THE FOUCAULT SHIFT IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY:
FROM EPISTEMOLOGICAL TO ONTOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

by

SAYYED MOHAMMAD SOLEIMAN-PANAH

B.A., East Carolina University, 1979
M.A., University of Tehran, 1991

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
Department of Anthropology and Sociology

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
December 1999

© Sayyed Mohammad Soleiman-Panah
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Anthropology and Sociology

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Dec. 24, 1999

DE-6 (2/88)
ABSTRACT

Sociology has always been forced to establish its “scientific” legitimacy, but this need has never been more strongly felt than today. Constant theoretical shifts and disciplinary fragmentation are viewed as symptoms of some fundamental problems. Assuming the precariousness of the present condition of sociology, this dissertation seeks to understand and explain the driving force behind theoretical shifts in sociology, for they are blamed for many of the problems in the discipline. Through a close reading of Michel Foucault’s works, I argue that sociology, like many other forms of knowledge, has attempted to shape the modern person as an ethical subject. Pursuant to this objective, early sociologists attempted to establish a balance between two different kinds of orientation within the discipline, one of which was epistemological and scientific while the other was ontological and discursive. This position was in line with the critical attitude of the time and the emancipatory promises of the Enlightenment, which were nurtured by the early sociologists. In other words, the dual characteristic of sociology was due to a critical interest in changing and shaping the modern social subject. However, this duality gave rise to a tension within the discipline that was extremely difficult to manage, if not impossible.

This dissertation examines the tension between the two orientations that has shaped the history of sociology. I read classical sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber to show that even these positivistic sociologists’ theories can best be understood as a form of critique. In particular, I explain how they sought to manage the tension between the epistemological and the ontological aspects of their theories. I also examine Karl Popper’s critical philosophy as a more recent attempt to keep science politically relevant. However, I will show that the dilemmas created in sociology are mainly due to a strong epistemological orientation beyond which most contemporary sociologists are not able to move.

Sociology may avoid some of its present dilemmas by shifting its critical interest to an ontological path. To show the possibility and merits of the ontological approach to politics, I read Karl Marx as a classical sociologist whose theory exhibits a strong ontological tendency. I above all discuss Michel Foucault’s work extensively in order to both explain the nature of sociological theories and to explore the possibility and the prospects of the separation of the epistemological and the ontological sociologies more systematically. My aim is to show that while scientific sociology tries to advance without becoming intrinsically political, an explicitly discursive or ontological approach to contemporary political questions can be adopted by interested political actors and sociologists alike.
### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction: A Tale of Two Sociologies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behind the Curtain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology: A Queen with no Crown</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Question of Approach</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Sociologies and Theoretical Shifts</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I: The Positivists</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: Auguste Comte: A Passion for a Positive Critique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Forsaken Father?</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comte’s Positivism: A Critique and an Ethics</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Emergence of an Epistemological Society</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Discursive Compensation for the Demise of Theology</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Government and the Formation of the Ethical Subject</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comte and Positivism</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comte and Language</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: Emile Durkheim: Moral Discipline and Scientific Rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Typology of Society</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide as a Symptom</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society in Durkheim’s Work</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Sociology: Critique and Moral Government</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: From Weber to Popper: The Age of Critique and Trembling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Science and Faith</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Weber: An Appreciation</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl R. Popper: A Rational Critique</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part II: The Foucault Shift</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV: A Marxian Prelude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marx on Critique: A Digression</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V: Discourse and Politics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse as an Event</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Rules of Discourse</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Rules of Discourse</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules for the Subjection of Discourse</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward Archaeology</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter VI: Beyond Epistemological Paradoxes</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departures</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Epistemology</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond the History of Ideas</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond the Philosophy of the Subject and Structuralism</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter VII: The Sociology of Knowledge: An Impasse</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Case of Social Determinism</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Defense of Science</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter VIII: Beyond the Critique of Ideology and Interpretative Analysis</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Question</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadamer versus Habermas: Intellectual Modesty is a Virtue</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique does not Have to be Self-Contradictory</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse as the Positive Unconscious of Knowledge</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power-Knowledge Thesis</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter IX: The Genealogy of the Modern Subject</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Genealogy?</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Critical Sociological Project</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals: Docile Bodies and Souls for Empirical Interventions</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics: Thou Shalt Pay for Thy Freedom</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter X: Governmentality: A Point of Contact</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technologies of the Self: A Sociological Significance</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Governmentality?</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Epistemological Turn in Governmentality</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rise of the Positive Ethics</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter XI: Ontological Critique: A Theoretical Revolution</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foucault's Politics</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Discontinuity</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aufklärung: An Ontological Critique</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Poverty of the Modern Self</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmentality and Critique</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Critical History of Thought</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Foucault Shift: An Ontological Rupture</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion: The Temptation of Discourse

The Sociological Significance of Discourse Analysis 428
Discourse is Nobody's Property 438

References 445
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

He who does not express gratitude to people does not express gratitude for God either.
(Prophet Mohammad)

Writing this dissertation and doing the necessary research for it, like almost all other things we do as social subjects, was a collective endeavor. I have been blessed all through my life with God’s grace manifested in people with whom I have lived and worked. Words cannot express how grateful I am for everything that different individuals have done for and to me even when it appeared to be unfavorable.

Many people have contributed to my success directly or indirectly. May God bless all of them! They may not expect to be mentioned here; however, I only name a few in order to keep the tradition of gratitude alive. I would like to thank all the members of my supervisory committee for believing in the possibility of writing a theoretical work by a student when some did not think it was possible. A very special thanks is due to my supervisor, Professor Thomas M. Kemple, who after reading my comprehensive examinations, expressed his words of encouragement saying that my reading of Foucault’s more theoretical works was interesting. Professor Kemple’s knowledge of various complex theoretical issues made me confident that I could explore many aspects of my thesis seriously because he not only would appreciate such an attempt but also would correct me if I err on some points. Professor Neil Guppy’s contributions to my work are many and diverse. All through the writing of my comprehensive examinations, proposal and dissertation, he made invaluable comments without which my work would have been of much lesser quality. His knowledge of the sociological literature and positivistic thought in sociology made me more comfortable dealing with positivism as a form of critique. He has also been a source of moral and personal support which no other person could provide. I am proud of having him in my committee, he is irreplaceable for his intellectualism, professionalism, and human integrity. I would also like to deeply appreciate Professor David R. Matthews for the professionalism, experience, and immense knowledge that he brought to the team. The overall format of this dissertation is one of the many contributions that he made to this work.

The contributions of my family members to my life and work are beyond my ability to recite. Without their love and labor I could not achieve what I have achieved. My parents, Reza and Sakineh, devoted themselves to raising me the best they could. They have given me all they had, and I love them sincerely. My children, Fatemeh, Ahmad, and Ali were as understanding as one could be during my years at school. They are my source of inspiration and joy. To my wife, Zahra, belongs the most beautiful praises that I can utter and the deepest love of my heart. I am humble before her honesty, dignity, love, and sacrifices. May God bless her with his most benevolent grace!
Behind the Curtain

After fourteen years, I returned to the West to study for a Ph.D. in sociology. It seemed as though the tree of sociology had been stripped of its fruits. After three years of undergraduate study in natural science, I changed my major to sociology intending to master another science that would enable me to understand the unfolding events in my country. At that time, in 1978, Iran was in social and political turmoil. Iranian society moved faster than I did. The Islamic Revolution occurred in Iran a few months before I got my BA from East Carolina University in sociology. My knowledge of sociology was never enough to comprehend social transformations of this magnitude. Nevertheless, it was always a great source of personal satisfaction to have at least some sociological insights about the social transformations that were taking place, and about the competing political views. When I came to Canada with an M.A. in cultural anthropology from Tehran University, I became even more humble about that modest insight.

Iranian intellectuals had a high regard for sociology. Many political activists in Iran were either sociologists or familiar with sociological literature. Ali Shariati, a Sorbonne educated sociologist and a student of Georges Gurvitch and Jean Paul Sartre,
was the most widely read pre-Revolutionary Iranian intellectual in Iran. His sociological perspective took Iran’s Islamic and cultural traditions into account. Many others were inspired by him and by other activists with a sociological background. The sociological school that was very strong in Iran was French positivistic sociology. Sociology was considered the queen of the sciences as far as political matters were concerned. While postmodernism has become popular in the West, positivistic sociology retains a privileged reputation as a critical force in Iran.

Following the Islamic Revolution of 1979, universities were centers of the power struggle in Iran. As a result, from 1980 to 1983 all universities were closed for restructuring. One of the objectives of this restructuring, which was called the “Cultural Revolution,” was reconstruction of the social sciences to reflect the Islamic and cultural heritage of the country. University instructors were asked to participate in weekly seminars with theologians in order to examine the status of sociology in Iran. This catechization of sociology can be described as a contestation between faith and science. Having made important contributions to the Revolution, the pious men of faith could move to the front of the social stage and claim to be more critical than “rational” science. It was a moment of triumph and bliss for people of faith after years of intense humiliation at the hands of modern sciences and secular philosophies which branded them as reactionaries. However, they did not dismiss positivistic sociology as politically and ethically irrelevant. Today, Iranian media are full of references to sociological studies and theories which are believed to support the political positions of competing groups, both secular and religious.
When I came to Canada and attended graduate courses, I noticed a radical difference regarding the status of so-called scientific or positivistic sociology. A wide range of opposing and contradictory ideas claimed to be sociological. As a student of both sociology and cultural anthropology, I could understand cultural relativism and appreciate cultural diversities. What I could not easily comprehend was the epistemological relativism which seemed to have perplexed positivistic sociology. As an undergraduate student I learned that in sociology one social phenomenon could be explained from different or opposing perspectives. We were used to hearing our instructors saying: “this is how Marx explains this situation, but Weber has a different view.” Contradictions were not a big issue. In fact, thinking through contradictions was considered one of the joys of sociology. What made the new sociology troublesome was not that contradictory views were presented as sociological observations, but the realization that there were no criteria left for resolving these theoretical contradictions.

After I arrived in Canada, the curtain was pulled away. There was nothing behind it worthy of being called a scientific law. All we had were personal narratives to share with one another in our classes. It was very natural during class discussions for the Canadian students to say “I am not interested in X’s theory.” But for me, this language was confusing. Positivism had told us that it did not matter if we were interested in a scientific explanation or not. Facts were facts. But, it was now a different age. Postmodernism and the philosophy of deconstruction were the dominant currencies in the intellectual market. I had spent half of my life studying sociology because I thought it could provide useful knowledge. It thus became a personal priority to determine the truth about sociology, my passion.
This is where my interest in this dissertation topic comes from. I thought one had to explain the theoretical chaos which sociology was going through before making any judgment regarding its usefulness. After attending several theoretical courses and doing some research, I realized that there is a widespread sense of disenchantment among sociologists with regard to the status of their discipline. Some spoke of a crisis while others were convinced that a fundamental shift had taken place within the discipline.

Sociology: A Queen with no Crown

Sociologists were told by Auguste Comte that their science ranked highest in the family of sciences, but eventually came to realize that the queen had been dethroned. This irritated their minds and souls to the extent that many no longer identified themselves as sociologists. Terence C. Halliday and Morris Janowitz's Sociology and Its Public is a collection of essays on the present state of sociology. Halliday's summary of the essays is a good example of how chaotic the discipline is perceived to be:

Various essays in this book propose that the quality of sociology's graduate student recruits has dropped radically since the late 1960s, that sociology lags well behind history, anthropology, and economics in its appeal to outstanding future scholars, and that the intellectual integrity of sociology is threatened by external financial and managerial pressures. Subspecialties in the discipline have become vulnerable to raids or even annexation by adjacent disciplines. Contributors also assert that organization of sociology within the university faces powerful centrifugal and sometimes disintegrative forces. They suggest that the substantive core of the discipline may have dissolved. (Halliday 1992: 4)

Stephen Cole, the editor of Sociological Forum, in his introduction to volume 9 made this public:

Sociologists who do research in Washington are advised when going to the Hill to identify themselves as "social scientists" rather than sociologists. The low opinion that academic administrators and the public
Seymour Martin Lipset, another sociological insider, also informs us that sociology has become a "self-destructive discipline" (Lipset 1994:218). He mentions that "in a recent survey of reactions to nine disciplines (Lynch and McFerron, 1993), a sample of 144 deans were asked to rate "departmental quality in teaching and research...[S]ociology comes out last in both dimensions" (Lipset 1994: 216). In response to the question, "What's wrong with sociology?" almost all the contributors to the special issue of Sociological Forum mention that sociology has failed to progress like the natural sciences. Among the reasons given to explain this, two reasons stand out. There is a lack of consensus among sociologists and a lack of core knowledge (a disciplinary paradigm) in sociology. Upon closer examination, we may be able to show that these two reasons constitute two sides of the same coin.

Cole distinguishes between two types of knowledge: core knowledge and the research frontier. According to him, the "frontier consists of all newly produced knowledge. Most of this knowledge is ignored, a small part is paid attention to, and most of that is discarded as being wrong" (Cole 1994a: 133). The core, which is similar to what Thomas Kuhn (1970) calls a paradigm, is the basis on which frontier knowledge is evaluated. The parts of the frontier knowledge which are consistent with the core enter the core and bring about a sense of scientific progress. Cole believes that at the "research frontier there are no significant differences in the way in which natural sciences and social sciences proceed" (Cole 1994a: 133). The problem with sociology is that there is no consensus as to what constitutes the discipline's core knowledge. Two main reasons are singled out: the changing nature of sociology's subject matter and the significant influence of non-cognitive variables such as political values. Because of these two
reasons, Cole concludes that “sociology has not, and probably will not, develop core knowledge similar to that of the natural sciences...” (Cole 1994a: 152).

Randall Collins (1994) reaches a similar conclusion through a different route. He believes that sociology’s problems have little to do with its epistemological assumptions and research practices. In his view, there is no significant difference between the natural sciences and the social sciences as far as issues such as empiricism, measurement and mathematization and experimental method are concerned. Rather, it is the distinct social organizations of the two domains which set them apart. The social organization of the natural sciences is marked by two traits: “high consensus on what counts as secure knowledge and rapid-discovery of a train of new results” (Collins 1994: 157). In the natural sciences disagreements are confined to the research frontier, but the social sciences are structured around rival paradigms. The high consensus in the modern natural sciences was made possible because of rapid discoveries at the research front. Such rapid discovery became possible as a result of advanced research technologies. In contrast, the social sciences have not been able and may never be able to develop a data-producing research technology. Even sophisticated computer analyses of statistics in the social sciences comprise only “theoretical manipulation of the data, not a method of producing new data” (Collins 1994: 171). Hence, Collins, too, concludes that “the social sciences, except perhaps in isolated pockets, will not develop streams of research technologies, and will never acquire the rapid-discovery mode” (Collins 1994: 175).
Questions

Both Collins and Cole agree that the major problem in sociology is a lack of consensus on what counts as the core sociological knowledge, and each offers his own explanation for this lack of consensus. Whether sociology can achieve a scientific status equivalent to the natural sciences is, however, completely different from why it suffers from a lack of consensus. We need to ask why there is no consensus in sociology. Indeed, this is one of the questions guiding this dissertation. Sociologists have produced an abundance of knowledge, but this knowledge resists being unified in the form of a dominant theory. Different kinds of knowledge seem to be incompatible with each other. The question is: Why?

Habermas (1992) has suggested that the social sciences, including sociology, are going through a paradigm shift. Thus, one may suspect that the present chaotic condition of the discipline will eventually be resolved through the adoption of a new paradigm. Over the last three decades, scholars have become increasingly aware of fundamentally different approaches to the social. Habermas (1992) speaks of a shift from the paradigm of consciousness to the paradigm of language, while Foucault (1972a) suggests we shift to the notion of discourse. Lyotard (1984) maintains that the nature of the social has changed in such a way that it cannot be understood except in terms of language games. Are we perhaps in the midst of a sociological revolution which, sooner or later, will inaugurate one of these theories? In this case we need to ask: What are the driving forces behind this shift?

Many socio-political factors may be responsible for the present conditions of the discipline; however, as noted above, sociology is somewhat unique among other social
sciences in this respect. Therefore, I believe we cannot explain the fragmentation of the discipline solely in terms of its institutional and organizational structure. I will explain that there is an inherent discursive political tendency in sociology that makes it suitable for the pursuit of non-epistemological objectives. Thus, I work within the context of those views that focus on the status of sociological theories as the source of current disciplinary crises.

There are two general views with respect to the present status of sociology. Some argue that sociology is inherently incapable of forming the disciplinary consensus necessary for scientific progress. Others have suggested that a process of theoretical shift is happening within the discipline. With regard to the first position, we should conduct an inquiry into the reasons why consensus is not achieved in sociology. In relation to the second view, it is imperative to seek out the conditions that are causing a shift in sociology. We may also be interested in the implications of such a shift for the discipline. These are the primary questions addressed by this dissertation.

Some writers have already proposed answers to these questions. For example, it is argued that sociology's subject-matter, unlike that of natural sciences, is rapidly transforming, and thereby the science which deals with it must also change rapidly. Harvey Molotch writes, "Society and its sociology, of whatever form, are not two 'things,' but an evolving process of knowledge, action, and substance" (Molotch 1994: 222). Cole suggests that the changing nature of society is a major source of sociologists' problems, because they have had to shoot at "a moving target- a target that frequently has changed or disappeared by the time the bullet arrives" (Cole 1994a: 139). Alain Tourain
expresses a similar view: "interpretations of social life are transformed together with the realities which they try to grasp" (Tourain 1992: 173).

The changing conditions of social life have always challenged sociology. Historically, sociology has responded to newly-emerging or newly-discovered social phenomena by developing new sub-fields:

If one examines the rise of new areas of interest in the past several decades, one will find the family and unemployment emerging in the years of the Great Depression; propaganda, public opinion, and rumor in World War II; a burst of new interests in the sociology of poverty, sociology of education, sociology of youth, and feminist sociology in the 1960s and immediately thereafter; an environmental sociology, the sociology of energy, and the sociology of occupational risk in chemical and other dangerous industries more recently. (Smelser 1992: 49)

In other words, until now sociology has succeeded in meeting the standards of disciplinary unity in the face of external challenges of an ever-changing socio-historical environment by submitting such changes to analysis by various sub-fields. But, there is a feeling that a new social organization of life has emerged which may also alter the nature of sociological theory. The revolutions in technology and communications, the emergence of mass media and consumer culture, the inhumane legacy of fascism and Nazism, the collapse of communism, and the emergence of colonized people as nation-states are some of the socio-cultural transformations which now challenge sociology.

Let us grant that sociological theories are closely related to the social conditions they seek to explain. It is the nature of this relation which must be analyzed if we are to understand theoretical shifts in sociology. The mere affirmation of the existence of a relationship between theory and society has little, if any, explanatory value. In addition, the thesis that rapid socio-political changes are responsible for the lack of a widely accepted scientific theory in contemporary sociology ignores that there has never been
such a theory in sociology. For example, Thomas Kemple (1995) shows the limits of Marx's concern with the scientificity of his theory. According to Kemple, Marx was also interested in the *aesthetic* dimension of the transformation of social conditions. Kemple calls our attention to "the simultaneously competing and complementary perspectives of Marxist aesthetics and Marxist political economy as points of access to a single contradictory problematic" (Kemple 1995: 172). It is the tension within this "single contradictory problematic" that I seek to explain as a driving force in sociological theories. While Marx dealt with this tension through a more explicit ontological orientation, Comte sought to establish a balance between the discursive and scientific aspects of his sociology. By contrast, Durkheim was far more concerned about meeting the scientific standards of his time. My analysis of classical sociologists such as Comte, Durkheim, Weber, and Marx will show that even in the absence of rapidly changing circumstances listed above, sociology never ceased to change its theories. Therefore, I think that there must also be other factors apart from recent social transformations involved in theoretical shifts in sociology.

Thus, our first impressions that the certainty of positivistic sociology has vanished may not be accurate. Perhaps sociology has always been a field of multiple theoretical truths. As I have suggested, sociologists may be more aware of the instability of sociological theories because of a more vigorous investigation of the history of the discipline. In other words, some sociologists' uneasiness with the present situation is perhaps due to the fact that the curtain has been pulled aside from theorizing practices in sociology. That is to say, as a result of critical examinations of the human sciences, such as those conducted by Michel Foucault, we are now able to see that sociological theories
have never been formulated in a purely objective process of the search for truth. And since they have been discursively constructed by politically motivated critical subjects, sociological theories lack the epistemological and logical coherency that is expected from scientific theories. This theoretical wilderness in sociology can and should be studied in terms of competing socio-political interests in sociological truths. Therefore, I believe we need a better understanding of the relation between sociological theories and society. It is in this context that I insist we should begin with theories and theoretical shifts.

The Question of Approach

In the light of observations like that of Kemple’s mentioned above, and that of Foucault (1980), who has shown how knowledge is related to power and vice versa, I will examine the theoretical formulations of knowledge in sociology in relation to the problem of social critique and various forms of governmentality, as defined later in this introduction. In the spirit of Foucault, my approach to theory may be described as “discourse analysis.” The exact nature of this approach will be fully discussed in the last chapters of this dissertation. However, a preliminary description is helpful at this point.

Let us consider the thesis that sociological theories change because their subject-matter changes. One way of examining this thesis is to show that there is a close correspondence between theoretical knowledge and the object of the study. That is to say, we have to show that there is a transparency between our theory and the reality in question. Even if we agree that there can be a transparency between mind and the external world, it is difficult to prove this with regard to a specific theory. Therefore the question of transparency is usually discussed in general terms, and in an epistemological
fashion. In other words, the thesis that a new theory is a new knowledge about a new object is hard to prove with regard to any specific theory. This is because we may generally—and even tautologically—agree that when the objects of our inquiry are different, there will be a change in our knowledge too; however, it does not follow from this that every change in our theories is due to a change in their subject-matters. Put differently, some theoretical shifts may take place in sociology for reasons other than the emergence of new objects. There is an inherent epistemological bias in the thesis under consideration: it assumes that theory construction is only motivated by epistemological interests in knowing different objects. However, in the main body of this study I will show that the subject-matters of sciences are discursively constructed and belong, at least in part, to theory itself. To this effect, my approach to these issues has to be different from that of those who understand theory in strictly epistemological terms.

Having discarded epistemology per se as my approach, I could have chosen any number of epistemologically oriented approaches such as the sociology of knowledge, the history of ideas, and the critique of ideology. They are not epistemology proper, but they have an epistemological orientation. They also understand scientific theories as mental and logical constructions. Through Foucault, I became convinced that theories have a discursive aspect that can only be understood as an event, as I shall discuss in Chapter V. Thus, the proper approach had to be one that does not study science as a matter of consciousness or mental and logical phenomena, but rather as an event. Foucault’s archaeological approach, which is a form of discourse analysis, is best able to deal with sociological theories as events. One objective of this dissertation is to explain the nature, legitimacy and advantages of this approach.
Two Sociologies and Theoretical Shifts

I need to say a few words with regard to the "two sociologies" used in the heading. Why two sociologies? One may argue that there are many sociologies. There are at least as many sociologies as different sociological schools. I acknowledge that sometimes theoretical divisions can be so profound that we may not be able to ignore them. However, I believe that regardless of how radical the differences between various sociological schools or theories might be, one can still identify two general orientations within sociology. I will argue that these two sociological orientations have given rise to two types of sociologies which are not always explicitly distinct: one that seeks to be pure, analytical and factual, and another which wants to be politically relevant. Throughout this dissertation, I try to make the distinction between these two sociologies sharper in order to show that despite being historically intertwined, the relationship between the two is marked by an acute tension. One seeks to be purely epistemological and scientific while the other becomes more developed, the more discursive it is.

I will argue that these two sociologies are present in the works of most sociologists and the tension between them has not been successfully managed. Classical sociologists were very much aware of this duality of the discipline, and each dealt with it in his own way. However, as sociologists became more forgetful of this aspect of their discipline, sociological theories went through more changes as a result of the tension between that sociology which was scientific and that which was discursive. It will be noted that the tension between critique and governmentality in modern society gave rise to these two sociologies. Scientific sociology was born as a form of critique against those forms of governmentality which were religious and metaphysical. It was also expected to
provide a basis for an alternative form of governmentality. However, since these two (critique and governmentality) are essentially ontological and discursive (see Chapter X and Chapter XI), sociology has constantly been given a discursive characteristic too.

In short, sociology has a dual historical characteristic that has been with it since its inception. I will document this duality with reference to the works of classical sociologists later in the main body of this work. However, here I would like to show that this political or discursive sociology is still attractive to even those sociologists who have very high regard for scientific sociology. As a recent example, I may cite the special issue of *Canadian Journal of Sociology* on “Sociology and Its Publics” published in 1998. David R. Matthews, the editor of this issue, comments on the political relevancy of sociology in the following way:

I believe that sociologists have an obligation as professionals to enter into policy debate. Moreover, if we fail to do so because we have not yet found unambiguous research-based evidence to support our positions, we not only risk losing the opportunity to influence the outcome of the decisions that are being made, but we leave the policy “field of battle” open to others who lack the insight that sociology as a discipline brings to the policy arena. (Matthews 1998: 137)

Matthews is careful to note that what qualifies sociologists as professionals to engage in policy debate is their sociological insight, but Talcott Parsons, who seems to have a similar position, fails to make such a link. Talcott Parsons also wrote about “the problems facing our profession” (see Parsons 1959: 547). Parsons, who was writing almost forty years before Matthews, took notice of the practical aspect of sociology, but he tried to explain it in terms of sociology as a profession, not as a science. Thus, he argued that the scientific purists who advocated a total withdrawal from the public affairs
were wrong because, “For the profession as a whole...it is an impossible task” (Parsons 1959: 555). However, he cautioned that:

It should never be forgotten that the central task of a scientific profession is the development of its discipline and the training of its successors in carrying on that function. Increasing involvement in popular ideological discussions and in applied functions could readily divert attention from these functions, although of course here there need be no intense conflict. (Parsons 1959: 559)

An archaeological understanding of sociology as a discourse will show that this conflict is not merely found in the profession, but it is rather an intrinsic element of sociological knowledge. Here, I should also make a comment with respect to my choice of an archaeological approach to science, instead of an epistemologically oriented approach such as that of Thomas Kuhn. As I will explain, the sciences also have a discursive aspect which does not make judgements on epistemological questions. This aspect can hardly be addressed through Kuhn’s notion of paradigm. Kuhn distinguishes between two different senses of the term paradigm:

On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science. (Kuhn, 1970: 175)

The first sense of the word is too general to be an aspect of science. It is closer to Foucault’s notion of episteme than to his concept of discourse. However, while the second usage of the term is a limited one, it concerns only the epistemological task of solving scientific problems. There is no room in it for a wide range of cultural and political issues that are not concerned with epistemological questions but related to science. In this sense, the notion of paradigm is more exclusionary than that of discourse.
It implies that certain practices are not related to science because they are not relevant to the epistemological questions with which a given paradigm is concerned.

It should also be noted that Alan Dawe in an article published in 1970 also refers to two sociologies. He identifies them as “a sociology of social system and a sociology of social action” (Dawe 1970: 214). These are not the two sociologies with which my work is concerned. In fact, they can be viewed as examples of what I refer to as sociological theories. My thesis is that the shift between these two theories is due to the political nature of discursive sociology. Dawe and others who have dealt with the question of theory formation in sociology have not dealt with the discursive aspect of sociology.

Thus, I think theoretical shifts in sociology can best be explained through an archaeological approach because of its ability to study the discursive aspects of sociology. I will explain that sociology’s engagement with critique has given it a discursive character that cannot be understood in epistemological terms. It will also be noted that it is this critical interest that has influenced theoretical shifts in sociology. By theoretical shifts in the title of this introduction, I mean those shifts that are made at a level below the two sociologies discussed above. These shifts are mainly marked by the tension that characterizes the relationship of the two sociologies. I believe that almost all of the theories constructed so far fall into this category. However, we may also imagine a shift to one of the two sociologies. It is in this sense that I use the term shift in the title of Part II of this work. Part II is titled “The Foucault Shift” to claim that Foucault’s approach to critique as an ontological practice makes the separation of scientific sociology from the discursive one possible. This is a different kind of theoretical shift with some profound scientific and political implications that are fully discussed in Part II.
Concepts

A few concepts used in this work need to be clarified in advance. One may expect a very clear definition of theory to be offered in the beginning of a dissertation which is concerned with theoretical shifts in sociology. However, I do not use “theory” in a specialized sense. I consider theory a group of interrelated ideas or propositions which have explanatory value with regard to some topic or object.

I frequently employ the term ontology. The term ontology is usually defined with reference to its subject matter as the philosophy of being. This conception of ontology is associated with metaphysics. Metaphysics is believed to be an attempt to explain what ontology considers to exist. A metaphysical qualification of ontological entities can be concerned with a transcendental notion of being as in Plato’s philosophy. However, others have raised the ontological question of Being as a determinable and temporal presence. Martin Heidegger is well known for his historical ontology. As he explains:

... it is inevitable that inquiry into Being, which was designated with regard to its ontic-ontological necessity, is itself characterized by historicity. The elaboration of the question of Being must therefore receive its directive to inquire into its own history from the most proper ontological sense of the inquiry itself, as a historical one; that means to become historical in order to come to the positive appropriation of the past, to come into full possession of its most proper possibilities of inquiry. The question of meaning of Being is led to understand itself as historical in accordance with its own way of proceeding, i.e., as the provisional explication of Dasein in its temporality and historicity. (Heidegger 1977: 65)

This ontological approach to beings as determinable and temporal has been considered more fruitful especially in relation to knowledge and human beings, for it takes into account their interaction with the world in which they are found. For example, Karl Popper maintains that he is a realist with respect to ideas and theories because he
considers them to have some ontological status (see Popper 1992: 183-187). He defines real as "anything which can act upon physical things..., and which can be acted upon by physical things" (Popper 1992: 184). Following Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer also prefers a determinable and temporal notion of being. According to Gadamer, an ontological approach is characterized mostly by its dynamic conception of being. This emphasis on the active side of being is what distinguishes him from Popper. Thus, commenting on the Greek philosophy, he notes that:

... this standpoint is understood in a deeply ontological sense—hence not in the modern sense whereby what can be established through experience and what can be measured count as "being," but rather in the sense according [to] which being is dynamis, thus in the sense of that which produces effects... It is the resistance with which "being" withstands penetration—somewhat like solidity in Democritus. (Gadamer 1998: 65)

In short, this dissertation works with a notion of ontology which is determinable and temporal as opposed to transcendental. It also emphasizes the active side of being, to use Gadamer' terminology, the side that resists against external forces. I am interested in this conception of ontology especially because I consider theoretical practices in sociology as a critique against certain forms of governmentality. In my discussion of Foucault’s notion of governmentality and critique, I will explain that we find a strong stress on the effects of power on the social subject in Foucault’s earlier works. This is very similar to Popper’s notion that a thing with ontological status can also be acted upon by other things. However, Gadamer’s emphasis on the active side of being and its resistance against external forces is more apparent in Foucault’s later works where he develops his ontological conception of critique more explicitly.

As mentioned above, ontology has traditionally been explained with reference to its subject matter as the philosophy of being. Given the centrality of the question of
knowledge and its discursive manifestation as power in Foucault's work, it seems to me that one can add a new dimension to the concept of ontology based on Foucault's work. I believe we must now put at least the same degree of emphasis on the knowledge-side of ontology as on its subject matter. Thus, ontology should be defined as the philosophy of being. And since philosophy is a form of knowledge, an ontological approach must also explain how this very knowledge about a being forms and transforms that being. In other words, an ontological inquiry must deal with the relationship between being (the social subject) and the truth that is established through such an inquiry into that being. It is in light of this observation that I will explain theoretical shifts in sociology as critical attempts on the part of the social subjects who seek to transform their modes of being through theorizing.

In sum, by ontology I mean a knowledge which is itself a mode of being. In other words, this knowledge is not an abstract category or concept. For example, one's comprehension of one's own suffering is an instance of ontological knowledge. Such knowledge is rooted in one's existential experiences and is indistinguishable from one's mode of being. Aesthetic experiences can constitute ontological forms of knowledge. Through Foucault, I will also show that discursive knowledge as an event has an ontological moment. One may translate these experiences into an abstract conceptual language. But such a translation is always an original creation. It is also closely related to one's mode of being rather than some impersonal and abstract logical categories. When I say critique is essentially ontological, I mean it is informed by a knowledge rooted in one's mode of being which it seeks to transform.
It should be noted that there are some specific ontological moments in the works of other sociologists such as Comte and Durkheim. For example, they employ biological and religious discourse to attribute ontological characters such as reality and sacredness to social phenomena and society. However, I prefer the Foucauldean notion of ontology discussed above for my purposes here because it seems to me that Comte and Durkheim work with a more transcendental notion of ontology as opposed to that of Foucault which is a social ontology.

I also speak of epistemology in a very broad sense as a theory of knowledge dealing with questions regarding the nature of truth and knowledge and the necessary conditions of knowledge. I consider epistemology a second-order knowledge in the sense that it is knowledge of knowledge. In this sense, it includes the sociology of knowledge. It can be distinguished from other forms of second-order knowledge in terms of its focus on the validity of knowledge and its conditions. The sociology of knowledge is not concerned with the conditions of validity. However, even though it deals with the social and institutional aspects of knowledge, it still understands knowledge as an abstract system of ideas. That is why I refer to it as epistemologically oriented. In contrast, discourse analysis conceives knowledge as an ontological entity, an event (see Chapter V). In this sense it is similar to first-order sciences such as biology or chemistry.

Outline

This work is organized in two parts dealing with various classical sociological theories and contemporary debates in the social sciences. My aim is to show that sociological theories have always appealed to political actors. Theoretical shifts are thus,
to a large extent, driven by their ethical and political implications. I tentatively refer to this ethico-political interest on the part of the political actors in theory as governmentality whenever a theory is sought for the purpose of forming social subjects, and critique whenever it is pursued for resistance against governmentality. In light of Foucault's thesis concerning knowledge-power, I read theories of classical sociologists such as Comte, Durkheim, Weber, and Marx as critical attempts intended to increase the freedom of social subjects. However, these theories, to different degrees, were also concerned with how alternative forms of governmentality might be developed. In short, I analyze theoretical shifts in sociology in terms of the tension between governmentality and critique.

However, through Marx and Foucault it will be shown that critique is essentially an ontological practice. The same is true of governmentality, for it seeks to *form* the individual as an ethical social subject. I tentatively define ontological practice as an undertaking which is informed by or directed at one's mode of being and existential experiences. For example, suffering is an existential experience. Let us assume a person suffers under a certain form of governmentality based on some form of knowledge. The person has every reason in the world not to accept the knowledge involved in that specific form of governmentality. She may not care how logical or epistemologically valid the knowledge is. As far as she is concerned, it has no ontological validity, and that is all she cares about. Therefore, as a form of critique she may decide to formulate an alternative knowledge in order to alleviate her suffering. These formulations of knowledge are conducted discursively with little or no epistemological concern. It is the power and politics of knowledge which are important in the study of discourse.
In the first part of my dissertation I examine positivistic sociology as a form of critique. I try to show that sociology from its very inception had ethico-political claims. And with the aid of Foucault's theory we will see that sociological theories were discursively formulated due to the ethico-political interests embedded in them. However, in the context of the modern episteme, which gave birth to man as "an empirico-transcendental doublet" (Foucault 1970: 322), these theories could conceal or ignore their discursive nature and were largely presented in a logical and methodical manner. As a result of this negligence, political actors continue to construct and deconstruct sociological theories in an epistemological fashion. The epistemological aspect of scientific theories is neither a basis for governmentality nor a source of critique. Thus, in the second part I explain some of the dilemmas that epistemologically oriented forms of critique have produced in sociology. In this regard, I discuss the sociology of knowledge, the critique of ideology, and feminism as examples. I do this in the context of Foucault's work in order to show how he addresses the same problems.

Foucault's work represents a genuine discontinuity or a fundamental shift in the social sciences. I hope that the reader will agree with me on this point after reading this work. However, I should make a comment with regard to my intense focus on Foucault's work in a dissertation which is concerned more generally with theoretical shifts in sociology. I have a threefold objective in using Foucault's work. Through my reading of Foucault, I seek to support my thesis that theoretical shifts in sociology, like changes in other scientific disciplines, are the results of ontological critiques on the part of discontented social subjects. At one level, I read Foucault as a scholar who best exemplifies this restless longing for self-transformation, which results in a new field of
scientific investigation. In other words, Foucault’s shift in the human sciences in itself is a support for my thesis that theoretical shifts are the work of politically motivated social subjects. I also seek to show that Foucault’s discourse analysis can explain the shifts that are taking place in the social sciences in general as well as his own theoretical shift. This is what Niklas Luhmann calls a supertheory because of its claim to universality, i.e. “to including both themselves and their opponents” (Luhmann 1995: 4).

I also have a third aim in reading Foucault. This dissertation can be read as an invitation to a Foucauldean approach to social phenomena. I will argue that Foucault’s concern is with the genealogy of the subject, which is inseparable from the question of socialization in conventional sociology. I show that Foucault’s approach can account for institutional practices in society, because discourse as an event has to be understood through its mutual relationship with non-discursive events coordinated by social institutions. I also argue that this approach has the merit of avoiding the need to struggle with the epistemological dilemmas of conventional sociology.

In Chapter I, I discusses Auguste Comte’s formulation of positivism and sociology as a critical response to the form of governmentality that he calls the Catholico-Feudal system. However, I will show that Comte’s critique also anticipates a form of scientific governmentality, for he is convinced that human beings cannot otherwise survive the evils of anarchy and revolution. Therefore, through a systemic understanding of society, he explains the merits of the social division of labor. For Comte, the most significant division that has ever taken place in society is the division introduced by Christianity between the temporal government and the spiritual government. Comte wishes to further advance this division by bringing the spiritual government into a closer
relationship with science, especially sociology. Thus, sociology becomes a force of
governmentality in modern society as well as a form of critique.

In Chapter II Durkheim is discussed as a sociologist who advanced Comte’s
project by arguing that the scientific truth established through sociology has ethico-
political significance. Durkheim put Comte’s positive religion on a more scientific
ground. He diminished the role of rhetoric and language, which Comte had favored, and
argued that methodical studies are enough for establishing rules that are necessary for
moral discipline. I will show that Durkheim’s sociology is exclusively concerned with the
moral discipline of the individual. Thus, he formulates a unique conception of society as
an ontological entity with ethical and epistemological functions. In its ethical capacity,
society saves the individual from anomie and suicide, while in its epistemological role it
gives rise to knowledge of the world. Durkheim did not seek to deduce moral principles
directly from sociological findings: however, he thought that no morality can be founded
without taking sociological knowledge into account. In other words, one has to deal with
sociological truth for the purpose of forming oneself as an ethical subject.

Max Weber and Karl Popper are the focus of Chapter III. I will read Weber’s
notion of value-freedom as an attempt to control the intense interest that was directed
toward science as an ethico-political tool. I will argue that Weber was caught between
science and faith, a tension he never resolved; however, he offered a more profound
understanding of the problem. Similarly, Popper tried to save the critical edge of science
by making it more modest through his principle of falsification. He argued that science
cannot prove anything as true; however, it can falsify our accepted truths.
Theories analyzed in Part I were formulated in light of an epistemological understanding of the nature of critique. However, I open Part II with a Marxian prelude to Foucault to show that the possibility of an ontological form of critique is already present in Marx's work. Chapter IV briefly deals with the role of aestheticism in Marx's work and argues that his approach to the question of ideology demonstrates a willingness to move beyond the epistemological conception of critique.

Chapter V introduces the reader to two fundamental elements of Foucault's work, i.e. the notions of discourse and archaeology. I will show that "discourse" as an aspect of science is Foucault's discovery, and it is not a domain of study for existing scientific disciplines. Thus, Foucault formulates archaeology as his own approach to discourse. Since discourse is not an epistemological domain, archaeology remains aloof from epistemological questions. However, as a form of critique, it is not politically neutral.

To show that Foucault understands both politics and critique as ontological matters, Chapter VI - VIII are devoted to an explication of the differences between Foucault's approach and a series of epistemologically-oriented approaches to science. I will explain that, far from clarifying the relationship between science and ethics, epistemological approaches have perpetuated the problem. Several contemporary scholars, including Habermas, Gadamer, Derrida, and several feminist writers, are discussed in order to introduce the dilemmas and paradoxes of the contemporary critical debate. It is also argued that Foucault's approach allows us to move beyond these paradoxes.

Chapter IX and Chapter X help us to understand the complex processes through which the ethical subject is formed. Chapter IX deals with the genealogy of the modern
subject and the role of epistemologically-oriented scientific ethics in contemporary
Western culture. I will explain ethics as a price that social subjects have to pay for their
freedom. Chapter X complements the previous chapter by providing us with an
understanding of governmentality as a process in which the freedom of the subject plays
an important part. I will explain that governmentality consists of technologies of
domination and technologies of the self. Since the technologies of the self are the
techniques that individuals in their freedom use to form themselves as ethical subjects,
there is always a possibility for resistance against a certain form of governmentality. This
is what Foucault’s critical project is intended to do, i.e. to show how a particular form of
governmentality can be resisted.

To demonstrate that Foucault’s notion of critique is radically different from those
of other contemporary thinkers, Chapter XI explains the ontological character of critique.
The implications of such an understanding for sociological theory are fully discussed. I
will argue that this shift is potentially capable of freeing sociology from the domination
of politics and vice versa.

Finally, in my conclusion I shall comment on the prospects of resolving the
tension between the two sociologies. It will be argued that this involves an ontological, or
at least a discursive orientation toward politics and an epistemological approach to
sociology. I shall also examine the temptation of discursive politics and explore several
possibilities. The possibility that I personally prefer is Weber’s conception of sociology
as a vocation. This involves a Foucauldean shift toward an ontological conception of
critique. However, there are other options whose nature and consequences are also
illuminated in this dissertation.
Writing this dissertation was also an attempt on my part to make an informed choice with regard to sociology and politics which brought me to the discipline. In an ironic way, my sociological training helped me to realize that sociology as a science without being ontologically mediated is not a promising political field. However, this also showed me that sociology may be a valuable technical asset if it conducts its scientific inquiries epistemologically with as little political involvement as possible.
Part I
The Positivists
A Forsaken Father?

Apparently Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte has been completely excommunicated from the Positive Religion that he so fervently founded more than one and half centuries ago. Sociologists make no reference to him except as a historical figure who coined the name of their discipline. He is also credited with introducing positive philosophy as a theory of scientific knowledge. However, even in this respect, today’s sociologists seem to have no interest in Comte’s conception of sociology and positivism. It is as if it were only an accident that the man came up with these two terms that we now have to use so frequently. Even his fellow countrymen, the authors of A Critical Dictionary of Sociology, think that sociologists should not call Comte the “founder of sociology,” because this implies that their discipline is influenced more by Comte than “the Enlightenment and the contractualist tradition” (Boudon and Bourricaud: 1989:77).

Unlike Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, Comte is not frequently referred to in serious theoretical texts in sociology. Introductory textbooks are still the most likely place one can find a reference to Comte in contemporary sociological discourse. For example, Gertrud Lenzer brings to our attention that in Talcott Parsons’s Structure of Social Action, “half of which is devoted explicitly to positivistic theory and tradition, Comte is indexed four times altogether” (Lenzer 1975: xix). Positivist thinkers in general have not received Comte any more enthusiastically. As Leszek Kolakowski notes, there is
a debate about whether Comte can legitimately be called a positivist, and some even believe that he was never a positivist (Kolakowski 1968: 47).

In a discipline like sociology that is so fond of its classical thinkers, this lack of interest in this particular founder should not go unexamined. Thomas Kuhn has argued that “the sciences, like other professional enterprises, do need their heroes and do preserve their names” (Kuhn 1970: 139). However he also notes that “Whitehead caught the unhistorical spirit of the scientific community when he wrote, ‘A science that hesitates to forget its founder is lost’” (Kuhn 1970: 138). Since we will make a distinction below through Foucault between science and discourse, we might agree with Whitehead that a science may forget its founder; we should also note that the significance of the founders or heroes is not merely a matter of the social and historical interest for science.

A return to Marx or Freud, for example, is not only motivated by historical curiosity, but in many instances, such classics are read to form new knowledge. But as Foucault notes, Physics and Mechanics never return to Newton and Galileo for such an objective. This difference between Marx and Newton is due to the difference between discourse and science. Discursive initiators do not have the same function as the founders of the sciences, even though these functions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. According to Foucault, there is an “inevitable necessity, within [the] fields of discursivity, for a ‘return to the origin’” (Foucault 1988i: 219). He adds:

This return, which is part of the discursive field itself, never stops modifying it. The return is not a historical supplement that would be added to discursivity, or merely an ornament; on the contrary, it constitutes an effective and necessary task of transforming the discursive practice itself. Reexamination of Galileo’s text may well change our understanding of the history of mechanics, but it will never be able to change mechanics itself. (Foucault 1998i: 219).
In which category should we put Comte: with Marx or Galileo? On the one hand, there is no place in sociology for his substantive views. On the other hand, he is almost unique in this regard, and no other classical sociologist is forsaken to the extent that he is. One may even doubt if he was a sociologist after all. Nevertheless, I believe it is exactly this apparent forgetfulness about Comte by sociology that makes him, in a sense, a true scientific founder instead of a discursive initiator. Comte was a scientific sociologist with many theoretical and empirical flaws that could easily be detected. But this is not all. I will show that no other sociologist has influenced the future formulations of sociological theories more than Comte has. In this sense, he is also a discursive initiator for sociology.

Had it not been for Durkheim, Comte would have remained only a minor scientist in the history of sociology. As Parsons points out, Durkheim adopted every element of Comte’s thought (see Parsons 1963: 307). Durkheim, through his empirical studies and theoretical syntheses, bestowed a scientific character upon Comte’s ideas, and thereby made them more attractive for a discursive formulation. While discourse should not be equated with science, in modern societies it is often constructed in reference to science. In Comte’s work, these two aspects, i.e., science and discourse, are to a large extent separated. He has to complement his positive sociology with a positive religion. This is why Comte’s ideas are either considered rudimentary scientific propositions or rejected as moral doctrines. Most readers of Comte choose the latter alternative.

Durkheim adopted Comte’s ideas and brought science and morality together. On the one hand, he established sociology as a field of investigation with a unique method and a proper object of study which could not be easily rejected as epistemologically illegitimate. On the other hand, he made moral elements of Comte’s theory an extension
of science itself and not just a complementary necessary domain. As a result, with Durkheim a science was born that could not be dismissed as a purely political or moral doctrine, and at the same time it had a very strong ethical dimension.

Durkheim shows that it was Claud Henri de Rouvroy, Count of Saint-Simon, who established sociology as a positive science and Comte was intellectually indebted to him more than he was ready to acknowledge. Comte, who worked for Saint-Simon for close to seven years, later severed his relation with him over personal and intellectual disagreements. Perhaps he was too disappointed by Saint-Simon to acknowledge his contributions. Durkheim clearly demonstrates that most of Comte's ideas are those of Saint-Simon (see Durkheim 1958: 119-234). However, here I discuss those ideas as presented by Comte because they receive a more systematic formulation at his hands, and also because Comte has played a more direct part in the formation and development of sociology through Durkheim.

In this section, I intend to read Comte very closely with several objectives in mind. First, with the aid of Foucault's concepts of governmentality and discourse (developed in more detail in Part II) I seek to explain Comte's positivism as a form of critique. My second objective is to show that the bases of future theoretical developments in sociology are already present in Comte's works. In other words, I will throw light on those elements of Comte's work that are also found in the works of Durkheim, Weber, Mead, and Habermas. Thirdly, I do not wish to establish a direct line of influence between Comte and all of these scholars. Rather, my aim is to show that they had a more-or-less similar project because they all belonged to what Foucault calls the modern episteme. Within this episteme positivism emerged as an ethico-political force, but it did
not succeed in treating ethico-political questions exclusively in epistemological terms, and therefore, positivistic sociology dealt with these questions discursively. Thus, I move from Comte to Foucault via Durkheim, Weber, and Popper in order to explore the possibility of a non-epistemological approach to ethics and politics.

Before any discussion of Comte, I need to make a precautionary remark. My reading of Comte is informed by Foucault’s approach to science and discourse. After considering the advantages and disadvantages of putting my discussion of Foucault at beginning of this thesis, I decided to discuss other theorists before Foucault. This was because I thought that the strength of Foucault’s approach would be better appreciated if we could first see why others failed in their theoretical attempts. However, I will briefly define those Foucauldian concepts that are crucial for my discussion when they are introduced. More systematic explanations of these notions are offered in the part devoted to Foucault. There might be some concepts that cannot be defined briefly. For example, Foucault’s notion of discourse cannot be explained except in a very systematic and extensive manner. In such cases, the reader may need to defer to the relevant discussion in Part II.

Comte’s Positivism: A Critique and an Ethics

My intention is to show how the practices of sociological theorizing until now can be analyzed in terms of what Foucault calls governmentality and critique. These two concepts will be treated in full detail in Part II of this dissertation. However, here we can briefly define governmentality as those practices which attempt to form ethical social subjects by means of certain technologies of domination, which put the individual in a
relation with others, and through certain technologies of the self, which establish a relation between the self and itself (see Foucault 1997m: 300). Government in this sense is very broad, covering a wide range of practices that extend from formal state apparatuses to the acts of self-restraint.

Critique on the other hand involves a resistance against governmentality on the part of the subject. In principle, critique can be total, that is, rejecting all forms of governmentality and advocating some sort of anarchy. However, in practice, critique is usually directed against a particular form of government for being excessive and costly. Critique is ontological, which means it is an attitude toward reality and a form of self-transforming activity (see Foucault 1997d: 26). But in western culture, for some socio-historical reasons that will be explained later, critique has assumed an epistemological orientation. That is, attempts are made to discredit a particular form of governmentality in terms of the flaws that exist in its knowledge base.

Through Auguste Comte we can show that Christianity introduced a form of governmentality in the West which was rational, and as such epistemological. Comte praises this movement as the most progressive invention of Christianity and believes that a critique of the old form of governmentality must further develop the rational tendency that was introduced by Christianity. In this view theological and metaphysical forms of rationality had lived out their lives and were now full of retrograde tendencies; therefore, rationality must assume its final and most progressive form of positivism. Thus, as we will see, because of the epistemological character of governmentality in the West, Comte thought that its critique should also be epistemological. But since he did not want his

---

1 Foucault also makes the same observation, but he suggests a different kind of critical response to the rational form of governmentality as I discuss in Part II.
critique to be *total*, he felt compelled to propose his Positive Religion as an alternative form of governmentality which was based on *sociology* rather than theology. Thus with Comte, sociology from its inception assumed a dubious political character which was both a critique of and an ethical base for forming social subjects. Having been preserved for almost two centuries, this characteristic has remained as a source of constant concern for sociology. In what follows I will show how Comte’s project is both a critique and an ethical position at the same time.

Historians and sociologists are not at ease when dealing with Comte. They have difficulty reconciling his faith in positivism with his *positive* political ambitions. The most unfair explanation is the division of his works into early and late phases, while regarding the early one as the work of the “normal and genius” Comte and the other as belonging to a mentally sick individual. Kolakowski notes:

Some of Comte’s earliest disciples held the view that his thought can be divided into two distinct stages, the first of which is the source of positivism proper, whereas the second is at least a partial negation of the first and should be regarded as an unfortunate aberration, ascribable to the fact that the great philosopher was afflicted by a recurrence of his mental illness toward the end of his life. (Kolakowski 1968: 47)

Kolakowski also observes that, according to twentieth-century historians, “the so-called second phase of his thought, in which he elaborates his ‘religion of humanity,’ is a natural development from the earlier, its crowning achievement rather than any sort of falling off” (Kolakowski 1968: 47). However, commentators are silent in explaining exactly how the religion of humanity is a *natural* development of positivism. On the contrary, it can be shown that Comte’s formulation of positive philosophy was the consequence of his political concerns.
Attributing Comte’s concern with morality to his mental problems is unfair, if only because this interest can be found in all of his writings. I intend to show that the best way to understand Comte is to study his project as both a form of critique and governmentality. I will also argue that the “natural” relationship that some historians believe exists between Comte’s positivism and his religion is, in fact, a paradoxical relation, though a necessary one given the nature of Comte’s project.

Comte was so conscious of the difficulty that some might have in understanding his project that, in the 1854 appendix to his System of Positive Polity, he wrote that it was “especially intended to demonstrate the perfect harmony that exists between [his] youthful efforts and [his] matured conceptions” (Comte 1975a: 3). The System of Positive Philosophy and The System of Positive Polity collected during 1830-1842 and 1851-1854 respectively are two significant works by Comte. In his System of Positive Philosophy Comte lays out the epistemological foundations of sociology as the last positive science, and discusses some of its characteristics. The System of Positive Polity, which is mostly ridiculed by contemporary positivists, brings to light the ethico-political implications of the new science. However, all of Comte’s writings attest to the fact that throughout his life his project was the same, i.e., a positive critique of modern society which also entailed the reorganization of this society. As Lenzer puts it, the significance of Comte’s project is not limited to sociology. Rather, “the work of this thinker is, for better or for worse, essential to an understanding of the modern period” (Lenzer 1975: xiv).

Comte was born on January 18, 1798, when France was still preoccupied with her revolutionary and post-revolutionary social disturbances. He was politically active in his youth and remained so until 1857, when he died in poverty. In 1816, he was expelled
from the École Polytechnique together with the entire student body for radicalism (Ferré 1988: vii).

In 1819, in his first essay titled “Separation of Opinions from Aspirations,” Comte clearly exhibits an interest in positivism as a form of critique. He first rejects the idea that only rulers “are entitled to a monopoly of opinion” on political matters (Comte 1974a: 77). He then adds that the monopoly of the rulers over politics is absurd, and that the subjects have every reason to refuse it. This is exactly what critique is about, rejecting some form of governmentality. But Comte thinks that it is equally absurd to say “that everyone is competent to form, by mere instinct, just views in politics” (Comte 1974a: 77). Political views are not merely statements of desires, they are opinions that include judgments and therefore should be based on a careful study of the political reality. While “the public alone should indicate the end” in politics, “the consideration of the measures for effecting it exclusively belongs to scientific politicians” (Comte 1974a: 78). Comte is aware that one may argue against his separation of opinions and aspirations by alleging that what he calls opinion is nothing but a metaphysical statement that is equally rooted in some desires. In other words, he acknowledges that politics has not “yet become a positive science” (Comte 1974a: 77). Thus, at the age of 20, Comte set himself the task of raising politics to a scientific status so that the public would refer political matters to qualified individuals with confidence. This is how Comte describes his vision as both a positive critique and an alternative, positive form of governmentality:

Such confidence, attended as it has been, with most serious disadvantages, while politics has remained vague, mysterious, devoid of principal—in a word, theological—will, so soon as it has been transformed into a positive science, be accompanied by no greater evil than the confidence that we daily and fearlessly accord to the physician, even in matters of life and death. (Comte 1974a: 78)
Based on this very short essay, which is also Comte's first published writing, we may make some preliminary observations that should be further developed in our examination of his thoughts. First, Comte's interest in positivism from the very beginning is an interest in politics, not sociology per se. He does not consider the extension of the positive philosophy, or sociology for that matter, into politics as illegitimate. In fact, for him, as we will see, sociology is also a positive politics in a very broad sense.

Second, Comte's critical project is basically ontological in the sense that it seeks to free the life of the subjects in general, not merely their intellects, from a certain kind of ruler. He wants people to decide for themselves what their objectives in life should be.

Third, Comte is not willing to put the fate of the people completely in their own hands. They should only tell their rulers what their vision of a desirable life is, but it is up to qualified scientists to say if and how it is achievable. This epistemological orientation of Comte's critique is due to his understanding of modern society, which, he thinks, has a distinct intellectual moment that cannot be governed by instincts. According to Comte, this dimension should be governed scientifically. In sum, in government there should be a share for "the mass of the people," and a part that "exclusively belongs to scientific politicians" (Comte 1974a: 78).

We can fully appreciate Comte's achievement only if we realize that all his intellectual labors were directed toward the scientific reorganization of the society, and that to a large extent this reorganization was successful in shaping modern societies. I use "societies" in plural form and without the adjective "western" because I have personally observed that positivist governmentality has largely shaped the course of events in a non-western society, such as Iran. However, here I have to limit myself mainly to the analysis
of Comte’s project so far as it relates to sociological theorizing. Pursuant to this objective, I will begin with Comte’s conception of modern society, which he formulated in his early writings.

The Emergence of an Epistemological Society

There is a striking similarity between Comte’s conception of modern western society and its description by Foucault. While Comte’s explanation is socio-historical, Foucault’s approach is a discourse analysis. However, they both trace back modern society to the early introduction of a new form of governance by Christianity. The distinct characteristic of this form of government is the stress it puts on the realm of thought and the human mind for the purpose of forming ethical social subjects. Foucault’s analysis of this movement is discussed in detail below in Chapter X. At this point, I will consider Comte’s explanation of the event and its significance for the positive reorganization of modern society.

In 1820, one year after his first essay, Comte wrote his second one under the heading of “A Brief Appraisal of Modern History.” From this article, which is much longer than the first one, it is obvious that Comte has already formed a very clear notion of society in general and of modern society in particular. Generally speaking, he has a systemic notion of society in which social cohesion is the result of cooperation amongst its parts. According to Comte, “any discordance of elements constituting a system is an evident sign of its decay” (Comte 1974b: 84). He identifies the two major components of any social system as consisting of temporal and spiritual elements. These two elements should correspond to each other for the society to function. Comte borrows these terms
from Catholic theology, which believed in “a mystical opposition between heavenly and earthly interests” (Comte 1975b: 302). He uses them to designate the material and moral aspects of the society in a very general sense. The Marxian notions of base and superstructure are analogous to these two notions of Comte’s sociology. Max Weber was also interested in the relation between these two levels in his Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

After two essays published in 1824 and 1825, Comte published “Consideration on the Spiritual Power” in 1826 as a more systematic treatment of the two concepts upon which his previous publications relied. We will see that Comte approaches the temporal and the spiritual aspects of the social system in terms of the question of government. Foucault’s research into the history of this question points out that this question attracted a great deal of interest throughout the Middle Ages. However, due to the emergence of the new problem of “population,” there was an explosion of treatises on the ‘art of government’ “from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth” (Foucault 1991c: 87). It is around the same period that the interest in critique as an ‘art of not being governed’ flourishes in Europe (see Foucault 1997d: 24-29). Thus by the time Comte began his intellectual work, the arts of government and critique had already been developed. Comte wrote within an established episteme in which science was involved in the governance of population. There were also certain critical movements against the existing forms of scientific governmentality which Comte considered to be destructive and sought to terminate through “the positive school” (see Comte 1975b: 200). Comte argued that by basing the arts of government and critique in positivism, we could both be
critical toward existing social realities and avoid social anarchy, which a non-positivist approach would give rise to.

Comte begins by asserting that every society is a social system which includes a certain number of individuals whose combined activity is its essence (Comte 1974c: 123). He then raises the question of what makes this combined activity possible. To express his conception of society, Comte needs to know why individuals interact with one another in an orderly fashion. To put it differently, a person who is interested in the critique of his society should first know what the bases of the social organization are in order to make the desirable changes to it.

Comte argues that any explanation of social organization in terms of "utilitarian considerations" is flawed because its utility and benefit "could never have been anticipated by individuals of any degree of ability, but could only manifest itself after the social evolution had proceeded up to a certain point" (Comte 1975b: 264). In other words, individuals do not form social bodies because they can see their future advantages in advance. Similarly, those theories that attempt to explain social organization exclusively in terms of self-interest are also ill-conceived because pure egoism is a source of disorder. A social state is both "a continuous state of individual satisfaction, ...[and] also...a continuous state of sacrifice" (Comte 1974e: 236). Since they cannot explain why individuals should make sacrifices, these theories, as their last resort, attempt to regulate every aspect of social life by means of laws and constitutions, and thereby redistribute power among different groups. But according to Comte, this legal approach stems from "the fundamental error of treating as simply a matter of practice that labour of social organisation which is in its essence theoretical" (Comte 1974c: 124).
Comte insists that *society* is possible only through *government* because:

> Every real association necessarily supposes a constant influence, at times directive, at time repressive, exercised, within certain limits, by the whole on the parts, in order to make them converge towards the general order from which they always naturally tend to deviate... (Comte 1974e: 227)

"Government" is the term Comte uses to designate the influences that bond individuals together and make the orderly continuity of social interactions possible. There are two kinds of government which can influence social subjects to make the sacrifices that are necessary for the functioning of the social system: material government and moral government. The material government is a *practical* enterprise, whereas the moral government is *theoretical*. This division of the society into the *practical* and *theoretical* governance has some crucial implications for both sociology and modern society. It enables Comte gradually to move his theory, and to a large extent modern society, towards the supremacy of the *theoretical* side. Since this dissertation is also concerned with the consequences of this shift for sociological theory, we need to first examine Comte's shift towards theory.

Comte thinks that interest in the question of government is related to the division of the temporal and the spiritual government introduced by early Christianity. According to Comte, the separation of spiritual and temporal elements is a critical historical turning point in the West. Comte believes that it was initiated in the Middle Ages. Before this period, "all the social systems of antiquity were characterised by the Confusion of the Spiritual and the Temporal powers" (Comte 1974e: 214). In the ancient societies of the East, like Egypt, temporal power "was only a derivative from and appendix to the spiritual power," whereas in the social systems of Greece and Rome the relation was reversed (Comte 1974e: 214).
A fully rational and scientific organization of modern society is now a realistic possibility because of the distinction introduced in the Middle Ages between temporal and spiritual government. Here is how Comte describes this great socio-historical transformation:

By this admirable division, human societies were enabled to establish themselves on a much larger scale, since it rendered possible the union under one spiritual government of population so numerous and so varied as to require distinct and independent temporal governments.... In the second place, within each separate society, the great political problem of reconciling the subordination to authority, essential for the maintenance of public order, with the possibility of reforming its course whenever this needs rectifying, was solved as far as possible by the separation legally established between moral government and material government. Submission, in clothing itself with the character of voluntary assent, ceased to be servile; while remonstrance was no longer hostile, at least within certain limits, since it rested on a moral power legitimately constituted. Before this period there was no alternative between abject submission and direct revolt. (Comte 1974e: 214-15)

It has already been noted that Comte, in accordance with this long intellectual tradition of the West, formulates the question of social order in terms of government. Comte considers moral government, which has a theoretical character, more vital for social cohesion. This is because the legitimacy of the temporal government rests on moral government in all societies. In Rome, for example, the constitution:

was originally as essentially theocratic as the Etruscan, and although it subsequently assumed so different a character, the patricians always considered their authority as a sacerdotal corporation the essential basis of their power. (Comte 1974e: 233)

In a sense, even though there are two distinct forms of government, one moral and another physical, society primarily relies on the moral government for its functioning, for as Comte puts it, “the temporal power only rules what cannot be governed spiritually” (Comte 1974e: 234).
Comte recognizes the historical significance of moral governance in western societies at the age of twenty, a conclusion that Foucault also reached much later. Comte also argues that in the course of the natural progress of human civilization, the temporal power continually decreases and the spiritual power advances towards "a purely civil hierarchy" (Comte 1974e: 234). In other words, the final state of society, which coincides with the positive stage, is reached when a civil society emerges and individuals voluntarily submit to the authorities as a moral obligation. They do so not because of some physical force, but rather because of a theoretical power.

According to Comte, the progress of human civilization can only be explained in terms of the progress of the human mind. His laws of development of human knowledge are at the same time the laws of societal development. In his third essay, "Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganizing Society," published in 1824, Comte announces his discovery of the three necessary and successive theoretical stages that the human intellect and knowledge must undergo. He identified these stages as "the Theological or fictitious state; the Metaphysical or abstract state; lastly the Scientific or positive state" (Comte 1974c: 134). *The System of Positive Philosophy*, first published between 1830 and 1842 as the *Cours de philosophie positive*, was mainly an extensive examination of the last stage.

Contrary to conventional belief, the laws of the three stages of development are not merely concerned with matters related to the history of ideas. They are actually laws of societal development, for there is a close relationship between mind and society. From the very beginning, Comte had his own distinct sociology of knowledge in addition to a general sociological approach. In 1825, in his essay on, "Philosophical Considerations on
the Sciences and Savants," Comte declares: "It is not sufficient to state the general proposition that the cultivation of the intelligence is only possible in society, and by society" (Comte 1974d: 186). He insisted that one has to show how certain forms of knowledge were linked to some specific socio-historical conditions, and this was what he sought to do with regard to the modes of thought that he classified as theological, metaphysical, and positive. Thus, we may say that the link between knowledge and socio-historical conditions is part of the modern episteme and predates Marx, who is usually considered to be the founder of the sociology of knowledge. It was 1846 when Marx wrote in *The German Ideology*, "Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life" (Marx and Engels 1970: 47).

For Comte, the relation of society and knowledge was reciprocal. In contrast to Marxist materialism, which is less concerned with explaining the material conditions of life in terms of intellectual superstructures, Comte’s sociology seems to insist more on the reciprocity of the two levels:

We should also recognise that the nature and extent of social relations at each epoch determine the character and rate of our spiritual progress, and reciprocally....[T]he formation of human science presupposes a complicated state of society. But, on the other hand, no real and coherent society can form and maintain itself except under the influence of some ideas, fitted to surmount the opposition of the individualising tendencies... (Comte 1974d: 186-87).

By stating that ideas have a significant role in shaping the society, Comte further developed the division between the temporal and the spiritual elements. If we consider his thesis that the spiritual element precedes the temporal element as far as the organization of the society is concerned, and will eventually diminish its significance substantially, we may regard Comte as a major architect of the modern episteme. Comte
opened the theoretical field in which Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* could be written.

With Comte, the human sciences began with the understanding of social organization in more epistemological terms. Man began to function as the “sovereign subject of all possible knowledge” (Foucault 1970: 310). At the same time, man had to be constituted as the object of knowledge. This second necessity gave birth to the modern human sciences (see Foucault 1970: 350). This dual conception of the man in the modern episteme is the crux of Comte’s system of thought. He formulates this view as an integral part of his theory of social organization and in relation to moral government.

Comte defines moral government as “the regulation of opinion, sentiment, and will, in a word, tendencies” (Comte 1974e: 227). He adds that in the last resort government “belongs to intellectual superiority and knowledge” (Comte 1974e: 227). This is another way of saying that social bonds and thereby social systems are essentially *theoretical*. In this context, Comte thinks the best method of critique is to theorize the most desirable form of moral (or theoretical) government.

Comte follows the historical development of society from a mainly material state to a predominantly epistemological one, i.e. one that is theoretically shaped. However, his conception of modern society as an epistemological social organization is essentially *paradoxical*. On the one hand, it seeks to explain and establish the modern social organization in terms of scientific knowledge of the world. On the other hand, he knows from the very beginning that positivism cannot by itself form a complete moral government. He therefore searches for a way of dealing with this problem. He decides to compensate for the deficiency of positivism by incorporating some non-positive element
into his religion of humanity. Thus, he introduces the most fundamental paradox of all into sociology. I will shortly elaborate on this paradox, but before that I should explain how Comte seeks to give moral government a positive character.

According to Comte, although moral government is *basically* theoretical, in many societies it also employs physical force. Comte seeks to make morality positive, and thereby more theoretical and less related to material government or physical force. It is part of his critical project to free social subjects from the domination of physical force and violence. In the positive stage, which is also the final stage of societal development, social systems are shaped more and more theoretically. But this is not all. Comte observes a fundamental transformation in the nature of the new social system. In the positive stage the two major components of the society, i.e., the temporal and the spiritual, are no longer forms of *power*, they are rather two types of *capacity* (see Comte 1974b: 82). Thus, moral government in the positive stage is a *theoretical capacity*. In this stage, knowledge creates social bonds in a completely different way from those of the previous stages.²

The significance of intellectual order as the basis for every other order is that all the material institutions of modern societies are “merely provisional” and constantly changing. Therefore a more stable form of order must be established in the realm of the intellect (see Comte 1975b: 212). According to Comte, “true science has no other aim than the establishment of intellectual order, which is the basis of every other” (Comte

---

² I need not emphasize how far ahead of other theorists, including his primary predecessor, Saint-Simon, Comte is in understanding knowledge as a source of social bonds unique to more advanced modern societies. Another point worth noting is the fact that he uses the term *capacity* instead of *power*, though he attributes the same function to both of them. As we will see in the last chapter, Foucault had the same problem with the term power and could not resolve this problem except by defining power as relation. I think Comte wanted to avoid a similar misconception of power as physical force when he chose to use *capacity* in relation to modern society.
1975b: 212). Thus, the value of a science is measured by its contributions to the orderly organization of social life because "in its nascent state every science is implicated with its corresponding art—and remains implicated with it..." (Comte 1975b: 196). This is why the social sciences cannot advance until they are related to practical affairs (see Comte 1975b: 197).

What is exactly the practical significance of science? Comte lists scientific modifications of nature to our own advantage as one of the practical consequences of the discovery of the positive laws of phenomena (see Comte 1974c: 138). Medicine, for example, is a practical art related to biology. But Comte definitely does not have an engineering attitude towards nature and society. In other words, he is not interested in technical reorganization of society according to a detailed scientific plan.

Comte is mainly interested in science as a political means for educating and shaping moral social subjects (see Comte 1974c: 137). In this regard, the practical significance of science is related to the sacrifice that each individual must make in order to live in society. Comte argues that knowing scientific laws can have a tranquilizing effect on people in the face of necessary pains. He rejects other forms of religious resignation because they justify "present suffering in view of an ultimate ineffable felicity" (Comte 1975b: 213). However, he believes that science can "calm our restlessness under pain by the conviction that it is by natural laws that they are rendered insurmountable" (Comte 1975b: 213). In addition to this function, the most significant practical relevance of the knowledge of natural laws is freedom from "all arbitrary personal dictation" (Comte 1975b: 214). In other words, for Comte, any other form of
moral government is an arbitrary exercise of power. The only effective form of critique is "a rational submission to the preponderance of the laws of nature" (Comte 1975b: 214).

Thus, both critique and governmentality presuppose a positive knowledge of the external world. That is to say, man should be the subject of all possible knowledge if he is to live a happy and orderly life. For this purpose, man must also know himself and be constituted as the object of knowledge, for "the art of man and the science of man are each of them indivisible..." (Comte 1874: 36). But Comte argues that the study of man presupposes a great deal of positive knowledge of the external world. He must become the subject of all possible knowledge before focusing his attention upon himself. It is only in the highest stage of scientific maturity that "he can, at length, apply the study of external nature to his own" (Comte 1975b: 286).

A Discursive Compensation for the Demise of Theology

Let us briefly summarize our discussion so far. We know that Comte understands society as a social system which cannot exist without two types of government: temporal and moral. And the moral government, which is superior to the temporal government and increasingly becomes more significant, is concerned with the governance of the individual, and has a theoretical character. For this purpose, according to Comte, we should know the laws of the external world as well as those of our own nature. This is not in order to change anything, but rather to "submit to these resistless fatalities in the best way we can..." (Comte 1975c: 327).

Now, the question for Comte is: how should individuals be persuaded to submit to positive laws? For Comte knows that scientific laws by themselves are not powerful
enough to make people organize their lives around them. As he observes, once medicine severed its affiliation with religion, it lost its power over individuals. According to Comte, for science to play a moral role in society it must become religious. He argues that:

This is easily verified by the fruitlessness of the efforts made by Western physicians to regulate our diet, now that it is no longer under the control of the old religious precepts. Men will not generally submit to any practical inconvenience on the ground solely of their personal health, where each is left to judge for himself... (Comte 1874: 36)

Comte’s whole critical project is based on the idea that science and its corresponding art are two separate fields that must be kept in close association with each other. In other words, science in itself is not a practical, political, or religious enterprise. But in order to be politically potent, it has to be relevant to human life. This relevance to human life is a precondition for science to assume a religious character. However, this does not mean that science itself is political or religious.

Comte began his project negatively, with a critique of what he called the Catholico-Feudal system and the anarchic condition of his time. Since theological thinking could no longer be considered a remedy for the evils of anarchism, he suggested positivism as the only acceptable basis for a moral government of individuals. But positivism can only achieve this goal by associating science and religion. This relation has always existed and will always exist as long as science remains morally and politically relevant.

How can positivism give a religious character to science? Comte believes that people should first be persuaded to submit to the laws of the external world. Then they will feel the “beautiful influence” of this submission upon their character (see Comte
In other words, Comte believes that science has an aesthetic moment that can manifest itself if society is organized according to its laws. Non-positive (traditional) religions were the aestheticism of theological knowledge. The Positive Religion, however, is the aesthetic manifestation of science. In other words, it is no longer possible in the age of positive science, to bring science under the control of theological religions. According to Comte, “for five centuries, society has been seeking an aesthetic constitution correspondent to its civilization” (Comte 1975b: 305). Since the last stage of human civilization is the positive stage, we should invent an aestheticism capable of propagating positive sciences. The beauty and poetic greatness of positivism will be easily acknowledged once we organize our society on the bases of scientific laws. But, the first step is persuading people to do so.

Comte believes that such persuasion begins with making science as relevant as possible to human beings. In the positive stage, the laws of the external world should be sought insofar as they are relevant to us. Otherwise, positivism will repeat the errors of theology and metaphysics, for:

if its investigations were allowed to assume an absolute character, and to recognize no limit, we should only be repeating in a scientific form many of the worst results of theological and metaphysical belief. The universe is to be studied not for its own sake, but for the sake of man, or rather, of humanity. To study it in any other spirit would be not only immoral, but also highly irrational. For, as statements of pure objective truth, our scientific theories can never be really satisfactory. They can satisfy us only from the subjective point of view—that is, by limiting themselves to the treatment of such questions as have some direct or indirect influence over human life. (Comte 1975c: 329-30).

To make science relevant to human life, Comte invents sociology as the most important of all positive sciences. Comte’s argument in favor of sociology is based on a conception of human being as speculative, affective, and practical. Imposing order on
human life creates a unified synthesis of thoughts, feelings, and actions (see Comte 1975c: 320-21). According to Comte, “the theological synthesis depended exclusively upon our affective nature” (Comte 1975c: 321). But this synthesis was never complete, because in the realm of practice where individuals had to work on the external world, affection was not capable of producing any result. As a result, the antagonism between practice and the intellect grew deeper and deeper through time.

On the other hand, by emphasizing the importance of the laws of the external world, positivism is able to harmonize the practical and the speculative tendencies with each other and with our affective part. According to Comte, sociology is the only positive science which is capable of synthesizing these three elements of human life and thereby of making science practically relevant.

First, let us see how sociology best satisfies the requirements of our speculative faculty. Comte hierarchically orders the sciences according to the complexity of their subject matters, the degree of their dependence on other sciences, the degree of their generality, and finally the remoteness from human beings (see Comte 1974d: 190). Based on these four criteria, Comte ranks the sciences in this manner: mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, physiology, and social physics (or sociology) (Comte 1988: 67). Since sociology follows all other sciences, in addition to its own scientific laws, it also depends on the findings of the other sciences (see Comte 1975b: 240). It relies most on the sciences closest to it. This means that a science like physiology, which is closer to human beings, plays a more significant part in sociological investigation. As far as the knowledge of the external world is concerned, sociology thus provides us with the most relevant and the most comprehensive scientific laws. In Comte’s words, “the science of
the society, besides being more important than any other, supplies the only logical and
scientific link by which all our varied observations of phenomena can be brought into one
consistent whole” (Comte 1975c: 317).

Sociology provides an *objective* basis for practice which is missing from
teological synthesis. Now, let us see how sociology makes science more relevant to
human life as far as the question of *practice* is concerned. Comte argues that human
activity is “always in its essence social,” and it is impossible to guide human activity
morally “without a previous study of society” (Comte 1874: 128-29). Once again, the
laws of our conducts and those of the external world are made harmoniously available
through sociology. However, this is still not enough for positivism to “supersede theology
in the spiritual government of humanity” (Comte 1975c: 322).

Moral government of the individual involves the successful synthesis of thoughts,
feelings, and actions. The goal of moral government is to overcome selfish feelings,
which are naturally present in every human being. This natural instinct should be
replaced by an *artificially* elevated social sympathy (see Comte 1975c: 337). Comte
believes that a stable synthesis of human life is possible only if the intellect becomes
permanently “the servant of the social sympathies” (Comte 1975c: 322). He solemnly
declares that his philosophical task consists in “the entire systematization of human life
on the basis of the preponderance of the heart over the intellect” (Comte 1975c: 313). In
other words, he seeks to inaugurate moral government at the level of the individual life
based on an objective knowledge which is subservient to social sympathies. A failure in
this task is tantamount to the rule of selfish instincts and anarchy. Sociology is Comte’s
crowning achievement with regard to this moral task.
We have already seen how sociology gives a human significance to practice and intellect. Now, we should examine how it helps the enthronement of the heart in life. The division of labor is a phenomenon that is more social than other aspects of human life. Adam Smith was concerned with the division of labor insofar as it was related with the economy. As Durkheim points out, Comte was “the first to have recognized in the division of labor something other than a purely economic phenomenon” (Durkheim 1933: 62).

Comte describes the division of labor as the basis of “our true unity,” for it is through the division of labor that we develop the capacity “to live for others” (see Comte 1874: 189; 1975c: 430). The division of labor, which is initially an economic practice, becomes a truly social and moral force as soon as:

Each family, when confined to a labor that directly produces what will satisfy a small portion of its needs, is forced to recognize the importance of other families to itself as well as its own usefulness to them. (Comte 1975c: 430)

Comte does not assume that the division of labor automatically leads to a harmonious synthesis of feelings and thoughts. On the contrary, it is “very apt to give rise to serious struggles” among families due to the natural selfish tendencies in every human being (see Comte 1975c: 430). Therefore, there should be a deliberate attempt to secure the predominance of the division of labor in the face of the combative selfish forces.

Comte reminds us that such an attempt in every society is made by government. Initially, government is based on the inequalities that are the direct result of the division of labor itself. Since there can be no society without government and no government without external power, “force is essential as the basis of every human society” (Comte
1975c: 433). But gradually government by force (temporal government) is replaced by spiritual government.

Spiritual government is based on the idea of “living for others.” But such a government has two interconnected conditions, one intellectual and another affective. Even though for such a purpose the intellect should be under the rule of the heart, it is “the intellect alone that can decide what habits should prevail, and even by what means they gain a footing” (Comte 1874: 189). Thus, sociology as a science can best study the division of labor and its consequences for society. It is in a position to tell us what kind of cooperative activity is most beneficial for all of us as a society.

After all the services provided by sociology with regard to practice, the intellect, and the heart, Comte does not rest his case with the inauguration of sociology as the most morally relevant science. He knows that sociology is a necessary condition for moral government, but it is not sufficient by itself. We still have to be either forced or convinced to follow the advice of sociology. And since Comte’s project is a critique of the temporal form of governmentality, he must find a way to convince the heart that a moral government based on sociological laws is the only way to secure happiness.

At this point Comte introduces his Positive Religion and corresponding system of education in order to appeal to the human heart. He argues that it is always the heart that rules over the intellect and practice. Later on, through Foucault, we will make a distinction between science and the discursive dimension of science. Then, we should be able to see how with this move Comte is able to make his sociology even more discursive. That is, in addition to discursive elements naturally present in sociological
theories, Comte consciously seeks to bring theory under the guidance of religious and educational doctrines.

Comte identifies education as "the chief function of the Spiritual Power" (Comte 1974e: 227). The separation of education and religion is not worthy of contemplation because it is a tool of the spiritual power to regulate active life. Thus, Comte declares, "As a general proposition it is clear that the supreme direction of national education, and the teaching of morals ought to be in the same hand..." (Comte 1974b: 100n). Once again, I have to underscore that the whole purpose of the Positive Religion and Education is to "persuade" individuals to associate with one another in a certain social division of labor.

Education begins from birth and continues into adulthood. The first phase of education, which lasts until puberty, is mainly spontaneous while the second phase must be systematic. The second phase, which targets both the youth and the adult population, consists "chiefly of a public course of scientific lectures on the essential laws of the various orders of phenomena" (Comte 1975c: 366). But to make science appealing to the heart of the public, Comte suggests that teaching of "even the most elementary point in mathematics" should be "thoroughly philosophic and consequently animated by a social spirit" (Comte 1975c: 367). Comte makes no apology for affiliating teaching with the traditional practices of oratory and rhetoric, for he believes this had to do with the natural hierarchy of the human faculties of feelings, the intellect, and action. In a word, he places art above science (Comte 1975d: 462).

Comte's interest in what we may call the discursive aspect of science can be traced back to his early writings. In his essay of 1822, after an extensive discussion of
observation as the only basis of positive political science, Comte emphasizes that politics also has another indispensable side. According to Comte, adoption of a political system requires the adherence of the masses. They will never be inspired by a scientific proof. Therefore any political change should involve some kind of work on people’s imagination (see Comte 1974c: 155-57). This is one reason why he seeks to make his project appealing to women and engages in an imaginary dialogue with Madame Clothilde de Vaux (see below). He realizes that science can only have ethico-political significance to the extent that it can address the political problems of social subjects in non-epistemological terms.

Even though Comte seeks a positive reorganization of the entire humanity, he is also realistic and believes that women and the working class are the social groups most open to his doctrine. Positivism recognizes the “legitimate” aspirations of both of these groups. For example, as a result of sociological investigations, it recognizes that no true synthesis of human life is possible without assigning “material labor its place in the drama of man’s life” (Comte 1975c: 425). But, in accordance with the spirit of his project, which is a moral reorganization of society, Comte argues that communism, though admirable as a critique, is not a remedy for the miseries of these two groups. According to Comte, communism proposes “to regulate the employment of property ... by a change in the mode of its tenure” (Comte 1975c: 356). Since any change in the temporal organization of the modern society must be preceded by a corresponding change in its moral government, we must begin with a moral education of the population.

Comte’s emphasis on the significance of sociology for the moral reorganization of society clearly shows that he conceives sociology as a politically potent science. This
means that sociology, in comparison to other sciences, has a stronger discursive tendency. And yet Comte attempts to make it more discursive by instituting an educational system that employs sociology in a philosophical fashion to construct public morality. I believe that modern education to a large degree has become an agent of what Comte would call a positive religion. While this claim should be substantiated by an independent study, here I intend to show that the kinship that Comte established between sociology and morality has left its mark on current theoretical trends in sociology.

Moral Government and the Formation of the Ethical Subject

The whole purpose of moral government is to exercise moral authority over the individual, in order to lessen the burden of the temporal government. Individuals are scientifically educated not as a preparation for official responsibilities with regard to the governance of the state. Rather, the aim is to persuade them to make changes in themselves. This is why, in spite of all the tributes that he pays to philosophers, women, and workers, Comte believes that “philosophers…must be excluded from government as rigidly as women” (Comte 1975c: 375). Temporal government is based on physical power while these groups are only moral agents that should first form themselves and then help others also to form themselves as ethical subjects who respect the laws of the division of labor.

If people do not wish to be governed by physical power, they should make themselves ethical subjects. This is the essence of Comte’s critical project. And no one has summarized this position better than Comte himself: “A well-known natural law of political action distinctly establishes that the only way to avoid being governed by others
is to govern oneself” (Comte 1974e: 223). This governing of the self by oneself is what
can be called the ethical formation of the social subject.

The formation of the social subject has remained one of the most fundamental
questions of sociological theories since Comte. He put the burden of the social order on
the shoulder of the subject. To this day sociological theory has not let the social subject
off the hook. The individual has only two choices: to be ruled by force, or to participate
in the division of labor in an orderly way which is dictated by the laws of the progress of
civilization. In this regard, Comte makes an illustrative comparison between the Russian
serfs and the French people:

A population must have reached a certain degree of temporal and spiritual
capacity before it can live under a system of social order which is not
based temporally on force and spiritually on blind faith. That man cannot
be emancipated who, as to the former, has not contracted certain habits of
order..., and who, as to the latter, does not possess, in sufficient degree,
knowledge and foresight. Such a man must continue in leading strings....
Thus, for example, the Russian serfs who in a time of pressing need, eat
the seed-corn, are still incapable of enjoying individual liberty....While in
France, where the entire mass of the nation can endure hunger without
touching the seed-corn, the people do not require to be governed (that is to

The moral government of the self should be conducted according to scientific laws,
mainly sociological, and in reference to the division of labor. In other words, sociology
and other sciences should guide the individual to his appropriate position in the system of
the division of labor. If the person is ethically formed, he will be happy with the function
he performs in the social system, for he has already learned to “live for others” as others
live for him. This is why Comte emphasizes that “the highest attainable state of social
perfection would manifestly consist in the fulfillment by each person of the particular
office for which he is best adapted by the general system” (Comte 1974e: 236).
To understand Comte’s theoretical zeal regarding the ethical formation of the social subject, we should consider it in the context of his conception of society. For Comte, society, like any organism, “is collective in its nature and individual in its functions,” with “each of its individual elements being naturally independent” (Comte 1975c: 421). The independence of the parts in their functioning is a source of constant threat to the whole, if they are not brought into a harmonious cooperation through a moral government. That is why each individual human being should be subjected to a scientific ethical intervention. Comte claims that by becoming positive, this formation of the ethical subject is no longer based on self-sacrifice. This is because the division of labor in which we are expected to participate is now scientifically planned (see Comte 1874: 39).

Based on his conception of society, Comte adopts an anti-“democratic” view of politics. He introduces himself as a Sociocrat and declares that “we Sociocrats are no more democrats than aristocrats” (Comte 1874: 1). According to the teaching of Sociocracy, individuals are servants of the Great Being and should serve it by bettering themselves (Comte 1874: 39). And since this task mainly involves a scientific knowledge of “man” as the basis of self-forming practices, Comte prefers to replace the term Sociology with the word Anthropology when “the word Anthropology shall be in more common and sounder use” (Comte 1874: 131). Thus, the highest science in the hierarchy of the sciences, i.e. sociology, is mostly concerned with “man” as a docile being which should be shaped according to the needs of a revered Social System.

To anticipate my later discussions of other theorists, I need to underscore here the fact that Comte is the first sociologist to see in the division of labor the possibility of a truly new World Order. This is why the Great Being in his Positive Religion is nothing
but the totality of humanity (see Comte 1874: 63). While he argues that moral education must first begin with women and the working class, it will extend successively to “the great family of Western nations,” to “the rest of the white race,” and finally to “the two other great races of man” (Comte 1975c: 319). It is the possibility of an international division of labor that makes such “a uniform system of education” for diverse populations a necessity (see Comte 1974e: 229-31). In other words, morality should gradually become universal and sociological theories should be prepared for erecting its scientific foundations. The ideal community for Comte is the universal communion of human beings:

Abstractedly considered, the jurisdiction of the spiritual power should acknowledge no other territorial limits than those of the habitable globe, if all portions of the human race had nearly reached the same state of civilisation, since a spiritual association is by its nature, evidently capable of an indefinite extension. (Comte 1974e: 228)

This universal system of ethics is what major theoretical social thinkers such as Durkheim, Mead, and Habermas followed and contributed to in different ways, without fundamentally violating its spirit. In Part II, I will argue that in Marx and Foucault we find an alternative ontological project to Comte’s epistemological ambition. The ontological approach to the question of social subject is a fruitful field of investigation that has not been given due consideration by sociologists. This dissertation can be read as an invitation into this domain.

At the risk of getting ahead of myself, I would like to make two remarks here. First, when I assert that critique is basically ontological even though it might have a strong epistemological orientation, I have something like Comte’s project in mind. In spite of all his epistemological emphasis on knowing the laws of the external world, for
Comte, in the final analysis, moral government rests on the ability to convince us of the political value of science in terms of its beautiful influence over our life. In other words, this aestheticism, which is capable of persuading the individual in favor of scientific governmentality, is rooted in her or his existential experiences and her or his mode of being.

Second, there is a danger in putting too much faith in the aesthetic power of science. It is always possible that once society has become scientifically based, we may become convinced of its beauty. However, it is equally possible that we may find the moral government of science aesthetically unacceptable. In such a case, science will be implicated in any backlash against scientific governmentality. That is to say, Comte’s critical project is based on a blind faith in science. He assumes that there will be no reaction against scientific governmentality. But, history does not seem to be on his side.

**Comte and Positivism**

Comte coined the term *positivism*, but he cannot be considered a positivist in the contemporary sense of the word. Kolakowski thinks that David Hume is the first philosopher who can, without any hesitation, be called positivist (Kolakowski 1968: 31). Since in a substantive debate there should not be much dispute with regard to who can rightfully claim a word, we may agree with Kolakowski that Comte is not a positivist in the modern sense of the word. In fact, Comte calls our contemporary notion of positivism “empiricism” and strongly rejects it. Anthony Giddens argues that Comte understands empiricism as a purely observational approach that does not recognize its theoretical embeddedness (see Giddens 1995: 142). However, as Raymond Williams notes,
positivism gradually became associated with empiricism to the extent that it is now "a swear-word, by which nobody is swearing" (Williams 1967: 239). Therefore, Comte's criticism of empiricism should not be explained away simply as a naïve conception of empiricism. Comte's interest in positivism is a critical interest, and therefore he is vigilant against anything that might diminish the role of this aspect of his positivism.

I have emphasized Comte's rejection of empiricism and the fact that he assigns a dominant role to theory in his positive philosophy in order to show the critical edge of his sociology. Herbert Marcuse identifies all forms of positivism with radical empiricism. Therefore, he argues that positivism cannot be critical because critique is a negative activity, and positivism cannot be negative since it cannot go beyond observation. Here is how he argues this point:

Dialectic in its entirety is linked to the conception that all forms of being are permeated by an essential negativity, and that this negativity determines their content and movement. The dialectic represents the counterthrust to any form of positivism. From Hume to the present-day logical positivists, the principle of this latter philosophy has been the ultimate authority of the fact, and observing the immediate given has been the ultimate method of verification...The protagonists of this positivism took great pains to stress the conservative and affirmative attitude of their philosophy: it induces thought to be satisfied with the facts, to renounce any transgression beyond them, and to bow to the given state of affairs. (Marcuse 1960: 27)

Comte tries to maintain the ability to criticize the existing state of affairs by making a sharp distinction between positivism that recognizes the significance of theory for science and empiricism that fails to move beyond observation of the facts. In short, the present-day pejorative connotation of the term "positivism" mentioned by Williams does not apply to Comte's version of positivism.
Today, positivism as a philosophy of science maintains that only empirically verifiable statements deserve to be considered scientific. Kolakowski summarizes the contemporary notion of positivism in terms of three rules. The first rule is the rule of phenomenalism. According to this rule, there is no radical distinction between the essence of things and their appearances. Therefore, any explanation of the invisible aspects of the objects should be conducted in terms of their manifestations alone (see Kolakowski 1968: 3-5). The second rule is the rule of nominalism. The real referents of scientific propositions are sensually observable concrete objects. Abstract scientific idealizations, such as those found in mathematics and other natural sciences, have no other value other than being helpful systems for ordering our experiences (see Kolakowski 1968: 5-7). The third rule is the rule that rejects normative statements as having any cognitive value. This rule means that there is no a priori relation between “is” and “ought.” In other words, one cannot deduce imperatives, or aestheticism of any kind from factual statements and vice versa. According to this rule, there is no logical connection between science and ethics or politics (see Kolakowski 1968: 7-8). The last rule of positivism maintains the essential unity of the scientific method, which means that regardless of the differences of their objects of the study, sciences are unified in their formulation of valid knowledge through theoretical reflection on experimental data (see Kolakowski 1968: 8-9).

The above conception of positivism, which is influenced by the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle founded by Ernst Mach, is mainly a radical empiricist philosophy of knowledge. Karl Popper, who resents being labeled a positivist, refers to positivism as “an over-emphasis on ‘sensually ascertainable facts’” (Popper 1994: 75). Whether this characterization of contemporary positivism is valid or not, it is important to note that
Comte has no inclination toward such a philosophy. We have already demonstrated that in Comte’s view science and morality are not completely separate entities although he has some difficulty in explaining the relation between the two. Even though he does not have the discursive understanding of science developed by Foucault, he clearly understands the discursive potential of science and attempts to use it to further his own political project. This is why he unequivocally declares that “Positivism consists essentially of a philosophy and a polity. These can never be dissevered—the former being the basis, and the latter the end…” (Comte 1975c: 317). This is fundamentally opposed to so-called “empiricist” objectivism.

Comte is not against empirical studies. In fact he traces the origin of positivism in Europe back to the introduction of empirical sciences into Europe by the Arabs (see Comte 1974b: 80-81, 90-91). It was because of the superiority of the sciences of observation that “several eminent members of the clergy, and among others two popes, went...to complete their education at Cordova by studying at that school sciences of observation under Arabian professors” (Comte 1974b: 81).

Positivism in Europe began with the methods of observation and continued to grow with them. Although it is a very important part of positive philosophy, methodical observation is not the only element of this philosophy. According to Comte, positivism attempts “to discover, by a well-combined use of reasoning and observation, the actual laws of phenomena” (Comte 1988: 2). Comte’s conception of positivism is a holistic approach which first moves from theory to empirical facts and then from facts to theory. This is how he justifies the necessity of the theological mode of thinking before positive sciences are developed. The human mind always functions in a total fashion and we
cannot demand that our minds postpone forming various understandings of the totality of the phenomenon under study until all the particular details are gathered (see Comte 1974c: 177). According to Comte, "those who expect that theory will be suggested by the facts do not understand what is the course necessarily pursued by the human mind" (Comte 1975b: 286).

The necessity to proceed from some kind of a priori theoretical construction explains why the theological stage had to come first. In the beginning people had to have some understanding of their environment before collecting any data through observation of the external world. Theological thinking provided them with some theoretical understanding of the world, and they gradually refined it by means of observation. This argument is basically true of understanding in the positive stage. Comte refers to empiricist philosophy as a logical dogma which fails to understand that scientific observation is first directed by some theory, and finally is also interpreted by some theory (Comte 1975b: 241).

Based on the above understanding of scientific practices, Comte alleges that, from a positive point of view, it is easy to see "how absurd in theory and dangerous in practice are the notions and declamations of the empirical school, and of the enemies of all social speculation..." (Comte 1975b: 247). We can better understand Comte's conception of positivism if we find out why he associates empiricism with anti-sociological tendencies. We should also know that, by postponing the development of sociology as a positive science, empiricism is the greatest obstacle to the final fulfillment of positivism. Thus, Comte sets himself the twofold task of instituting sociology as a positive science and perfecting positive philosophy.
Believing that no science is possible without theory, Comte argues that sociology can not be developed as a positive science because no positive theory has been formulated for the observation of social facts. As he puts it, in this field:

There can never be any lack of facts, for in this case even more than in others, it is the commonest sort of facts that are the most important, whatever the collectors of secret anecdotes may think; but though we are steeped to the lips in them, we can make no use of them, or even be aware of them, for want of speculative guidance in examining them. (Comte 1975b: 242)

Comte complains that the theological and metaphysical methods, which have been discarded in all other sciences, are still used with regard to social phenomena. One can only suspect that this is because they can provide social thinkers with some kind of explanatory theory where there is no positive theory available yet. Since social phenomena are “the most special, most complicated, and most dependent of all phenomena” (Comte 1988: 12), the observation of social phenomena must be guided by “a knowledge of the principal laws of earlier phenomena” (Comte 1988: 15). The task of constructing a positive theory for sociological observation cannot be assigned to any individual science. It involves a synthesis of the findings of all other science by a separate field which is not itself a science.

Comte believes that the positive sciences are in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand up to certain point, their progress depends on the division of intellectual labor. On the other hand, since scientific divisions are “at bottom artificial,” different branches of science need each other for further growth (see Comte 1988: 16-17). There is also a grave political risk in exaggerated scientific specialism. Comte wants to free politics and morality from the theological and the metaphysical system of thought. But, since the human mind by its nature is inclined towards theoretical unity, a remedy should be found
for the essential weakness of the division of scientific labor. Otherwise, theology and
metaphysics would triumph again. Comte cautions:

Let us hasten to remedy this evil before it becomes more serious. Let us
take care that the human mind does not lose its way in a mass of detail.
We must not conceal from ourselves that this is the essentially weak side
of our system, and that this is the point on which the partisans of
theological and metaphysical philosophy may still attack the positive
philosophy with some hope of success. (Comte 1988: 17)

The real solution to this problem is not a return to theological or metaphysical
philosophy, but rather in creating a new intellectual specialty. Comte proposes positive
philosophy as a new field of study that seeks to synthesize the findings of different
branches of science as a general system of thought. As such, positive philosophy will be
able to connect different sciences with each other, and thereby make it possible for them
to develop further. It will also take care of the moral needs of the masses of people by
providing them with a coherent theory of the world which can serve as a basis for ethical
formation of themselves. Finally, it can help sociology emerge as a positive science, by
systematizing scientific laws of less complicated phenomena as a provisional theory for

Let us return to the question of empiricism. Comte does not consider positive
philosophy a positive science (Comte 1988: 14). What does it mean to be a philosophy,
and not a science? According to Comte, a philosophy is not directly involved in the
observation of facts. Positive philosophy is the theoretical synthesis of scientific laws that
have been formulated in a combined process of theorizing and observation. Given this
multi-dimensional role of theory in the formation of positive philosophy, it seems natural
for Comte to say: “No logical dogma could be more thoroughly irreconcilable with the
spirit of the positive philosophy, or with its special character with regard to the study of
social phenomena, than [empiricism]" (Comte 1975b: 241). Comte accuses scientists of having “anarchic tendencies” that are as strong as those of any other group because of their extreme scientific specialization and their strangeness to positive philosophy (Comte 1975b: 215-16). This is why scientists should not be directly involved in the moral reconstruction of the society. This task is assigned to positive philosophers, women, and the working class (see Comte 1974c: 130n; 1975b: 332-33). The division of labor in socio-economic areas and in scientific fields is the source of great material and spiritual advancements. But, at the same time, it is accompanied with the grave evils of moral and social anarchy that cannot be compensated for except through positive philosophy. Such is the mission of positivism according to Comte.

Comte justifies his choice of the word “positive” for designating his thought in terms of various meanings which are implied by this term in all West European languages. For Comte, by being positive, a system of thought becomes real, useful, certain, precise, organic and relative. Comte acknowledges that the last quality is more “latent than the others,” but it is a real attribute of being organic (Comte 1975c: 332-33). Comte uses the term “organic” to distinguish his positive thinking from purely critical doctrines that only seek to destroy the fabric of social organization (see Comte 1974b: 116-19). Positivism is a constructive approach, and therefore it does not have to be absolute in order to attempt to reorganize society. To be constructive, we need to do something positive instead of merely criticizing. And that cannot be done unless we abandon the search for the “knowledge of ‘things-in-themselves’” and work with whatever laws of phenomena we have been able to establish thus far (see Comte 1875b: 116-19; 1988: 8-11).
In spite of their fundamental differences, conventional positivism and Comte's version of positivism have a common ambition. They both assume a totalizing position with regard to the question of knowledge. All other forms of knowledge, except those in agreement with their versions of positivism, are rejected as invalid, meaningless, or theological. Even Comte, who insists on the relative character of positivism, does not want to imply that the truth of positivism is relative with regard to what he labels as metaphysical or theological forms of knowledge. It is relative only in relation to future developments of the positive sciences. Comte refers to the total rejection of other forms of knowledge as the universal character of positivism. He says that this character of positivism is "indispensable for its final constitution" (Comte 1988: 12). I believe this is the main characteristic of both versions of modern positivism which distinguishes them from previous empirical studies.

As Comte himself observes there have been studies in the areas of the natural sciences since Aristotle and the Alexandrian school. But those practices could not be classified as "positive" because they peacefully coexisted with other forms of knowledge. Positivism was truly born in the seventeenth century when it "began to assert itself in the world, in evident opposition to theological and metaphysical spirit" (Comte 1988: 11). This totalitarian tendency of positivism, which distinguishes it from empirical studies per se, has become the focus of theoretical counter-movements. I will take up this point later in this part, and then in Part II...
Comte and Language

As noted above, Comte's positive philosophy also has a totalitarian tendency insofar as it rejects metaphysical thinking, but he tries to control and diminish this tendency through the introduction of ontological and discursive elements into his philosophy. His appreciation for the role of language and dialogue in human life must be understood as a preventive measure against positivistic totalitarianism. He does not systematically study the question of language, but he does make some general comments with regard to language. He offers a biological explanation of the sign as the elementary unit of language (see Comte 1975c: 417-19). For the purpose of my thesis, I do not need to discuss Comte's theory of the nature of language here. Rather, I should underscore Comte's interest in language as a moral force. This view is consistent with his interest in the discursive aspect of science.

According to Comte, "language provides religion with the general instrument by means of which the regulating faith is formed, transmitted, and applied" (Comte 1975c: 416). In other words, it is a medium of moral transformation. This is why he refers to language as a "great institution" that testifies to "the unselfish character" of social existence (see Comte 1975c: 416-17). Comte comes to the conclusion that a simple scientific statement should become "a real conversation" in order to function as a moral force (see Comte 1874:10-11).

Comte himself creates such a conversation in his Catechism of Positive Religion, which is written as a dialogue between Comte and his beloved companion, Madame Clothilde de Vaux. In this work, which was written in 1852, six years after Clothilde's death, Clothilde is Comte's imaginary partner in dialogue. He addresses her as "my
daughter,” and she in return calls Comte, “my father.” Coming from a Catholic background, Comte thinks it is appropriate to use these titles in a religious conversation.

The substantive content of The Catechism has no extraordinary significance. It is only a summary of the views that Comte expressed in his other writings. However, the very idea of choosing dialogue as a means of achieving moral unity is an indication that Comte is aware of the shortcomings of a purely epistemological approach to ethics and politics. He clearly envisions linguistic communication as a powerful political tool in modern society. Years before Mead and Habermas, he decided that the unity of humanity is a moral unity, based on positive knowledge, and to be achieved through language. Once again, I should emphasize that Comte not only coined the term sociology, he also shaped its future developments.

It is difficult to close a chapter on Comte without making a comment on his personal devotion to his work. For Comte, positivism was a deep-rooted personal project in which he sought a remedy to social vices of his time and his own life. He organized his personal life in accordance to the principles of his Positive Religion, and regularly performed rituals suggested in his calendar of positivist heroes which he proposed should replace the Christian calendar (see Ferré 1988: x). This devotion was not without its own price. And as Ferré mentions, at the time of his death in 1857, Comte was suffering from very poor health because his “conservative enemies in the intellectual ‘establishment’ had retaliated for his philosophic criticisms with economic weapons, and for a considerable period in his life he was kept narrowly from destitution only by a subscription raised for him through the organizing efforts of John Stuart Mill” (Ferré 1988: x).
Critical thinkers have neglected Comte’s interest in the critical aspect of positivism while positivists have ridiculed the religious and political aspect of his project. Hence, he has been mostly dismissed for being either a “conservative” or an “unsophisticated” positivist. These largely unfounded accusations have damaged Comte’s sociological legacy a great deal. Had Durkheim not adopted Comte’s project, Comte’s intellectual labor would have been in vain.
Orientation

According to Islamic mysticism, things which exceed their boundaries will be transformed into their opposites. This seems to be the case with Durkheim, who pushes the critique of traditional moral organization of society to its outer limits and ends up advocating scientific moral discipline as the basis of a healthy society. The age of the Great Confinement, as Foucault calls it, which extended from the middle of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century, discovered the docility of the body and attempted to "discipline" the body in the houses of confinement such as the school, the army, the factory, and the hospital (see Foucault 1965: 38-64; 1977: 137). But once the bodies were disciplined, the nineteenth century looked after the lost souls that were continuously growing in number. These souls, who in their madness had become a threat to the society and a danger to themselves, were thought to need a moral discipline. Following Comte, Durkheim argued that old religions were once legitimate answers to the moral needs of traditional societies, but that modern societies now had to formulate their own moral responses.

Durkheim assumed the task of scientifically theorizing the moral nature of social life as a precondition for its moral discipline. Comte had already established that society was a moral entity, but he did not believe science by itself was sufficient to serve as a
basis for social order. This was why he founded the Religion of Humanity as a complement to the positive philosophy.

Talcott Parsons suggests that every element in Durkheim's thinking is "rooted deeply in the problems immanent in the system of thought of which Comte was so eminent an exponent" (Parsons 1968: 307). He thinks that the only major difference between the two is the fact that Durkheim had little interest in social dynamics. Durkheim focused his attention on the question of social statics and the problem of order, while Comte was also preoccupied with the question of social evolution (see Parsons 1968: 307-308n).

It is true that the conceptual basis of Durkheim's theory is more or less that of Comte. However, I intend to show that he breaks from Comte's theory of society in a very fundamental way. In addition to his highly sophisticated empirical studies, which can hardly be found in Comte's work, Durkheim transforms Comte's project into a fully positive science. In his preface to the first edition of his first book *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim unequivocally states that his intention is to establish a positive science of morality, which does not merely deduce morality from science:

> The moralists who deduce their doctrines, not from some *a priori* principle, but from some propositions borrowed from one or more of the positive sciences like biology, psychology, sociology, call their ethics scientific. We do not propose to follow this method. We do not wish to extract ethics from science, but to establish the science of ethics, which is quite different. (Durkheim 1933:32)

Indeed, there is a profound difference between an ethics that is *extracted* from science and a science of ethics. This is exactly what distinguishes Durkheim from Comte. In the course of my discussion, I will show that Durkheim's insistence on an objective study of morality should not be understood as an attempt to separate these two domains.
Durkheim’s science of morality is not a declaration of the separation of the Church and the State. It is not intended “to give to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar and to God that which is God’s.” On the contrary, it is an assertion of their strong connection. The connection that Comte established between the two was more artificial than that established by Durkheim. The very fact that Comte consciously and deliberately introduces discursive elements such as language and the dialogue with women and workers into his critical project is because he does not believe that one can logically and directly extract ethics from science. As I will explain toward the end of this chapter, Durkheim fundamentally agrees with this position; however, he is not willing to leave the question of ethics completely for arbitrary and rhetorical discursive practices. That is why he connects ethics and science through a negative process.

Durkheim’s concept of the conscience collective may also be viewed as another indication that he establishes a link between science and ethics. Most translators find it difficult to translate into English. For example, George Simpson, the translator of some of Durkheim’s major works, says, “the usual translation of Durkheim’s term, consciousness, seems to me to be a gross misinterpretation of Durkheim’s meaning” (Simpson 1933: ix). Simpson and many other Durkheim’s scholars use the term conscience itself in their English translation of Durkheim’s works. I will show that in the final analysis Durkheim understands social solidarity in terms of the conscience collective. Since it is also the basis of organic solidarity (though in a different form than for mechanical solidarity), all forms of solidarity become essentially moral. Therefore, we may argue that Durkheim consciously exploits the ambiguity of this term, which can mean either ‘collective consciousness’ or ‘collective conscience’ (or both simultaneously). This relation between
'consciousness' and 'conscience' characterizes Durkheim's sociological project which seeks to be "the science of ethics."

Durkheim's project is also a critical project. He is interested in helping to move society away from traditional forms of governmentality. However, the critique and governmentality that constitute his project are fully positive. That is to say, for Durkheim, ethics and critique should be based on scientific findings. He criticizes other social thinkers for not realizing that scientific understanding of society is logically prior to any constructive ethico-political reform. This was the reason why Saint-Simon failed in his reforms and why Comte tried not to make the same mistakes:

Saint-Simon was wrong to pass suddenly to questions of application. Even before his ideas had undergone all scientific elaboration it required, he wanted to draw practical conclusions from it, an entire plan of social reorganization. Thus he placed the cart before the horse. He hurried too much; he wanted, for utilitarian ends, to prematurely use a hastily constructed science. And in fact what differentiates Comte and Saint-Simon is that the former separated science from practice more clearly, but without disinteresting himself in the latter—at least during the better part of his career. (Durkheim 1958: 146)

The separation that Durkheim suggests between science and morality is temporary, for he does not want to undertake a project of social reform before the science of society is advanced enough. As he puts it, "If we separate carefully the theoretical from the practical problems, it is not to the neglect of the latter; but, on the contrary, to be in a better position to solve them" (Durkheim 1933: 33).

The social disintegration that followed the collapse of the feudal system gave rise to two antagonistic reactions: revolutionary and counter-revolutionary conservative movements. Comte referred to the intellectual representations of these two as the negative and the retrograde doctrines (see Comte 1974b: 118-19). The negative doctrine
was engaged in a never-ending critique without any plan for the reorganization of the society. The advocates of the retrograde doctrine such as Louis de Bonald and Joseph de Maistre, on the other hand, were interested in reviving the old system (see Zeitlin 1981: 39-60). Comte and Durkheim founded sociology as a middle ground between these two trends. It was a discipline that was fully adjusted to the modern episteme, in which “man” had a central place both as a critical subject and as an object of moral government. The social sciences were to control the forces of critique by subjugating “man” to the new form of positive moral discipline.

Since a return to the old religious order of feudalism was not considered to be an option for modern industrial society by most modern thinkers, the first task was to criticize traditional religions to the point of their destruction. Both Comte and Durkheim attended to this task, but it was Durkheim who pursued this project most vigorously. Yet, as we will shortly see, in an ironic way, the more he destroyed religion, the more he revived it in another form. In other words, instead of moving beyond religion, he found himself increasingly attracted to it.

Durkheim is a very self-conscious writer, especially with his use of terminology. For example, he opens the first chapter of The Division of Labor with an elaborate argument on why he prefers the word function to words such as aim or object for his purpose, emphasizing that he wants to use a term which does not entail a prejudgment as to whether the consequences of the division of labor are intentional and preconceived or not (see Durkheim 1933: 49). He adopts the same approach in the beginning of Suicide, where he methodically defines this term (Durkheim 1979: 41-46; see also 1995: 304). However, in many instances he uses metaphorical and rhetorical language, and
occasionally, he appeals to religious imagery. This tendency can only be understood in
light of his strong religious and humanist orientation. D. F. Pocock, a translator of some
Durkheim’s essays, makes the following observation with regard to his writings:

Durkheim has suffered much at the hands of would-be admirers, but the
fault does not lie entirely with those who have ascribed to him certain
notions which, in fact, he did not hold. Although for the most part he is a
careful writer, he is liable to be carried away on occasion by metaphor,
and even in those parts of the present work which were not intended for
oral delivery he is from time to time given to rhetoric, and especially
anthropomorphism. (Pocock 1974: xxxiii)

However, I do not think Durkheim should be blamed for his style of writing. As Pocock
acknowledges, since he is a very careful writer, we should at least initially assume that he
deliberately chooses to express himself the way he does. My task here is to understand
why, for example, he uses a highly religiously charged language. He describes society in
religious terms so frequently and so consistently that it is impossible to explain them
away as a slip of his pen. We should assume that he means what he says.

Durkheim is one of the most talented scientific minds that ever became attracted
to sociology. A crude positivistic representation of his work, as dispassionate and
objective descriptions of the social state of affairs, is a disservice both to him and to the
history of sociology. I intend to show that Durkheim’s theory is a complex and consistent
system of thought which is based on a unique conception of society as an independent
and real moral authority which demands the respect of all its members. My thesis is that
Durkheim as a theorist of society had the highest admiration for Society. And this
veneration for Society is perhaps the major source of the anthropomorphism that Pocock
attributes to Durkheim. Thus, I chose to open this chapter on Durkheim with a piece of
mystical wisdom in order to capture the spirit of his theory.
A Typology of Society

Durkheim, like all classical sociologists, witnessed the rapid and fundamental social changes that accompanied the industrialization and urbanization of Western Europe. He tried to capture these transformations in terms of dichotomous ideal types: mechanical society and organic society. Before him, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer had already proposed different societal classifications. According to Comte, the three stages of civilization correspond to three stages of the development of the human mind: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive states. Spencer distinguished two types of society: military and industrial societies.

In every classification, the criterion according to which cases are categorized is the most important element. It is the true representation of the basic characteristics in which separately classified types both differ and resemble each other. For example, in Comte’s classification societies are distinguished according to the prevailing forms of knowledge in them. In other words, knowledge is considered the most important constitutive element of societies that exist in each category. Differences in forms of knowledge also set societies apart.

Durkheim does not object to Comte’s classification as strongly as that of Spencer. As we have already noted, Comte put a lot of emphasis on the role of the division of labor in the progress of the sciences. But Comte seeks to contain the division of labor beyond a certain point through the physical force of government and the synthetic character of philosophy, because he is worried that it may lead to social disintegration if not controlled. Durkheim, who totally ignores religious aspects of Comte’s theory of
social organization, rejects governmental control and philosophical syntheses as viable 

sources of social integration. With regard to the role of government (the state), he argues 

that:

The government cannot, at every instant, regulate the conditions of the 
different economic markets, fixing the prices of commodities and services, 
or keeping production within the bounds of consumptionary needs, etc. All 
these practical problems arise from a multitude of detail, coming from 
thousands of particular circumstances which only those very close to the 
problems know about it. Thus, we cannot adjust these functions to one 
another and make them concur harmoniously if they do not concur of 
themselves. (Durkheim 1933: 360)

In other words, physical force or government is not the source of social cohesion. Society 
is based on bonds that are more fundamental.

With respect to the philosophical unity of science and mind, Durkheim believes 

that any philosophical synthesis of the sciences will be artificial and therefore not very 
effective. According to him, science is a way of living, not merely a set of propositions or 
laws that could be condensed in a logical fashion. Scientists are engaged in many 
conscious and unconscious practices that can never be expressed in symbols, which are 
means of philosophical communication. Thus, he concludes that philosophical syntheses 
of the sciences are incapable of creating social bonds because:

There is too great a chasm between detailed researches which are their 
backbone and such syntheses. The tie which binds these two orders of 
knowledge together is too slight and too loose, and, consequently, if 
particular sciences can take cognizance of their mutual dependence only 
through a philosophy which embraces all of them, the sentiment of unity 
they will have will always be too vague to be efficacious.

Philosophy is the collective conscience of science, and, here as 
elsewhere, the role of the collective conscience becomes smaller as labor 
is divided. (Durkheim 1933: 364)
In short, government and philosophy\(^1\) cannot give rise to social cohesion in the first place. Secondly, according to Durkheim, even though the division of labor destroys the traditional forms of social bonds, it is fully compatible with the new emerging bonds in advanced industrial societies and therefore there is no need to contain it.

Durkheim treats Spencer’s conception of the social bond more harshly than he does Comte’s, even though Spencer’s concept of *cooperation* on the surface seems very close to Durkheim’s notion of *solidarity*. To understand Durkheim’s theory of social solidarity and his general theory of society, it is necessary to see why he relentlessly attacks Spencer’s views on the nature of social organization. The criterion that Spencer uses to classify different types of society is *cooperation*. In other words, for him, cooperation is what gives rise to social life and sustains it. Traditional societies are mainly based on military forms of cooperation while modern societies depend on industrial forms of cooperation. One type of society is based on *force* and the other on *economic exchange*. Apart from similarities between notions of *cooperation* and *solidarity*, concepts of *force* and *economic exchange* are also used by Durkheim to explain the origin of society and the modern industrial division of labor. Then we need to ask why he devotes a great part of *The Division of Labor in Society* to refuting Spencer’s position.

I need to pause here to underscore the significance of Durkheim’s rejection of Spencer’s theory. I should remind the reader that my aim is to show that sociological theory has assumed a profound ethico-political character through Comte and Durkheim.

---

\(^1\) It is true that Durkheim rejects philosophical syntheses as the source of social cohesion, but this does not mean that consciousness and mind have no significance in this regard. On the contrary, he wishes to replace artificial philosophical syntheses with *one* single science of morality which may serve as the only basis of social solidarity in modern societies.
This unique feature of sociology is that it appeals to political actors for discursive political practices. As we will shortly see, Durkheim’s theory rejects Spencer’s theory of social cohesion in spite of the apparent similarity between the two. Durkheim’s criticism is more directed towards how Spencer explains cooperation. From Durkheim’s point of view, Spencer’s theory is flawed because it leaves out morality, which is the essence of social life. In this context, Durkheim’s criticism of Spencer should be viewed as a discursive turning point that reorganizes theoretical practices in sociology.

To give the reader some idea of the significance of this event, and Durkheim’s place in the history of sociology, let us hear from some sociological insiders. Raymond Boudon and François Bourricaud, who are thoroughly familiar with the history of French sociology, make the following observation with regard to Spencer’s influence after Durkheim’s criticisms:

Neither did it [Spencer’s influence] survive among professional sociologists, particularly in France, especially because of the successful critique of Durkheim. Like Weber, Simmel, or Tarde, Spencer, in France, is a victim of the orthodoxy of Durkheim and his followers, an orthodoxy which they succeeded in imposing on French sociology over a long period of time. (Boudon and Bourricaud 1989: 367-68)

The situation in America is not much more favorable toward Spencer, though his name is mentioned among the classical sociologists. There can be no comparison between him and Durkheim as far as theoretical developments in North America are concerned. In 1933, when American sociologist George Simpson translated Durkheim’s *De la division du travail social* into English, he declared that:

[T]here would seem to be no reason for being interested in Spencer’s ideas after Durkheim has finished with them. In truth, there is scarcely any mind, even though tutored in logic and philosophy, as Spencer’s certainly was not, that can stand up under the attack of Durkheim’s incisive
thinking on topics to which he has given keen attention.² (Simpson 1933: x)

Durkheim’s work has had more impact than that of Spencer in the history of sociology. Had it not been for Durkheim’s defense of positivistic sociology, perhaps Marx and Weber would have enjoyed a much greater influence among sociologists. He successfully made sociological explanations independent of the psychological approach. Functionalist schools in both sociology and anthropology are strongly influenced by Talcott Parsons and Bronislaw Malinowski’s readings of Durkheim. In fact, Parsons places Durkheim in a very high rank in intellectual history and science in general. He claims, “Only a very select few among the figures in intellectual history have contributed so crucially—at such a significant juncture—to the development of scientific culture” (Parsons 1974: lxiv).

Thus, Durkheim’s reasons for distinguishing his theory from that of Spencer can serve our purpose very well. By refuting Spencer’s ideas, in spite of their apparent similarities with those of his, Durkheim is indicating to us that the notion of morality is crucial for his social theory. Given the centrality of Durkheim’s work for sociology, we can see why sociology and politics are so closely associated with each other by many contemporary theorists.

Durkheim’s critique of Spencer’s social typology is directed against his understanding of cooperation as the essence of society. He argues that cooperation is itself made possible by society. Individuals must first come together by other mechanisms. Durkheim explains the genesis of society in terms of “mechanical causes and impulsive forces such as affinity of blood, attachment to the same soil, ancestral

² However, one may argue that the later functionalist school of thought still exhibits some interest in Spencer’s work. For example, Talcott Parsons in his “Introduction” to The Structure of Social Action in an
worship, community habits, etc." (Durkheim 1933: 278). According to Durkheim, society is an association of individuals and should not be confused with their cooperation. Once an association is formed, it might be transformed by individuals’ cooperative activities, but this does not mean that the forces that made it possible give their place to cooperation. According to Durkheim, what makes society possible and secures its continuity are essentially of the same nature. Therefore, Durkheim insists that the distinction between association and cooperation should remain intact (see Durkheim 1933: 278-79).

The existence of independent individuals is a precondition of cooperation. If we assume that individuals are free and solitary before entering cooperative activities, then we cannot explain why they should tolerate the loss of independence and great personal sacrifices that accompany elementary forms of society in the name of some possible future benefit. Thus, social life could not have arisen out of the deliberate and rational choices of individuals. As Durkheim puts it:

Collective life is not born from individual life, but it is, on the contrary, the second which is born from the first. It is on this condition alone that one can explain how the personal individuality of social units has been able to be formed and enlarged without disintegrating society. (Durkheim 1933: 279-80)

In other words, individuation is itself a social process; otherwise it would have led to the disintegration of the collective life. There is no danger in the expansion of individuality and further differentiation in the division of labor. As Durkheim insists, individual life has the mark of social life and it "has nothing anti-social about it because it is a product of society" (Durkheim 1933: 280).

ironic way suggests that Spencer’s work is still relevant for sociological theory by asking: Who reads Spencer? (see Parsons 1968).
Before turning our attention to Durkheim’s explanation of social cohesion, let us see how Spencer explains social cohesion in terms of cooperation. According to Durkheim, Spencer believes that the social life of less advanced civilizations “was necessitated by the state of war in which lower societies chronically live” (Durkheim 1933: 193). To succeed in war, “it is necessary for all the individual forces to be concentrated in a permanent manner in an indissoluble union” (Durkheim 1933: 193). Thus, individual wills had to be suppressed and absorbed by a superior will, i.e. government. Spencer refers to a society formed in this fashion as a military society. However, Durkheim argues that this is a modern prejudice that had no place among primitive people. They did not need to restrain the individual in this artificial and despotic manner, because “at that moment of history, it [the individual] did not exist” (Durkheim 1933: 194).

I will shortly explain how Durkheim proves that individuals did not exist in early societies. At this point, let us consider Spencer’s explanation of industrial society. It was already mentioned that there is a great deal of superficial similarity between his conception of cooperation in industrial societies and Durkheim’s notion of the division of labor. Durkheim acknowledges that Spencer is correct in attempting to explain social organization of modern societies in terms of the division of labor. However Durkheim contends that “if Spencer has justly noted what the principal cause of social solidarity in higher societies is, he has misunderstood the manner in which this cause produces its effect, and accordingly, misunderstood the nature of the latter” (Durkheim 1933: 200).

According to Durkheim, Spencer’s understanding of the division of labor as a spontaneous process may logically imply that social contracts are at the basis of industrial
societies. However, Spencer does not wish to revive this "absurd postulate of Rousseau," as Durkheim calls it, by theorizing a fundamental social contract for industrial societies. He is thus forced to explain social solidarity in terms of particular contracts that are initiated by individual interests. This is how Durkheim reads Spencer and comments:

Since it is spontaneous, it does not require any coercive force either to produce or to maintain it. Society does not have to intervene to assure the harmony which is self-established. Spencer says that each man can maintain himself through his work, can exchange his produce for goods of another, ... without obeying the direction of society in its totality. The sphere of social action would thus grow narrower and narrower, for it would have no other object than that of keeping individuals from disturbing and harming one another. That is to say, it would have only a negative regulative force.

Under these conditions, the only remaining link between men would be that of an absolutely free exchange.... But the normal form of exchange is the contract. (Durkheim 1933: 200-201)

The normal exchange is contract, but Spencer knows that a comprehensive contract among all members of a society, if anything, is more in line with the spirit of military societies. In such societies, people are characterized by a unanimous consensus, which, in turn, represents the identity of all consciences (see Durkheim 1933: 201). Thus, Spencer has to theorize a "vast system of particular contracts which link individuals as a unique basis" for higher societies (Durkheim 1933: 203). According to Durkheim, these particular contracts, which are supposed to have been formed by self-interested individuals, cannot be the basis of social solidarity. As he puts it: "For where interest is the only ruling force, each individual finds himself in a state of war with every other since nothing comes to mollify the egos, and any truce in this eternal antagonism would not be of long duration. There is noting less constant than interest" (Durkheim 1933: 203-204).
In short, according to Durkheim, cooperation that results from force and fear of war, or in the form of economic exchange and pursuit of selfish interests can give rise to social life. However, he would rather employ the term social solidarity in place of cooperation. This change of terminology does not have any particular theoretical value, except as Richard Swedberg mentions, social solidarity had already become a kind of ideology in French society by the turn of the century (see Swedberg 1982: 57-58). It might be safer to refrain from attributing an ideological function to this concept, and consider it a key term within the general episteme of the time which played a discursive role in Durkheim’s theory.

Swedberg notes that Solidarity was so popular with the scientists in the Third Republic that even some “biologists and zoologists, for instance, proclaimed Solidarity to be not only an ideal but also a scientific fact” (Swedberg 1982: 58). He adds that the unstable political conditions of the Third Republic and its continuous socio-political conflicts convinced the French liberal bourgeoisie that it could play a key role in the transition to advanced capitalism. They could do this by replacing the ideology of individualism with something more collective, and thereby fending off the threat of the working class. Thus, the French bourgeoisie formulated the doctrine of solidarity (see Swedberg 1982: 57-58).

Even if we accept that socio-political conditions of the Third Republic had something to do with the idea of solidarity, we cannot still reduce its theoretical formulation to those conditions. In Chapter VIII, I will argue that ideological critique is

---

3 After Napoleon III, eight different political regimes ruled France, three of which were monarchies, two empires, and three republics. Durkheim lived under the Third Republic and actively participated in its educational reforms.

4 Durkheim also refers to this interest in solidarity by other writers (see Durkheim 1933: 38).
not an adequate approach for the study of scientific developments. Durkheim, like Comte, and like most other great sociologists, does tell us that his scientific labor is related to practical issues. But, this does not mean that the scientific explanations that he offers are merely deceptions and wishful statements. An analysis of scientific discourse should not dismiss a theory simply for being an expression of some political interests. There is indeed a relation between science and politics, but as I will show more fully in Part II, it has to be established at the level of discourse. In other words, we seek to show the political potential that a scientific theory can be charged with regardless of its epistemological value.

As far as Durkheim’s sociology is concerned, we want to know how he constructs his theory and how this method of theoretical construction exercises a certain political power. Had it not been for strong discursive and scientific support, the idea of “solidarity” would not have had any considerable political impact on people who live in the age of science. It is therefore necessary to understand the scientific and discursive bases of Durkheim’s sociology without making any ideological accusation.

Durkheim wants to show how social solidarity can explain social life better than cooperation can explain it. Unlike cooperation, social solidarity does not assume the existence of independent individuals prior to social life. Let us make no mistake about it, people as biological organisms precede collectivities. However, according to Durkheim, they are not yet individuals with distinct personalities. How does he prove this claim? He begins by asserting that “social solidarity is a completely moral phenomenon which, taken by itself, does not lend itself to exact observation nor indeed measurement” (Durkheim 1933: 64). Social solidarity must be of a moral nature because the collective
life involves mutual sacrifices that no power, except one which enjoys moral authority, can effectively demand (see Durkheim 1933: 228). Being a positivist, Durkheim needs "some objective element that allows an exact determination, and if possible, measurement" (Durkheim 1933: 37). Durkheim finds in law and suicide two "external" indices, or "visible" symbols that make the scientific study of social solidarity possible. In two of his four major writings, Durkheim commits himself to the study of social solidarity in light of these two phenomena. In The Division of Labor, he studies social solidarity through law while in Suicide he explains it by analyzing the available data on suicide.

Since law is the very organization of social life, it can reflect "all the essential varieties of social solidarity" (Durkheim 1933: 65). Durkheim believes that social customs are the basis of law, and it is only in a pathological state that they are in conflict (Durkheim 1933: 65). Based on these assumptions, Durkheim analyzes laws of different ancient and modern societies, including Hebrew, Roman, Chinese, and modern French law. Since every "precept of law can be defined as a rule of sanctioned conduct," he classifies different laws according to the types of sanctions associated with them, into two general categories: repressive laws and restitutive laws (Durkheim 1933: 68-69).

There are some laws that demand that the violator suffer and be deprived of something he enjoys, for example, his fortune, his honor, his liberty, or his life (Durkheim 1933: 69). This type of sanction is characteristic of penal law, which is the only law found in primitive societies. But in advanced industrial societies sanctions have a restitutive character. They consist "only of the return of things as they were" (Durkheim 1933: 69). Their purpose is not to inflict pain on the criminal, but rather to
compensate society, as much as possible, for the loss it has suffered by restituting relations to their normal state, as they were before the violation of law. Durkheim calls the type of social solidarity that corresponds to repressive laws *mechanical solidarity*, and that which manifests itself in the form of restitutive laws *organic solidarity*.

Even though every written law both prescribes obligations and attaches sanctions to them, upon a close examination of repressive law, we realize that in most cases it does not explicitly state obligations. It clearly spells out punishments without formally stating the duties of each individual. For example, “it does not command respect for the life of another, but kills the assassin” (Durkheim 1933: 75). Durkheim argues that this is because the rules concerning one’s duties are *strongly* inscribed in every conscience, and “they are object of no contest, because everybody feels their authority” (Durkheim 1933: 75). Had they not been strongly engraved in people’s consciences, their violation would have not been considered a punishable crime. That is why everybody is offended by the act of violation to the same degree, and why everybody has the right to punish the violator. This is basically how Durkheim proves the existence of the *collective conscience*, which he defines as: “The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society” (Durkheim 1933: 79). According to Durkheim, the collective conscience is a *sui generis* entity that cannot be reduced to material and biological phenomena, or even to a social function. I will return to this point later.

The fact that a criminal offence gives rise to a general and collective reaction proves that the *individual* does not exist in societies wherein repressive law is the only kind of law.
Restitutive law, which seeks to return things to their normal state (instead of being expiatory), is a sign of a different form of social solidarity that Durkheim calls *organic solidarity*. It shows that society is organized in a new fashion and therefore is sensitive to different issues, to be regulated by the new form of law. Unlike the repressive law, which is diffused, the restitutive law is specialized. A whole series of intermediary bodies are created between society and the individual to deal with every case in an appropriate and proportionate manner. As Durkheim puts it:

> Since rules with restitutive sanctions are strangers to the common conscience, the relations that they determine are not those which attach themselves indistinctly everywhere. That is to say, they are established immediately, not between the individual and society, but between restricted, special parties in society whom they bind. But since society is not absent, it must be more or less directly interested, it must feel the repercussions. Thus according to the force with which society feels them, it intervenes more or less concomitantly and more or less actively, through the intermediary of special organs charged with representing it. (Durkheim 1933: 115)

In short, between society and the individual, new relations are established, which must be governed by new types of rules. Durkheim divides these relations and the corresponding rules into negative and positive rules. The negative rules are those which govern the private spheres of each individual life, e.g. that everyone’s rights are protected, and no one is allowed to disturb another person’s life. However, Durkheim argues that the solidarity which results from such negative relations is not a real solidarity, for there is no reason why people should respect the rights of one another. For negative solidarity to even come into existence, there must first exist a positive solidarity. Durkheim mentions that even achieving peace and security is not a good reason for
making necessary sacrifices inherent in social life,\(^5\) for war "has its interest and its advantages" (Durkheim 1933: 120). In other words, negative relations cannot give rise to social solidarity by themselves. In reality, "for man to recognize and mutually guarantee rights, they must, first of all, love each other, they must, for some reason, depend upon each other and on the same society of which they are a part" (Durkheim 1933: 121).

However, modern society does not consist of only negative relations. There are also positive relations, which have a cooperative character. Durkheim analyzes civil, commercial, procedural, administrative, and constitutional laws as different instances of positive rules governing cooperative relations. He wants us to conclude that since there are no repressive sanctions attached to the rules governing cooperative relations, these relations are themselves of value to modern society. After all, the objective of restitutive sanctions is to restore relations to their normal state after being disrupted (see Durkheim 1933: 127-132). The division of labor, which is a logical precondition of positive relations, is a source of social solidarity.

Thus, through an analysis of the repressive and the restitutive laws, two types of solidarity are proven to exist: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Since this analysis also distinguishes the sources of each type, we must also be able to describe the social life which corresponds to each type of solidarity. Durkheim identifies the collective conscience as the source of mechanical solidarity, and the division of labor as the source of organic solidarity. He notes that the two types of society specified according to their forms of solidarity are constructed as ideal types. This may not correspond with real societies in all respects (see Durkheim 1933: 174).

\(^5\) We should take notice of the fact that Durkheim rejects both the utilitarian theory of Spencer and the social the contract theories of Rousseau and Hobbes. Here without mentioning Hobbes, Durkheim is
According to Durkheim, mechanical solidarity is "exclusively the result of resemblance" (Durkheim 1933: 174). There is no individual differentiation in a mechanical society. It is an aggregate of human organism which can be characterized as the horde (Durkheim 1933: 174). This society is formed by a repetition of similar segments, like an earthworm that is a linear juxtaposition of similar rings. Hence, no part can perform a function without all other parts doing the same thing (see Durkheim 1933: 181, 191). This homogeneity gives rise to the collective conscience and its religious character, not the other way around (Durkheim 1933: 179). Mechanical society is a community of beliefs and sentiment to which one must conform as long as he is a member of that society. However, since each member has in himself "all that social life consists of," he can easily break away from his society (Durkheim 1933: 151). In other words, he can survive under solitary conditions easier because he already has everything he needs for survival. That is to say, he is not too dependent on others. Accordingly, it is also very easy to join such a society as long as one does not deviate from its collective conscience in a radical way. A mechanical society is not based on the division of labor, and its parts are not interdependent. It should be noted that the empirical validity of Durkheim’s views on different types of solidarity is not an issue in my discussion here. I am rather concerned with Durkheim’s theoretical position within the critical project of positivism.

Thus, in comparison to organic solidarity, mechanical solidarity is weaker. But, how could dependence of individuals upon one another give rise to solidarity in the first place, let alone a strong solidarity? We have already noted that Durkheim did not accept Spencer’s notion of “cooperation” as the source of social cohesion, even though it was refuting the Hobbesian approach to the question of order (see Parsons 1968).
merely another name for “the division of labor.” He objected that Spencer had not understood the true essence of the division of labor. By analyzing different restitutive laws, he intended to prove something more than the mere existence of the division of labor in society. The existence of the division of labor in modern societies has never been a matter of dispute. We have already seen that the reason Durkheim decided to study different forms of law was the fact that being a moral phenomenon, solidarity could not be observed and studied directly. He had to show only that there are various observable restitutive laws and that their objective is to guarantee the continuity of certain cooperative activities. In other words, two inferences may simultaneously be drawn from the existence of these laws: first, the division of labor is a characteristic of modern industrial societies; second, it has a moral significance and that is why law seeks to reinforce it.

How can the division of labor be intrinsically moral? To answer this question, we need to first examine how the horde-like societies of mechanical solidarity were transformed into structurally- and functionally-differentiated societies. Durkheim argues that the two types of solidarity cannot coexist together. They “develop in inverse ratio to each other” (Durkheim 1933: 192). Therefore, for the division of labor to emerge, it is necessary that the collective conscience first be weakened.

According to Durkheim, empirical observations show that “The division of labor varies in direct ratio with the volume and density of societies” (Durkheim 1933: 262). If the population is more concentrated, and there are more social units, the division of labor must necessarily be greater. Historically speaking, three social developments made societies denser and more voluminous: the invention of agriculture, the emergence of
cities, and faster means of communication (see Durkheim 1933-257-60). Durkheim calls the concentration of people “dynamic density,” and states that: “Dynamic density can be defined, if the volume remains constant, as a function of the number of individuals who are effectively engaged not only in commercial but also moral relationships with each other” (Durkheim 1982: 136). In *The Division of Labor* Durkheim suggests that physical density is an *exact* expression of moral density, but in his *Rules* he retracts this position saying that the former is only an *auxiliary* element of the latter (cf. Durkheim 1933: 257 and 1982: 136, 146). This later position is consistent with our reading that, for Durkheim, the division of labor is intrinsically a moral phenomenon, and it does not derive its moral power from anything else. Walter L. Wallace puts Durkheim in the same category with Malthus with respect to the determining role of population growth (see Wallace 1969: 18-19). However, if we consider Durkheim’s sociological theory as a whole, we realize that for him, demographic changes do not by themselves *determine* the moral character of the division of labor. They are only negatively involved in it by diminishing the power of the collective conscience.

After establishing an empirical relationship between the concentration of population and the division of labor, Durkheim attempts to explain it in light of Darwin’s theory:

Darwin justly observed that the struggle between two organisms is as active as they are analogous. Having the same needs and pursuing the same objects, they are in rivalry everywhere. As long as they have more resources than they need, they can still live side by side, but if the number increases to such proportions that all appetites can no longer be sufficiently satisfied, war breaks out, and it is as violent as this insufficiency is more marked...(Durkheim 1933: 266)
Since human beings are subject to the same law, conflict also grows among them as their societies become denser and more voluminous. As a result of this unavoidable conflict, the moral power of the collective conscience begins to fade away, which means that people now have enough freedom to organize their societies around something other than common beliefs and sentiments. Durkheim thus declares: “The division of labor, is then, a result of the struggle for existence” (Durkheim 1933: 271). The division of labor makes the survival of a greater number of individuals possible, because those who are weak in some areas can still contribute to the society in other areas.

In sum, people at first are forced to form social unions for mechanical reasons such as kinship, attachment to the same soil, and so forth. Once organized as a social unit, people’s resemblance gives rise to a common conscience among them which strongly holds them together until they no longer have moral respect for one another as a result of the conflict that physical density has created among them. It is only then that they differentiate themselves individually from one another in order to avoid the existing social conflicts. However, as the division of labor is being formed as a repercussive measure, the “moral sentiments” of the prior society preside over its elaboration (see Durkheim 1933: 280). In other words, the division of labor does not enjoy a moral power because it has some utilitarian value or prevents social conflict. It is moral because a moral force, i.e., the collective conscience, though weakened, precedes and presides over it.

Talcott Parsons notes that there is initially a certain difficulty in Durkheim’s position with regard to the relation between the two types of solidarity. On the one hand, it seems that organic solidarity can only grow at the expense of the collective conscience,
on which mechanical solidarity is based. On the other hand, the division of labor, which
gives rise to organic solidarity, derives its moral character from the collective conscience.
Parsons believes that Durkheim’s later work suggests a broad solution to this problem.
This solution, which I believe can also be noticed in *The Division of Labor*, is that
morality, in the final analysis, is the result of the collective conscience. However, with
mechanical solidarity, as Parsons indicates, it is “implemented *directly* in collective
action,” while “in the case of organic solidarity the common element lies at a more
general level and must be implemented in relation to different functions in the system
through norms that are not identical for different sections of the collectivity” (Parsons

I mentioned that even in *The Division of Labor*, it is clear that the division of
labor has its own “*intrinsic morality*” (Durkheim 1933: 228). This is why Durkheim
dismisses the types of economic cooperation that lack any moral character as being
“simple relations of *mutualism*” that can even be found among people who are enemies.
For the same reason that they are void of morality, he insists that criminal and other
harmful activities are also not integral to the division of labor. Rather, they are
“differentiation pure and simple” (Durkheim 1933: 353). That is to say, the mutual
relationship that can be found between harmful occupations and the rest of social
institutions do not constitute a new form of functional specialization. In such cases,
certain elements seek to live at the expense of others without positively contributing to
their functioning (see Durkheim 1933: 354). In other words, the division of labor is
*inherently* a moral phenomenon, and any evidence to the contrary must be understood as
either unrelated to it, or a pathological state of the division of labor (see Durkheim 1933: 271).

In this section I showed how Durkheim proved empirically through his study of law that all forms of social life are essentially moral. In the following sections I will further examine this observation and discuss its ethico-political implications with regard to sociology as a positive science.

Suicide as a Symptom

While each society's laws manifest the existence and the characteristics of its form of social solidarity, suicide may signify that social solidarity is in a pathological state. For Durkheim, crime and suicide are normal phenomena of all societies up to a point, and they only become pathological and thereby threaten the healthy functioning of the society after their number increases beyond that point (see Durkheim 1979: 370; 1982: 98). While it is impossible to establish a rigid line of normality for crime and suicide, Durkheim believes that the high number of suicides in modern and advanced industrial societies is an indication that the rate of suicide has reached a pathological stage (see Durkheim 1979: 370). Before examining the implications of this fact for modern societies and social theory, let us consider Durkheim's theory of suicide and its significance in relation to his general sociological theory.

I have argued that for Durkheim, society is moral in nature, and cannot maintain a healthy state of existence without the moral discipline of its members. However, the lack of moral discipline puts the society in a state of crisis that results in an increase in the number of suicides. Too much moral discipline has the same effect.
empirical verification of this thesis. Most students of Durkheim make reference to this work only in the context of his interest in *method* (see for example, Giddens 1972: 32). It is understood as an attempt to help to establish sociology as a science by proving that suicide, which seems to be one of the most individualistic phenomena, can only be explained as a social fact that is caused by other social facts. In short, it is simply an application of *The Rules of Sociological Methods*, or a separately published appendix to it. For example, Margaret Gilbert argues that many would agree with Jack Douglas that the study of suicide, especially Durkheim’s work on suicide, had a great importance in establishing sociology as an independent discipline (Gilbert 1989: 45).

I have no intention of denying the methodological significance of *Suicide* for the emergence of sociology as a scientific discipline. Rather, from a discourse-oriented perspective I wish to argue that the primary significance of studies on suicide, including Durkheim’s, is related to the general episteme of the modern human sciences. These sciences seek to shape modern society on the basis of new scientific disciplinary rules. From Durkheim’s *Suicide*, it is clearly evident that “suicide” had been an obsession of scholarly reflection in Europe for some time before his study.

Before Durkheim’s formulations of altruistic, egoistic, and anomic suicides, morality and suicide were closely associated with each other. For example, Montesquieu “contrasted Roman suicide, which was a form of moral and political behavior, the desired effect of a concerted education, with English suicide, which had to be as an illness since ‘the English kill themselves without any apparent reason...in the very lap of happiness’” (Foucault 1965: 212-13). In modern societies, suicide is not caused by too much moral discipline; it is rather the manifestation of a kind of moral madness, or what Durkheim
will call “anomie”. According to Foucault, in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, almost a century and half after the houses of “the Great Confinement,” madness became the focus of attention as the manifestation of “the strange contradiction of human appetites” (Foucault 1965: 209). Here is how Foucault describes the name given to one aspect of this new phenomenon:

Sadism is not a name finally given to a practice as old as Eros; it is a massive cultural fact which appeared precisely at the end of the eighteenth century, and which constitutes one of the conversions of Western imagination: unreason transformed into delirium of the heart, madness of desire, the insane dialogue of love and death in the limitless of presumption appetite. Sadism appears at the very moment that unreason, confined for over a century and reduced to silence, reappears, no longer as an image of the world, no longer as a \textit{figura}, but as language and desire. And it is no accident that sadism, as an individual phenomenon bearing the name of a man, was born of confinement and, within confinement...

(Foucault 1965: 210)

It is also no accidental coincidence, nor a simple scientific discovery that Durkheim identifies “anomic suicide,” which is caused by a lack of moral discipline, as a form of suicide peculiar to modern societies and their new methods of institutional confinement.

We should evaluate the significance of Durkheim’s \textit{Suicide} in light of massive socio-cultural developments such as the practices of confinement and the rise of the idea of moral discipline. The whole purpose of establishing sociology as a scientific discipline, for Durkheim, is to treat suicide, which is essentially a moral problem, \textit{scientifically}. Durkheim believes that a real problem can only be solved by a science that is capable of treating it as a real and objective thing. That is why \textit{Suicide} should first establish the real existence of the moral entity which causes suicide, and then show that it can be scientifically studied. In this regard, referring to \textit{Suicide}, Durkheim emphatically asserts that:
But it seems hardly possible to us that there will not emerge, on the contrary, from every page of this book, so to speak, the impression that the individual is dominated by a moral reality greater than himself: namely, collective reality... Thus it will appear more clearly why sociology can and must be objective, since it deals with realities as definite and substantial as those of the psychologist or the biologist. (Durkheim 1979: 38-39)

All writings of Durkheim have one objective: to establish that society is a moral reality which must be scientifically studied in order to discover the disciplinary rules that ought to be observed for it to maintain a healthy life. This is the purpose of *The Rules of Sociological Method*, which is obviously his most methodologically oriented book.

Towards the end of this work he writes:

To summarize: to most of the attempts that have been made to explain social facts rationally, the possible objection was either that they did away with any idea of social discipline, or that they only succeeded in maintaining it with the assistance of deceptive subterfuges. The rules we have set out would, on the other hand, allow a sociology to be constructed which would see in the spirit of discipline the essential condition for common life, while at the same time founding it on reason and truth. (Durkheim 1982: 144).

From this passage it is evident that sociology is above all a means of ensuring the moral discipline necessary for the survival of society. Thus, *Suicide* should not simply be read as a methodological verification of the scientific status of sociology, a verification that has a high epistemological value, because it proves the fruitfulness of the sociological approach even with regard to such an apparently personal matter as suicide. The primary objective of *Suicide* is to study the moral problem of “suicide,” and secondarily to enhance sociology’s scientific reputation.

For Durkheim, the significance of suicide is that it shows that society is the moral authority which governs individuals. This is because the rate of suicide increases beyond its normal level only when society’s authority is either too strong or too weak. Below I
will show how Durkheim defines morality and what he means by defining society as a moral authority, but first we should consider how, from observing a pathological rate of suicide, he makes inferences with regard to the moral nature of society.

It must be noted that Durkheim’s whole argument in *Suicide* is based on a definition of “suicide” which he calls “an objective definition.” The methodological function of this objective definition is to include those forms of death that, within other cultures, are not considered self-destruction. For example, in many cultures an act of heroism which exposes someone to death is not considered an act of suicide. But Durkheim thinks from a scientific point of view that there is no definitional difference between such heroism and an Indian women’s suicide after their husbands’ death, or someone who kills himself because of depression. Thus, he suggests the following as an objective definition for suicide:

> [T]he term *suicide* is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result. (Durkheim 1979: 44)

Accordingly, a soldier’s death in line of duty may be as much a case of suicide as the death of a political activist on a hunger strike.

Once he defines the concept of suicide, Durkheim begins to analyze statistically the available data on suicide from several European countries. By accounting for different non-social variables, one by one he rules out all psychological, biological, and natural factors. For my purpose, it is not necessary to consider Durkheim’s discussion of each of these factors. However, I would like to call attention to the fact that in addition to rejecting non-social factors as the cause for suicide, he also rules out all other social
factors, save the society itself. In other words, he does not simply prove that suicide cannot be explained in terms of non-social facts; social facts also cannot explain it.

At first, it seems that “religion” is the only social fact that Durkheim considers capable of explaining suicide. But a closer reading of *Suicide* reveals that religion is related to suicide insofar as it is the most essential characteristic of society, not a system of beliefs. First, let us see how he develops his argument after he rules out non-social factors. After controlling other variables, Durkheim finds a correlation between individuals’ religious affiliations and the rate of suicide in their respective communities. He finds out that the rate of suicide among Catholics is less than that of Protestants while among Jews it is generally less than either of the two groups (see Durkheim 1979: 152-54).

Since suicide in this case cannot be understood in terms of any other factor but religion, Durkheim abandons all the existing classifications of suicide and tries to construct his own typology. By analyzing suicide rates among Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, he formulates the notion of *egoistic suicide* as resulting from a lack of social integration (see Durkheim 1979: 209). Durkheim attributes the low rate of suicide among Jews to their “especially rigorous discipline,” which is a consequence of being a very small minority, “facing the hostility of the surrounding populations” (Durkheim 1979: 156). With regard to Catholics and Protestants, he believes that the only essential difference between them is that “the second permits free inquiry to a far greater degree than the first” (Durkheim 1979: 157). The significance of this is that while the Catholic’s faith is mainly constructed for the Catholic by society as represented by the Catholic Church, “the Protestant is far more the author of his faith” (Durkheim 1979: 158).
Durkheim is quick to note that freedom of thought in Protestantism is itself a product of social conditions, and we should not think that it is the real cause of suicide. People do not think unless they have to, and that will be only when the traditional social stock of knowledge has lost its legitimacy. Thus, Durkheim concludes that even though suicide increases with a society’s interest in knowledge, knowledge “does not determine this progress.” Jews generally have a higher level of education than both Catholics and Protestants, but their suicide rate is lower (Durkheim 1979: 168). Therefore, a suicidal individual must have already gained an excessive degree of freedom from the society. In other words, egoistic suicide springs “from excessive individualism” after society’s authority loses its legitimacy (see Durkheim 1979: 209).

As I noted, for Durkheim, it is not “religion” which influences suicide rates, it is rather, the moral authority of the society that plays this role. To prove that “if religion preserves men from suicide only because and in so far as it is a society,” Durkheim decides to study the effect of other societies, namely, domestic and political societies (Durkheim 1979: 171). After statistical analyses of suicide rates for single, married, and divorced individuals and of the available data for periods of great political activity, he formulates the three following propositions:

*Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of religious society.*
*Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of domestic society.*
*Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of political society.*
(Durkheim 1979: 208)

Thus, what saves the individual from committing egoistic suicide is his moral discipline, and this, in turn, is a function of society’s moral authority over him.

But, if too little social integration leads to suicide, too much of it also produces the same effect. *Altruistic suicide* is a second type of suicide, which Durkheim attributes
to a very powerful societal control over the individual. It is exactly the opposite of egoistic suicide. Where the egoistic suicide is the result of a very strong sense of individualism, altruistic suicide is marked by a total absence of individual personality. Durkheim distinguishes three variations of altruistic suicides: obligatory altruistic suicide, optional altruistic suicide, and acute altruistic suicide (see Durkheim 1979: 217-27). Altruistic suicide is mainly a characteristic of traditional societies, but it can also be found in some subgroups of modern societies, for example, among military personnel.

With respect to suicide in traditional societies, Durkheim only relies on anthropological and historical narratives. But, since suicide among military populations has been statistically documented, he is able to support his thesis empirically with respect to altruistic suicide. He controls for individual and even social factors such as age, alcoholism, marriage, and the harshness of military life, and finds out that none of these factors can account for the higher rate of suicide among military personnel. Therefore, he concludes that military suicide is a form of altruistic suicide. It is an indication that “the profession of a soldier develops a moral constitution powerfully predisposing man to make away with himself” (Durkheim 1979: 239).

The third type of suicide, anomic suicide, results from lack of regulation in the individual’s life (Durkheim 1979: 258). In relation to suicide, Durkheim refers to three types of anomie: economic, domestic, and conjugal. All of these forms of anomie represent a state of crisis in which no regulations constrain individual behavior. Once again, we should note that, according to Durkheim, sudden economic fluctuations, the death of one’s spouse, and divorce cannot be considered the cause of suicide. They only put the individual in a new situation for which he has no rule of conduct. In other words,
there is no moral authority to govern him, and when society loses its control over individuals, passions and desires reign over them:

So far as the appetites are not automatically restrained by physiological mechanisms, they can be halted only by a limit that they recognize as just. Men would never consent to restrict their desires if they felt justified in passing the assigned limit...So they must receive it from an authority which they respect, to which they yield spontaneously. (Durkheim 1979: 248-49)

In sum, the anomic can only be accounted for in terms of society’s moral authority. No other force, be it psychological, natural, or even social can cause an individual to kill himself. Durkheim speaks of the role of social or religious factors in suicide. However, by this he means that society itself is the moral power, not “religion” in the conventional sense of the word. In egoistic suicide, for example, it is the total absence of the society from the individual’s life that causes him to commit suicide. In anomic suicide, society’s weak presence creates the same effect. In the case of altruistic suicide, on the other hand, a powerful presence of society leads to suicide, not “religion.”

According to Durkheim:

Religious conceptions are the products of the social environment, rather than its producers, and if they react, once formed, upon their original causes, the reaction cannot be very profound...Consequently, it is also in this society that we must seek the cause for this special suicide...(Durkheim 1979: 227)

In a footnote which is usually ignored, in part, because Durkheim himself does not emphasize it, Durkheim mentions a fourth type of suicide that he refers to as fatalistic suicide (see Durkheim 1979: 276n). According to Durkheim, it is a form of “suicide deriving from excessive regulation, that of persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline” (Durkheim 1979: 276n). Durkheim argues that this type of suicide has “little contemporary importance” (Durkheim 1979:
Contrasting Durkheim’s position here with that of Foucault on the disciplinary character of modern society, we may take notice of the differences between the critical projects of these two thinkers. For Durkheim, too much freedom and lack of an appropriate scientific discipline (or governmentality) are the malaise of modern society, while for Foucault, the opposite is the case. Foucault thinks that our age is the age of confinement and disciplinary measures based on discursive regimes of scientific truths. That is why, unlike Durkheim, he is more interested in critically examining the nature of scientific truths.

Society in Durkheim’s Work

Through a reading of *The Division of Labor* and *Suicide* I showed that social solidarity, and consequently society, are essentially moral. Because of its critical role in Durkheim’s theory (and thus my approach to it), his notion of society needs to be more closely examined.

Durkheim has been criticized for having an ontological and anthropomorphic conception of society. He insists, for example, that social facts and society are real things with their own independent existence (Durkheim 1933: 342; 1982: 59). He also frequently speaks of society in a highly anthropomorphic language with phrases such as: “it is society, which, fashioning us...”; “society aspires to...”; “society highly regards...”; “society formally expresses its interest in...” (see Durkheim 1979: 212; Boudon & Bourricaud 1989: 372).

William Outhwaite alleges that Durkheim did not really believe in society as an ontological entity, but rather that social facts and society had explanatory roles for him
(see Outhwaite 1983: 140). He supports his position through Durkheim’s assertion that “society can exist only in and by means of individual minds, it must enter into us and become organized within us” (Durkheim 1995: 211). He insists that Durkheim, under the influence of a false epistemological theory, embraces the concept of “society” only for explanatory purposes:

In general, Durkheim gives more attention to the explanatory role of social facts than to their ontological status. He is more committed, in other words, to holistic patterns of explanation than to a holistic ontology of the social. Occasionally he flirts with the latter, but mostly because he believes (mistakenly) that this is required to establish the case for the possibility of explaining social facts by other social facts. (Outhwaite 1983: 140)

Following David Papineau, Outhwaite argues that it is fully legitimate to be an individualist on the “what” question, which is an ontological issue, and yet be a holist on the ‘why’ question, which is an epistemological matter (see Outhwaite 1983: 139-40).

Outhwaite is correct in recognizing the explanatory value of “society” for Durkheim. However, it is not enough to say that it is perfectly legitimate to believe both in ontological individualism and in epistemological holism, for it is even more consistent to be a holist both ontologically and epistemologically. Contrary to Outhwaite’s allegation, Durkheim’s interest in “society” as a distinct entity is more than a simple flirtation. His argument makes it appear that Durkheim pulls “society” out of thin air without offering any proof for its independent existence. In fact, in almost all of his writings, Durkheim, in one way or another, makes some argument for the independent existence of society and social facts. In The Rules, for example, he establishes the independent existence of social phenomena in light of their coercive power (Durkheim 1982: 52), that is, the moral force exerted by these entities is part of the proof for their
external existence. I will shortly cite more examples from Durkheim’s writings where he reasons for the existence of society.

If one is interested in Durkheim’s work at the level of its scientific validity, which Outhwaite seems to be, he cannot ignore all of the evidence that Durkheim offers of the real existence of society by misreading a statement (see below page 111). He must show why he does not find Durkheim’s arguments scientifically credible. But, since the interest of my own study in Durkheim’s work is at the level of discourse, I neither ignore them, nor challenge their scientific status. Rather, I seek to describe them and show the significance of the idea of “society” for Durkheim’s critical project. In other words, I intend to show that it is not only a “perceived” explanatory need that leads Durkheim to formulate his notion of society. Rather, society is the moral force that must be taken into account by anyone who, like Comte and Durkheim, seeks to advance socio-political changes that increase individual freedom. I will also show that in addition to the explanatory role of “society” that Outhwaite emphasizes, there are, according to Durkheim, other epistemological and political reasons that make “society” significant for both sociology and for science in general.

But first, let us see how Durkheim establishes society as a real entity. As early as his Ph.D. dissertation, The Division of Labor, Durkheim was convinced that society is a *sui generis* reality beyond the individual. Through an analysis of crime, he concludes that the collective conscience has an independent existence. He argues that an act is condemned not because it is a crime, but it is a crime because it is condemned (Durkheim 1933: 81). And the reason for its condemnation is not simply because it disrupts serious social and individual interests, but rather, because it is “an offense against an authority in
some way transcendent" (Durkheim 1933: 85). He supports this thesis by an examination of the nature of punishment. Durkheim shows that punishment is essentially a passionate reaction that is meant to make "the culpable suffer particularly for the sake of making him suffer" (Durkheim 1933: 86). With regard to primitive societies, he then adds:

It [punishment] often extends further than the culpable and reaches the innocent, his wife, his children, his neighbors, etc. That is because the passion which is the soul of punishment ceases only when exhausted. (Durkheim 1933: 86)

According to Durkheim, punishment in both primitive and modern societies is a "work of vengeance" (see Durkheim 1933: 85-96). The passionate character of punishment shows that what is offended in the act of crime is not some economic or material interest. If that was the case, a reasonable compensation could be sought instead of vengeance. For example, it is universally true that a murderer will be punished more severely than someone who is responsible for a stock-market crash. Materially speaking, the effects of the crash are more harmful to the society and many people may even die as a result of the subsequent economic hardships. But since murder of even one person is considered a great moral evil, it gives rise to a strong moral outrage and brings upon the murderer a very harsh reaction (see Durkheim 1933: 72).

In short, crime offends a moral authority because it is only morality which is passionate and material compensation cannot satisfy it. And that is why penal law in every society is essentially religious. At this point, Durkheim makes the assertion that from the world of experience one cannot point to any moral authority beyond the individual other than the collective conscience:

Crime is not simply the disruption even of serious interests; it is an offense against an authority [that is] in some way transcendent. But, from
experience, there is no moral force superior to the individual save collective force. (Durkheim 1933: 85)

The question of crime aside, Durkheim also proves the existence of society on the basis of the existence of moral phenomena in general. He argues that no one else has been able to explain moral phenomena scientifically. For example, Durkheim rejects Kant's theory of morality for two reasons. First, it is only a "game of concepts" with no empirical basis (see Durkheim 1933: 411-412). Secondly, Kant equates morality with a sense of duty while desirability is also another intrinsic aspect of morality (Durkheim 1974: 36).

As George Simpson mentions, Durkheim does not make a sharp distinction between morality and ethics (Simpson 1933: x). Upon a close reading of his work, we may even say that he uses these two words and religion interchangeably. In The Division of Labor Durkheim asserts that the domain of ethics "consists of all the rules of action which are imperatively imposed upon conduct, to which a sanction is attached, but no more" (Durkheim 1933: 53). In other writings he further elaborates on this definition and explains that the idea of authority is an absolutely necessary element of morality (see Durkheim 1972: 98; 1974: 36). That is to say, "moral rules are invested with a special authority by virtue of which they are obeyed simply because they command" (Durkheim 1974: 35-36; also see 1995: 209). There is also a sui generis desirability in the moral act that appeals to us (Durkheim 1974: 36). Desirability and obligation are two contradictory aspects of morality, which can best be designated by the term sacred (Durkheim 1974:

---

6 This is a quotation from Durkheim's introduction to the first edition of The Division of Labor in Society. He omitted this part, which mainly deals with the metaphysical aspect of ethics, in the second and subsequent editions (see Simpson 1933: vii). This omission of a largely metaphysical discussion shows that Durkheim gradually becomes increasingly convinced that sociology can address ethical questions by itself, and we do not need other types of moral reflection for ethico-political purposes.
And as it will be noted below, *sacredness* is the essence of religious phenomena according to Durkheim. Thus, morality and religion (which cannot be reduced to its established institutional forms) are essentially the same in Durkheim’s work (see Durkheim 1995: 215).

Based on the above definition of morality, Durkheim argues for the existence of society with the following logic:

By examining the contemporary moral consciousness (...and the moralities of all known peoples) we can agree upon the following points: (i) The qualification ‘moral’ has never been given to an act which has individual interests, or the perfection of the individual from a purely egotistic point of view, as its object; (ii) if I as an individual do not constitute *in myself* a moral end, this is also true of other individuals...; (iii) from which we conclude that, *if a morality exists*, it can only have as object the group formed by associated individuals—that is to say, society, *with the condition that society be always considered as being qualitatively different from the individual beings that compose it* (Durkheim 1974: 37).

Thus, through an analysis of systems of morality and penal law Durkheim independently establishes the existence of society as a moral authority. In *The Rules* he reaches the same conclusion through a different route. He first argues that there is a category of facts which “consists of manners of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual, and are invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him” (Durkheim 1982: 52). He mentions that we may not ordinarily feel their pressure; however, the moment we decide to ignore these facts in our conduct, we feel their resistance against our will (see Durkheim 1982: 52-53). That is to say, they externally constrain us, which means they exist independently from the individual (see Durkheim 1982: 59).

After he proves the externality of social facts, Durkheim argues that the constraint which is “the characteristic trait of every social fact” is due to “the fact that the individual
finds himself in the presence of a force which dominates him and to which he must bow” (Durkheim 1982: 143). And that force is nothing other than society.

Thus, Durkheim establishes the independent existence of society as a moral authority from three different routes. This idea of society as a real moral entity is the bedrock of all of Durkheim’s major writings. However, there are two points which must be clarified in this regard before further discussion. The first point addresses statements such as the one to which Outhwaite appeals in order to argue that Durkheim does not foster an ontological notion of society, that he needs “society” only for (false) epistemological reasons. In The Elementary Forms of Religious Life Durkheim argues that “society can exist only in and by means of individual minds, it must enter into us and become organized within us” (Durkheim 1995: 211).

From the time of his first major writing Durkheim has attended to the question: if society is real, where is its domain of existence? As he puts it, “since there is nothing in society except individuals, how could there be anything external to them?” (Durkheim 1979: 313). He formulated his theory of representation in response to this question. He argues against biological and material reductionism with regard to mind and with respect to society. He insists that by real, external or independent existence he does not mean a separate existence. For example, mental phenomena cannot be explained away as neurological reactions of the neural centers. The brain is the substratum of mental representation but it is wrong to assume that mind and brain are the same. Mind consists of representations that cannot be reduced to physiological elements (see Durkheim 1974: 1-24).
With regard to society, Durkheim makes the same argument. He clearly explains what he means when he says that society is real:

When we said elsewhere that social facts are in a sense independent of individuals and exterior to individual minds, we only affirmed of the social world what we have just established for the psychic world. Society has for its substratum the mass of associated individuals...The representations which form the network of social life arises from the relations between the individuals thus combined or the secondary groups that are between the individuals and total society. (Durkheim 1974: 24)

Thus from Durkheim's statement that "society can exist only in and by means of individual minds, it must enter into us and become organized within us" (Durkheim 1995: 211), we should not assume (as Outhwaite does) that society can be reduced to the individual. By this statement, he only means that society is not a \textit{concrete} and \textit{material} entity; it has a \textit{representational} life and therefore it needs individuals as its \textit{substratum}. Durkheim is so confident of his representational theory of society that he has "no objection to calling sociology a variety of psychology, if we carefully add that social psychology has its own laws which are not those of individual psychology" (Durkheim 1979: 312). In other words, the representational existence of society may not be reduced to individual minds although it only exists through those minds.

The second point which I wish to address concerns how Durkheim himself refuses to use the qualification "ontological" for society. In both \textit{Suicide} and \textit{The Rules} he states that society and social facts are not ontological. To avoid confusion it is necessary to consider the contexts in which he makes such statements. First, let us go back to the above passage where Durkheim argues that "Society has for its \textit{substratum} the mass of \textit{associated} individuals" (Durkheim 1974: 24; my emphasis). Here, as in the statement from \textit{The Elementary Forms}, he clearly refers to individuals as the \textit{substratum} of society,
but he qualifies his remark by the adjective "associated." In The Division of Labor, since he does not use the term "associated," he seems justified in saying, "No doubt, it has not a specific organ as a substratum; it is, by definition, diffuse in every reach of society" (Durkheim 1933: 79, my emphasis). If we do not wish to accuse Durkheim of making contradictory statements, we should say that the usage of a "specific organ" in place of "associated individuals" indicates that these two statements have two different objectives. One is saying that no single individual is society's substratum while the other states that society exists in associated individuals in a diffused manner.

Based on the above clarification we may say that in the following statement from Suicide, where Durkheim refuses to use the term "ontological," he might be maintaining his position that a "specific organ" cannot be society's substratum:

We refuse to accept that these [social] phenomena have as a substratum the conscience of the individual, we assign them another; that formed by all individual consciences in union and combination. There is nothing substantival or ontological about this substratum, since it is merely a whole composed of parts. But it is just as real, nevertheless, as the elements that make it up... (Durkheim 1979: 319)

From this passage it is clear that Durkheim understands "ontological" to mean substantial and concrete. The theory of representation was designed to refute such a conception of society. There is a clear support for this reading in Durkheim's preface to the second edition of The Rules. There he complains that he has been accused of "realism and ontological thinking" in spite of the fact he "had expressly stated and reiterated in every way possible that social life was made up entirely of representations" (Durkheim 1982: 34). Thus, there should be no doubt that when Durkheim denies any ontological status for society, he is only emphasizing that it is not a material being. He does not want to deny it any form of being. In fact, he attributes a higher state of being to society, namely, that of
representation. Ontological status in its conventional sense means nothing other than how something exists in some state of being. *In this sense* only one can say that Durkheim considers society to be an ontological entity in light of remarks he repeatedly makes elsewhere, as in the following:

> It was deemed paradoxical and scandalous for us to assimilate to the realities of external world those of the social world. This was singularly to misunderstand the meaning and effect of this assimilation, the object of which was not to reduce the higher forms of being to the level of lower ones but, on the contrary, to claim for the former a degree of reality at least equal to that which everyone accords to the latter (Durkheim 1982: 35).

The ontological conception of society has several epistemological and ethico-political moments in Durkheim’s general theory. From an epistemological point of view, Durkheim believes that there can be no science without a distinct subject matter of its own. In an analysis of anthropological literature on religion Durkheim criticizes the theories of religion (especially Tylor’s theory of *animism*) mostly for explaining away religion as *errors* of primitive minds. He questions whether these theories could be properly called a “science of religion” and wonders: “What sort of science is it whose principle discovery is to make the very object it treats disappear?” (Durkheim 1995: 67).

For Durkheim, the objectivity of a science is partly a result of dealing with a real object that does not depend on the consciousness of the knowing subject. As he puts it: “A science is a discipline that, however conceived, always applies to a reality that is given. Physics and chemistry are sciences because physicochemical phenomena are real, and of a reality that is independent of the truths those sciences demonstrate” (Durkheim 1995: 66). With regard to social life, he believes that sociological object of the study should also be independent from the consciousness of its participants. In a reference to
Marx’s famous thesis, “Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life,” Durkheim remarks that this view is essential for a scientific approach to social life. He insists, however, that he has reached this conclusion independently from Marx:

We believe it to be a fruitful idea that social life should be explained, not in terms of the conception which its participants hold of it, but by reference to underlying causes which escape consciousness; and we also think that these causes have to be sought principally in the way in which associated individuals are grouped. It seems to us that it is indeed on this condition, and on this condition alone, that history can become a science and, in consequence, that sociology can exist...We ourselves arrived at it before knowing Marx, who has not influenced us in any way. (Durkheim 1972: 159)

Thus, for sociology to develop as a distinct scientific discipline, society and social facts must be real entities with an ontological status of their own. In other words, society must exist if sociology is not to be reduced to individual psychology (see Durkheim 1979: 38, 310). But, it must be made absolutely clear that Durkheim does not invent “society” in order to have sociology. On the contrary, sociology is needed because there is a reality such as society. We have already seen that he independently proves the existence of social facts and society apart from their epistemological necessity for sociology.

A second, and perhaps a more interesting epistemological function of “society” in Durkheim’s general theory is related to the truth-value of scientific statements. This aspect of Durkheim’s work, which puts him in the category of the pioneers of the sociology of knowledge, has not always been well explored. He believes that every knowledge, including religion, is social. According to Durkheim, “to maintain itself, society often needs us to see things from a certain standpoint and feel them in a certain way,” therefore it modifies our ideas (Durkheim 1995: 62).
Society’s role in science is more direct in Durkheim’s theory of knowledge than in other sociological theories of knowledge. It is society which gives human minds the basic concepts necessary for scientific investigations. He argues that, through religion, society shapes not only the content of our knowledge but also “the form in which that knowledge is elaborated” (Durkheim 1995: 8). For example, we have knowledge of both unique and individual objects and universal categories. According to Durkheim, no theory of knowledge can successfully explain these two forms of knowledge except the sociological theory of knowledge. Empiricism has to deny categorical knowledge by reducing them to sensation. It thus explains away “the universality and necessity that characterizes reason” as illusions (Durkheim 1955: 13). That is why Durkheim argues that “Classical empiricism leads to irrationalism; perhaps it should be called by that name” (Durkheim 1995: 13). A priorism, on the other hand, is a rational theory of knowledge that does not reduce the two forms of knowledge to each other. But it cannot explain where the validity of categories such as causality, necessity, time, place, and other principles that govern science comes from. It only attributes them to the intrinsic structure of the mind.

However, Durkheim argues that sociological theories of knowledge show that society, as a collective entity which exists in all individuals, brings the unique and the universal together. As Durkheim puts it, “man is double,” and “in him are two things: an individual being that has its basis in the body and whose sphere of action is strictly limited by this fact, and a social being that represents within us the highest reality in the intellectual and moral realm…” (Durkheim 1995: 15). Here again, the existence of logical categories, which are necessary to every scientific investigation, is related to a
moral and logical consensus that could not be achieved without the authority of society (see Durkheim 1995: 16). Durkheim explains how the principle of causality and scientific discoveries such as force and atom were made possible by religious ideas (see Durkheim 1979: 312; 1995: 238, 368-372).

But if Durkheim so strongly ties science and social life together, how can we assume any truth-value for science? Thanks to “society,” Durkheim is able to shield himself against the accusation of relativism. Even though categories and scientific notions are social constructions, this does not mean that they “only have the value of artificial symbols—useful perhaps, but with no connection to reality” (Durkheim 1995: 17). Science, in spite of being a product of society, is not an illusion because:

The social realm is a natural realm that differs from others only in greater complexity. It is impossible that nature, in that which is most fundamental in itself, should be radically different between one part and another of itself. (Durkheim 1955: 17)

In other words, society is a natural phenomenon, and since nature does not err, society does not err either. Based on such an understanding of nature and society, Durkheim makes the very bold remark that: “Fundamentally, then, there are no religions that are false. All are true after their own fashion: All fulfill given conditions of human existence, though in different ways” (Durkheim 1995: 2). That is to say, no enduring religion or knowledge can be false because society does not permit such a thing (Durkheim 1995: 2). But since society changes through time, it is possible to rank different bodies of knowledge according to the degree that they correspond to the present state of each society.

This brings us to the ethico-political function of “society” in Durkheim’s theory. We have already noted that society, for Durkheim, is essentially moral. As he puts it,
morality is "the daily bread without which societies cannot exist" (Durkheim 1933: 51; see also 1974: 54; 1979: 38 for similar statements). Durkheim uses a highly religious language with respect to society, and employs many images from the Old Testament in particular. For example, he refers to individuals as society's children (see Durkheim 1979: 318). He also describes the relationship between society and the individual in biblical terminology: "it is society, which fashioning us in its image, fills us with religious, political, and moral beliefs that control our action" (Durkheim 1979: 212). For him, society very much resembles the God of traditional religions, perhaps above all of his own Judaic background. His theory of society reflects a very typical religious understanding of God replaced by society.

As a religious or moral authority, society has an awesome power which must be respected; its sacredness embodies the two contradictory characteristics of being both obligatory and desirable. The individual simultaneously feels some kind of attraction and repulsion for the society. In a sense, we can feel that "society" in Durkheim's work is both a dear and a dangerous being. One should always stay at a safe distance from it, and try one's best to take care of it and respect it, for a person's well-being is closely tied with that of society's. With too much proximity and attraction, society sacrifices its son while too much distance and repulsion throws him into the wilderness of egoism and anomie (which may then lead to suicide). For instance, consider the following:

For individuals share too deeply in the life of society for it to be diseased without their suffering infection. What it suffers they necessarily suffer...Hence it cannot disintegrate without awareness that the regular conditions of general existence are equally disturbed. Because society is the end on which our better selves depend, it cannot feel us escaping it without a simultaneous realization that our activity is purposeless. Since we are its handiwork, society cannot be conscious of its own decadence...
without the feeling that henceforth this work is of no value. (Durkheim 1979: 214)

The safe distance referred to above characterizes Durkheim’s critical project. For Durkheim, the sole purpose of science is “to increase our chances for survival, [otherwise] it does not deserve the trouble it entails” (Durkheim 1979: 212). Since society is a moral power, too much attraction to it blinds us to the degree that we cannot critically evaluate its needs. It continually changes, and therefore criticism is necessary to find out what type of morality is evolving with it. And too much distance from society means a disrespect for its moral authority, and the individual is abandoned unto himself. In short, we should both engage in some critical activity and at the same time exercise some form of moral government over ourselves. In the next section I will further elaborate on these two complementary practices from Durkheim’s perspective.

Positive Sociology: Critique and Moral Government

We have already seen that both science and religion, according to Durkheim, are society’s creations. He also argues that science is “the offspring of religion” (Durkheim 1995: 431). That is to say, the origin of science originates in religious ideas. Before Durkheim, Comte had already argued that positive thinking logically had to be preceded by theological thinking (see page 54 above). Durkheim, as we noted above, took this relation beyond its logical necessity and into the content of sciences.

The religious and moral lineage of science, coupled with the fact that religion and science are both society’s offspring, has a pivotal discursive function in Durkheim’s theory. On the one hand, it suggests that there is a harmonious relationship between
science and society, for society determines the essential characteristics of science. On the other hand, science and religion enter into a relationship with each other which is marked by both cooperation and rivalry. Their cooperative relation is due to the fact that they are both created by one creator (society) for its own sake. And the relation of the rivalry is the result of the fundamental similarity of science to religion. Since science can do most of the things that religion does, it may function as a criterion against which the contributions of religion to society are evaluated. In other words, society engages in a critique of its religious aspects through science, and religion is expected to adopt itself to the continually changing nature of society more or less in conformity with science. In what follows I will expand this thesis of Durkheim, with a focus on its relevance to sociology.

Although critique is always carried out by individual subjects, Durkheim argues, critique must be understood only as an act of society (see Durkheim 1974: 66), that is, because critique is a work of a clearer consciousness against a less clear consciousness. Since science, which makes consciousness clearer, is social, critique is always social. According to Durkheim, even the most radical form of critique, i.e., rebellion and revolution, is the work of society against itself. Society has changed so much that it has to free itself from the shackles of its old organizations, which endanger its chances for survival under new conditions.

Given that “society is continually evolving” and given the moral nature of society, morality should “not be inculcated in such a way as to be beyond criticism or reflected thought, the primary agents of all change” (Durkheim 1972: 112). Those who overlook this aspect of Durkheim’s theory with regard to the role of critical thinking in social
change make all sorts of charges of conservatism against him. Lucien Goldmann, for example, charges that Durkheim's definition of crime as an act that results in society's pain includes "acts as different as the deed of Jesus driving the money-changers from the temple... and [of]... the latest hold-up or murder" (Goldmann 1969: 38). But, Durkheim does not want to explain the essence of crime as being punished simply for causing pain in society. This definition of crime is only "intended to equip us in order to arrive at this essence later" (Durkheim 1982: 80). It is only in the beginning of scientific investigation and on the surface that Jesus's deed, and that of a murderer, do not seem fundamentally different. But Durkheim is a rationalist, and his positive approach is expected to explain scientifically the value of certain critical practices:

   Indeed our main objective is to extend the scope of scientific rationalism to cover human behaviour by demonstrating that, in the light of the past, it is capable of being reduced to relationships of cause and effect, which, by an operation no less rational, can then be transformed into rules of action for the future. What has been termed our positivism is merely a consequence of this rationalism. (Durkheim 1982: 33)

   If Durkheim considers crime necessary and even useful, it is because he sees it as an expression of diversity, and thereby has a moderating influence on the moral authority of the collective conscience. For it "to make progress, individual originality must be able to express itself" (Durkheim 1938: 71). Durkheim does not want to suggest that since the crime paves the way for the critical activity of thought, they are the same. He makes a distinction between two types of contributions made by crime to social change. One is indirect, and involves reducing society's hostility toward change. The other is direct, and occurs when what is offensive and criminal to society in reality introduces positive changes into society. As Durkheim puts it:
Beyond [the] indirect utility, crime itself may play a useful part in this evolution. Not only does it imply that the way to necessary changes remains open, but in certain cases it also directly prepares for these changes. (Durkheim 1982: 102; my emphasis)

Thus, any crime may reduce society’s resistance to change because it challenges the accepted norms of conduct, but it is not necessarily capable of introducing rational and desirable changes. There is a “crime” that has this latter type of function, and this is what can be called a form of “critique”.

Accordingly, I think that Durkheim’s theory of positivism as a rational form of critique is capable of addressing Goldmann’s criticism. It is true that wherever there is a social upheaval, those in the position of authority label rebellious individuals as “undesirable elements,” “thugs,” “hooligans,” “criminals” and the like. However, one should rationally be able to evaluate the changes they seek to introduce into society. If they seek to modify social organization to bring it into harmony with the evolving conditions of life, they have the value of critique; however, if they do not have such a function, they are valuable only to the extent that they diminish society’s resistance to change. This is why after more than two thousand years, we think from a rational perspective that we can show that Socrates was not a criminal even though he surely was so to Athenian law. As Durkheim argues:

[H]is crime, namely, the independence of his thought, rendered a service not only to humanity but to his country. It served to prepare a way for a new morality and a new faith, which the Athenians then needed because the traditions by which they hitherto lived no longer corresponded to the conditions of its existence. (Durkheim 1982: 102)

This service to society for adopting itself to evolving conditions of life is what Durkheim has in mind when he asserts that “criticism” and “reflected thought” are “the primary agents of all change” (Durkheim 1972: 112).
We need to fully appreciate the value of this positive critique in Durkheim’s sociological theory in order to understand why he emphasizes the role of society over that of the individual in critique. Before any further elaboration of this point, let us consider the following passage, in which Durkheim insists that any individual act of critique is, in fact, a creation of society against itself. Responding to one of his critics, Durkheim writes:

A rebellion against the traditional morality you conceive of as a revolt of the individual against the collective, of personal sentiments against collective sentiments. However, what I am opposing to the collective is the collective itself, but more and better aware of itself. If it is argued that this fuller and higher consciousness of itself is only expressed in and through an individual intellect, I reply that society arrives at this fuller consciousness only by science; and science is not an individual; it is a social thing, pre-eminently impersonal. (Durkheim 1974: 66).

Science as a social being is an agent of social revolution, but a revolution is a reaction on the part of a higher societal consciousness against a lower one. This relative ranking is due to the fact that the old consciousness reflects the old social conditions, and must be replaced by a scientific assessment of the new circumstances. This scientific consciousness is social in the sense that the social conditions they explain give rise to its form and its content. However, this does not mean that science spontaneously grows in society without any effort on part of individuals. To understand the roles of the individual in society’s critical activity, we need to know Durkheim’s conception of the individual.

Habermas alleges that Durkheim, “who was the first to observe the connection between societal differentiation ... and progressive individuation,” can only conceive of the individual to the extent that he “deviates from the more general determinations of his social milieu” (Habermas 1992: 149, 150). The reader may have already realized that by considering even revolt as an act of society against itself, there can hardly be an
individual act that Durkheim would call a deviation from the general determinations of the social milieu. For Durkheim, the individual as a personality, not as a biological organism, is created by society, so that the individual can only remain a distinct person in society. In mechanical societies there are no individuals because society does not need them; it is only in organic societies with an advanced division of labor that the individual is born.

The individual is born in a normal process of societal development; there is no deviation involved in its creation. The fact that a person has come into being in a social process does not make her less individual, for this social process itself is a form of differentiation. Habermas seems to be thinking that the harmony between the individual and society suggested by Durkheim is an indication that she is nothing but society's dupe. On the contrary, individuality is a real characteristic of the person. According to Durkheim, individuals are society's partners in its advanced stage; that is why if they do not cooperate with society, it will not survive, and vice versa. This brings us to the relationship between critique and governmentality in Durkheim's works. But first, let us read Durkheim with regard to the mutual relationship between individuals and the organic society from which they are born:

On its side, society learns to regard its members no longer as things over which it has rights, but as co-operators whom it cannot neglect and towards whom it owes its duties. (Durkheim 1933: 228).

Thus, both the individual and society have mutual duties toward each other. The duty of society towards the individual is to maintain his individuality and enrich "his intellectual and moral culture" (Durkheim 1995: 351). In turn, the individual should contribute to the survival of society by keeping alive its beliefs, traditions, and
aspirations, without which "society will die" (Durkheim 1995: 351). And to ensure fulfillment of this duty, some individuals should prepare society for its necessary changes through critical reflection and scientific investigation of society (see Durkheim 1933: 52-53).

Since science has a religious origin, in addition to its utility for critique, it may also suggest the rules necessary for the moral discipline of the individual. Human beings cannot live without moral discipline, for "irrespective of any external regulatory force, our capacity for feeling is in itself an insatiable and bottomless abyss" (Durkheim 1979: 247). There is no need to argue further here that Durkheim believes the evil of social anarchy must be eliminated and avoided through moral discipline. However, we can elucidate the role that science, especially sociology, plays with regard to the individual's moral discipline.

According to Durkheim, social anarchy and anomie are accompanied by an absence of rules and regulations. But sometimes legislative rules themselves are the source of evil; and that is when they do not correspond to "the true nature of things," and thereby lack moral authority and have to be imposed by external force (see Durkheim 1933: 374-377). Consequently, what we need is not another philosophical theory of morality, but rather, we need a science of morality:

Because certain of our duties are no longer founded in the reality of things, a breakdown has resulted which will be repaired only in so far as a new discipline is established and consolidated. In short, our first duty is to make a moral code for ourselves. (Durkheim 1933: 409)

Since moral rules "are moral only in relation to certain experimental conditions," these conditions must first be scientifically studied (Durkheim 1933: 423). Science in general is "the impersonal human reason" and that is why the interventions of its moral branch in
the collective life must not be feared or suspected of securing personal or class interests (see Durkheim 1974: 65).

The objective of the science of moral facts is first to understand the moral order, and then to “direct its changes” (Durkheim 1974: 66). It is only through such a science that change and order (or critique and discipline) can go hand in hand. Durkheim is suspicious of any schematic program of moral reform. As he puts it: “The work of the sociologist is not that of the statesman. We do not have to present in detail what this reform should be” (Durkheim 1933: 23). Sociology is expected to indicate general principles and goals while the details should be worked out gradually in practice (see 1933: 23, 409; 1958: 184). However, there are some points that need to be made about Durkheim’s conception of the moral and practical role of sociology.

Durkheim’s notion of positivism is less philosophical than that of Comte, which he considers to be a “positive metaphysics” (see Durkheim 1982: 33n). In other words, Durkheim’s sociology is more empirical. At the same time, he does not want to base sociology on an empiricist epistemology; he thinks that science is governed by some principles whose truths cannot be empirically established. They are the mythologies and wisdom that society formulates at each stage of its development (see Durkheim 1995: 11-18, 367-373).

Durkheim thinks that positive sociology has also suffered from another empiricist bias, namely, the separation of scientific judgements from value-judgement. He argues that saying, ‘I like hunting’, or ‘this picture has a great aesthetic value’ is not fundamentally different from saying, ‘bodies are heavy’ (see Durkheim 1974: 80-81). In short, according to Durkheim, values are also facts, and therefore they must be studied as
such. There is only a difference between the two that must be taken into account in a study of values. According to Durkheim, values attributed to things are different from other attributions of things only in the sense that values are always estimated in relation to some ideal. Since the ideal is "of and in nature," it can and should be studied by positive sociology (Durkheim 1974: 94). Durkheim complains that:

Positive sociology has been accused of having a fetish for fact and a systematic indifference to the ideal. We can see now the injustice of such an accusation. The principal social phenomena, religion, morality, law, economics and aesthetics, are nothing more than systems of values and hence ideals. Sociology moves from the beginning in the field of ideals. The ideal is in fact its peculiar field of study. (Durkheim 1974: 96)

With this I may clarify another aspect of Durkheim’s sociology. Durkheim is very cautious, and perhaps even modest with respect to sociology’s role in the realm of ethics and values. The primary task of sociology is to study values but not construct a system of values because they have their own causes. Like other things, values cannot be changed at will. However, sociology can help us to gain a “greater control” over the world of values (see Durkheim 1974: 96). Another modest aspect of Durkheim’s theory is that it recognizes that it cannot completely replace religion, for science is “fragmentary and incomplete” but life “cannot wait,” and people have to act (Durkheim 1995: 432). Thus, “there is something eternal in religion” (Durkheim 1995: 432). There will be no society which can live solely on science; however, the role of science is to help religion to “transform itself rather disappear” (Durkheim 1995: 432).

At the heart of Durkheim’s critique is the transformation of religious institutions in light of scientific investigations so that both individuals and society may survive the continually changing conditions of life. He does not want to construct an “artificial religion” as Comte did (see Durkheim 1955: 429). Durkheim does not want to go back to
the theological notion of religion either. He seeks to study morality scientifically in order to enable us to *critique* our social life, which has an essentially religious character:

As soon as the authority of science is established, science must be reckoned with; under pressure of need, one can go beyond science, but it is from science that one must start out. One can affirm nothing that science denies, deny nothing that science affirms, and establish nothing that does not directly or indirectly rest on principles taken from science...There rises a power before religion that, even though religion's offspring, from then on applies its own critique and its own testing to religion. (Durkheim 1955: 433)

The spirit of positivism as a critique is summarized in this simultaneously and ironically bold and modest statement: *One can affirm nothing that science denies, deny nothing that science affirms.* However, as Foucault teaches us, the history of science is full of discontinuities. The day will come when this statement is no longer interpreted according to its *critical* spirit, and attempts are made to establish science itself as a positive program of *constructing* and *organizing* our lives. On that day critique will have to find a new dwelling place.

Durkheim abandoned Comte's attempt to link science and ethics through *conscious* discursive practices in favor of a more *logical* connection between the two, though a negative connection. However, even this more scientific ethics could not be free from discursive elements. Therefore, in the next chapter I will explain that, while Weber could not go along with even this formulation of the relationship between ethics and science, Popper made Durkheim's formulation more logically sophisticated in order to save the critical edge of positivism.
Between Science and Faith

One cannot read the nineteenth-century social thinkers without noticing an extraordinary preoccupation with practical ethico-political questions. There is a serious concern among them over the status of practice in the age of science. What should guide human beings in their action, faith or science? Can science prescribe rules of conduct? Is the scientific critique of faith to be taken seriously? If science is not a legitimate substitute for faith in the sphere of socio-political actions, what is its importance? These are some of the questions that explicitly or implicitly inform and guide many classical sociological texts. Positive sciences originally proposed themselves as critiques of the religious and philosophical bases of the political organization of social life. However, gradually they sought to fill the moral vacuum created by the disappearance of non-positivist systems of thought.

Comte suggested that with the demise of theological and metaphysical philosophies, it was time for positive philosophy to move beyond mere critique and to become active in the reorganization of society. He stated:

The positive philosophy has, up to the present, intervened in the contest only in order to criticize both schools [theology and metaphysics]; and it has accomplished this task so well as to discredit them entirely. Let us put it in a condition to play an active part... (Comte 1988: 30)

We have already noted that Comte did not seek to deduce political and ethical rules directly from the sciences. He rather assigned this task to positive philosophy, which was
a synthetic discipline. By contrast, Durkheim resisted even this political temptation of Comte and argued that positive sociology should remain a critique of politics without constructing a system of values. He summarized the critical role of science by saying, “One can affirm nothing that science denies, deny nothing that science affirms” (Durkheim 1955: 433). That is to say, as a positive science, sociology has only a negative task. It only prohibits affirmations and denials that are contrary to scientific findings, but it cannot prescribe its own moral codes.

However, one need not go further than Max Weber’s work to realize that this issue was not easily resolved for social thinkers. Weber’s discussion of “value-freedom” makes it clear that the relation of science and politics was fiercely debated in Germany to the extent that scholars could be disqualified from holding academic positions if they adopted a dissident position on certain political or religious questions (see Weber 1949: 7). Many thought that political and ethical rules could be directly deduced from positive sciences. Given the epistemological orientation of the positivistic critique of religion and metaphysical philosophy, I think it seemed natural to expect that positive sciences would fill the moral gap created by the diminishing influence of religion and metaphysics. In other words, if science claims that philosophical and religious beliefs are wrong, and only the scientific knowledge of the world is valid and correct, it should also replace religious values with scientific values. With this move, positivism became totalitarian. It not only rejected all other forms of knowledge, it also affirmed itself as the source of ethics.

In this chapter, I will discuss Weber and Popper because they represent the ultimate tensions and limits of positivism as a critical project which began with Comte and stretched into the twentieth century. My reading of their works is selective and
limited to their treatment of the question of ethics and science. I will argue that Weber tried to contain positivism, and to divert its path to totalitarianism more explicitly than did Durkheim. Weber insisted that there was no *logical* relationship between science and ethics. However, his monumental effort in this respect did not resolve the problem, for he was not able to define clearly a *non-epistemological* source of ethics or politics beyond a very general notion of culture. Thus, sociology remained ethically and politically confused. I will also discuss Karl Popper’s philosophy of rational criticism as a later epistemological attempt to contain the totalitarian tendency of positivism while retaining the critical edge of science.

As we will see, both Weber and Popper clarify many issues concerning the critical potential of science, but they fail to explain why, in spite of all logical prohibitions, science and politics are for all practical purposes linked. An uneasy relationship between science and politics is present also in Comte’s and Durkheim’s works, but it is more explicit in Weber’s because of his more profound and elaborate analysis of this issue. Weber brings the tension of positivism to the surface. He thereby forces anyone interested in the scientific critique of ethics and politics into a *trembling* position in which one cannot “logically” prefer science over ethics, or vice versa. It is only one’s hopes and fears that push him to one side or the other.

**Max Weber: An Appreciation**

Contrary to the conventional wisdom in current introductory sociological texts, Max Weber’s treatment of the question of scientific value-freedom is very complex and
rich, if not confusing. He does not settle the problem one way or another, but he does get
the reader to appreciate the complexity of this subject.

My first encounter with this aspect of Weber's work took place in the joint
weekly seminars held by sociologists and theologians in Iran during the Cultural
Revolution. In these seminars—to which I referred in my introduction—the theologians
argued that the sociology curriculums in Iranian universities should be reformed to reflect
the Islamic and national cultural heritage of the country. Of all the human sciences,
sociology was the most suspected of being a vehicle for the Western cultural and political
hegemony. They argued that sociology was political and culturally biased. Comte and
Durkheim were cited as two founders of positivistic sociology who preached a
"scientific" religion rooted in the Western culture and values. They proposed that Iranian
sociologists should develop an Islamic sociology. After all, Ibn Khaldun, the first
sociologist, was a Muslim.

The sociologists, on the other hand, responded that science is universal, and it
would be meaningless to have a religious or national sociology. The theologians would
reply that there are many schools in sociology, and sociological theories bear the marks
of their geographical origin. Therefore, either sociology is not a science at all, or it has
not yet achieved a true scientific status. The sociologists usually conceded that sociology
did not enjoy a full scientific status, but they thought that no one could start from scratch.
They argued that the existing sociological theories should be worked upon and advanced
through more empirical research.

This kind of argument and counter-argument characterized the spirit of the
seminars, which lasted for three years. No real consensus was ever formed with regard to
the status of sociology in the post-revolutionary Iran. However, there were times that the sociologists could induce a sense of appreciation for sociology among the theologians, and this usually happened when they argued for sociology through Max Weber. Unlike Marx, he did not consider religion to be a mere epiphenomenon or a reflection of material interest. In fact, his *Protestant Ethic* showed that religious movements could even shape economic infrastructures. He was not seduced by the social-ontological naiveté which characterized Durkheim’s work. Sociological ontologism was despised by the clerics because communist movements justified totalitarian policies in the name of super-individual entities such as “Society,” “Humanity,” and “History”. Weber’s sociology was modestly concerned with social actions as meaningful individual behavior. In short, Weber’s sociology appealed to the theologians for several reasons. It did not overlook culture and religion as Marxism did, and could even be presented as a rebuttal to Marxism. It also was not a shameless justification of the status quo and a conservative national ideology like American functionalism. Finally, it was not so provocative and epistemologically over-confident as to demand religion to submit to scientific evaluations, like Durkheim’s sociology.

But this appreciation of Weber was not very profound. Very few of the sociologists in these seminars defined themselves as Weberian. There was a special reason for this unwillingness. Universities were very active in the 1979 Revolution which toppled the Shah’s regime in Iran. The most active revolutionary voice in the university was that of Ali Shariati, who was a Sorbonne-educated sociologist. His lectures were highly political and their transcripts were distributed among activists both in and outside of the university. Through Shariati and other leftist activists, sociology became a
revolutionary force in Iran. Now, in the post-revolutionary era, it was difficult to restrict this force to the classroom and value-free discussions in the fashion Weber seemed to suggest. Weber was needed to save sociology from the harsh epistemological and political criticism that came from the ruling clerical group which was beginning to understand sociology as a critical force.

The theologians, on other hand, were also not comfortable with Weber’s notion of value-freedom, which they understood to mean that a system of values could be rationally constructed. If there were any contradictions between religious values and true scientific findings, it would be only an apparent contradiction that could be explained away through more careful analyses. The theologians gradually decided to reserve their final judgement on Weber until they understood him better. In short, Weber’s passion for scientific objectivity was a two-edged sword. It could not be easily handled by the politically- and ethically-motivated participants on both sides of the discussion in these seminars.

I offer this account of my encounter with Weber within a tense political condition in order to help the reader to appreciate the confusion that I think many readers experience with Weber, and in part to shed light on Weber’s own dilemma. It is through Weber that sociology becomes conscious of these dilemmas. Weber does not resolve these dilemmas, in fact, he makes them more acutely felt. Through him, we can learn to appreciate the complexity of the problem, and thereby to resist the temptation of simple and easy solutions. I will argue that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, Weber did not want, and could not make, sociology a science that would be completely free from values. He was motivated by a critical interest in sociology in a similar fashion as other
classical sociologists. However, he came to realize that science and critique are uneasy bedfellows. But he could not relinquish his interest in critique and dismiss science as irrelevant for this purpose. Thus, he ended up in a "trembling" position between science and faith. Weber’s age was also an age of intense socio-political tensions, and he had to respond to social forces such as anti-Semitism, feminism, pacifism, war-mongering, and nationalism in universities.

I must note that there is a discontinuity between Weber and most Weberian sociologists. Many have alleged that Weber in his "substantive studies" does not adhere consistently to verstehen principles of sympathetic understanding (see Scaff 1989: 34). In fact, Alvin Gouldner thinks that Weber’s myth of a value-free sociology is the ideology of contemporary positivist sociologists who comprise an occupational group (see Gouldner 1973: 4). We can see that many consider Weber a dispassionate empiricist whose scientific project has no political or ethical concerns. However, it is very difficult to base this reading on Weber’s texts. Discontinuity is actually a very frequent phenomenon in the history of science, and we should not be surprised that some sociologists use Weberian concepts in a non-Weberian sense. Something must have happened with regard to the post-war reception of Weber’s sociology to cause Gouldner to write:

This is an account of a myth created by and about a magnificent minotaur named Max—Max Weber, to be exact; his myth was that social science should and could be value-free. The lair of this minotaur, although reached only by a labyrinthine logic and visited only by a few who never return, is still regarded by many sociologists as a holy place. ... Today, all powers of sociology, from Parsons to Lundberg, have entered into a tacit alliance to bind us to the dogma that ‘Thou shalt not commit a value judgement’ especially as sociologists. ... In the end, of course, we cannot disprove the existence of minotaurs who, after all, are thought to be sacred precisely because, being half man and half bull, they are so unlikely. The thing to
see is that a belief in them is not so much untrue as it is absurd. (Gouldner 1973: 3)

Gouldner says that sociology is neither a value-free discipline in reality, nor should be so. Gouldner alleges that the value-free principle is an occupational ideology that enhances the autonomy of sociology by allowing sociologists to escape from "the parochial prescriptions of [their] local or native culture" (Gouldner 1973: 11). However, the reality is that sociologists always make value judgements. Weber's writings are full of references to social scientists who use their classrooms and expertise to advance certain moral and political points of view. Therefore, he cannot deny that sociologists make value judgements. But, he seems to suggest that sociology, which is a technical competence, does not qualify them to make value judgements. This prompts Gouldner to ask, "if technical competence provides no warrant for making value judgements, then what does?" (Gouldner 1973: 5). This is exactly the question for which Weber does not have a clear answer.

With regard to the desirability of a value-free sociology, Gouldner argues that no scientist can be indifferent to the consequences of her research. According to him, scientific objectivity will not necessarily be hindered by scientists' ethical positions. Hiroshima and Auschwitz are good reasons for science to assume ethical responsibility (see Gouldner 1973: 25). I will show below that Max Weber does not reject these ethical concerns. In fact, he tries to keep sociology an ethico-critical discipline. But, he does not find any logical way to accomplish this task.

Lucien Goldmann acknowledges that Weber does not completely exclude values from the realm of science. He argues that Weber believes that the subject-matter of scientific study is always selected according to some values, and this has no bearing on
the objectivity of science. But Goldmann thinks that this is an illusion, for “it goes without saying that the elements selected determine in advance the result of the study” (Goldmann 1969: 43). He adds that, since the values according to which this selection is carried out are always related to some class interests, science is also tainted by the class interests that scientists serve. I will comment on this ideological conception of science in Part II. Here I just want to support the view that Weber did not seek to exclude values totally from science. Weber does not agree with the claim that the intervention of values in one’s choice of the object of the study determines the outcome of the research. The word “determine” is too strong. Let us see how Weber views the relation of science and ethical choices.

Weber mentions that social science, “as is the case with every science treating the institutions and events of human culture, ... first arose in connection with practical considerations” (Weber 1949: 51). In other words, these sciences were informed by a critical or at least practical interest. Weber does not think that the scientific critique of social policies and values should be abandoned altogether. He rather believes that we must further examine this issue in order to have a more profound understanding of all its aspects. He emphasizes that scientific freedom from value-judgements only means that an empirical science can never “provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived” (Weber 1949: 52). This statement, together with the qualification which follows, explain Weber’s position with regard to the relation of science and ethico-political critique. Here is his qualification:

What is the implication of this proposition? It is certainly not that value-judgements are to be withdrawn from scientific discussion in general simply because in the last analysis they rest on certain ideals and are therefore “subjective” in origin. Practical action and the aims of our
journal would always reject such a proposition. Criticism is not to be suspended in the presence of value-judgements. The problem is rather: what is the meaning and the purpose of scientific criticism of ideals and value-judgements? This requires a somewhat more detailed analysis. (Weber 1949: 52)

Even after his more detailed analysis, Weber does not decisively explain "the meaning and the purpose of scientific criticism of ideals and value-judgements." In the end, he neither relinquishes the task of critique, nor is he able to connect science directly with values. This apparent contradiction is rooted in Weber's profound understanding of the complexity of the subject. On the one hand, he recognizes that practically speaking, values and social policies are derived from various forms of scientific and non-scientific knowledge. On the other hand, he knows that there is no logical relationship between the two. After some insightful analysis he leaves the problems unresolved. Weber explored the problem so deeply, and made it so complex, that after him no epistemological conception of science could successfully avoid this contradiction. My argument (fully developed in Part II) is that we need a discursive understanding of science to be able to explain the power of knowledge as an ethico-political force. Weber's analysis of this subject indirectly contributed to Foucault's resolution of the problem. To further appreciate Weber's contribution, we need to examine his analysis more closely.

Lawrence Scaff explains that after almost four years of mental breakdown, described by Marianne Weber as a "fall" and a "descent into hell" in 1903 (when Weber started his intellectual works again), he exhibited an unusual interest in obscure questions concerning the philosophy of science (see Scaff 1989: 75). According to Scaff, Weber's early writings after his recovery are hardly readable, and many, including his *Archiv* coeditors, Edgar Jaffé and Werner Sombart, criticized his new epistemological interest.
Scaff cites Jaffé as complaining that: “Naturally from Weber himself I would prefer ten times more to have an essay like that on the Protestant Ethic than three logical-epistemological essays on Eduard Meyer, Stammler, etc.” (Edgar Jaffé, cited in Scaff 1989: 76). The Protestant Ethic, which also belongs to this post-illness period, may provide some clues for this interest in methodological and epistemological questions.

*The Protestant Ethic* can in many ways be compared with Durkheim’s *Suicide*. Durkheim sought to show that the individualistic rationalism of the Protestants caused them to take their own life. Weber argued that the same ascetic rationalism was partly responsible for the rise of Capitalism. Weber, unlike Durkheim, may have had a sense of admiration for Protestant rationalism, because in the beginning of this work he *seems* to be dismissing all religions and cultures on the face of the earth as irrational except Protestantism (see Weber 1930: 13-31, 38, 76-77). But this is not the whole story. Unlike Durkheim’s *Suicide*, Weber’s *Protestant Ethic* has no definitive character. It is more a reflection on rationality than an empirical scientific study or decisive explanation like *Suicide*. With regard to the role of Protestantism, Weber even seems to want his work to be read more as a rebuttal to “naïve historical materialism” rather than the “foolish and doctrinaire thesis...that capitalism as an economic system is a creation of the Reformation” (Weber 1930: 91; see also 55-56, 183). Weber’s ambivalence with respect to the worldly rational morality of Protestantism is apparent at the end of the book where he comments that:

> In Baxter’s view the care for external goods should lie on the shoulders of the “saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment.” But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. (Weber 1930: 181)
Weber is obviously pessimistic about this rationality and its bureaucratic manifestations. He even explicitly describes himself as a pessimist (see Scaff 1989: 68). Durkheim also had serious concerns about individualistic rationality, but he preferred to maintain faith in science as an aid to find a better way of life. Weber does not share this optimism. He noticed a dangerous potential in science. I believe it is legitimate to read Weber's separation of science and ethical questions as a critique of a science which is on its way to becoming a totalitarian power in an Iron Cage. In other words, his thesis can be considered an attempt to protect ethics rather than science. He could never finish this move because he lacked the necessary conceptual tools. But, he did his best to divert science from becoming a totalitarian voice in politics by showing that logically science could not produce ethics. I will argue that, later on, Karl Popper made a similar attempt to make science more modest. A different approach to knowledge had to be formulated in order to move beyond this dilemma.

Weber did not wish to completely dismiss traditional cultures. Rather, he sought to evaluate both traditional irrational culture and the scientific culture of modernity. He reminds us that "the value of scientific truth is the product of certain cultures and is not a product of man's original nature" (Weber 1949: 110). In his writing on religion, economy, science, bureaucracy, and legitimacy, he compared these two cultural modes of life in order either to choose one or to reconcile the two. Alvin Gouldner believes that he preferred the reconciliation of these two cultures. He says:

[The myth of a value-free sociology was Weber's way of trying to adjudicate the tension between two vital Western traditions: between reason and faith, between knowledge and feeling, between Classicism and Romanticism, between the head and the heart. (Gouldner 1973: 25)
In his “Science as a Vocation,” Weber argues that at “the threshold of modernity” many believed science to be “the way to nature,” to the truth of everything. But in 1919 when he gave this lecture, the situation was “quite the reverse.” Young people in Germany proclaimed “deliverance from the intellectualism of science in order to return to one’s own nature” (Weber 1989: 16). Weber admonishes university professors not to take advantage of this attitude in order to fill their lecture rooms with students who naively conceive science as ‘the way to art’ or ‘true happiness’. He says that after Nietzsche’s “devastating criticism [of science],” one should not be carried away with this “naïve optimism” (see Weber 1989: 17).

Weber argues that moral questions can only be answered in terms of one’s Weltanschauung; that is, “one’s ultimate attitudes toward life” (Weber 1989: 18, 26). In other words, moral ideals are part of one’s general cultural orientation rather than a product of scientific culture. According to Weber, science is not capable of creating a genuine community, and university professors should stop playing the role of prophets, for “academic prophecy will create only fanatical sects, never a true community” (Weber 1989: 30). If so, it is quite legitimate to ask: what is the importance of science if it cannot tell us how we should live?

Weber struggles to find a moral significance for science. Weber’s theory of action plays a significant role in this regard. He argues that human conduct can partly be understood in terms of “means” and “ends” (Weber 1949: 52). He distinguishes four types of social action: instrumentally rational, value rational, affectual, and traditional (see Weber 1978: 24-25). The last two types of action, which are based on emotions and habits respectively, are ultimately beyond the reach of science. However, the first two can
be subjected to what Weber calls a *technical criticism* by science. Science can help us to assess whether the means we have selected are appropriate to achieve our ends, i.e. if the action is instrumentally rational or technically effective. However, the value rational action, which is consciously sought for its own sake, is not easily accessible to science. Science can only “indirectly criticize the setting of the ends itself as practically meaningful… or as meaningless with reference to existing conditions” (Weber 1949: 53).

As Weber puts it:

> We can provide the acting person with the ability to weigh and compare the undesirable as over against the desirable consequences of his action. Thus, we can answer the question: what will the attainment of a desired end “cost” in terms of the predictable loss of other values? (Weber 1949: 53)

However, a *technical criticism* of this type can go no further than informing the acting person; in the final analysis, it is he who has to choose “from among the values involved according to his own conscience and his personal view of the world” (Weber 1949: 53). Once again, I would like to emphasize that from this analysis, it is obvious that Weber does not have a conceptual framework that enables him to argue that the very choice of the actor is a function of his knowledge. Once he does not see any *logical* necessity of following the advice of science, he leaves the whole matter in the hands of the actors. However, as I have suggested, in fact a discursive conception of knowledge allows us to recognize the power of knowledge, and to advance Weber’s criticism of science for having no logical or epistemological claim to this power. This capacity is a property of discourse, which is different from science.

According to Weber, a second contribution of science to morality is the critical assessment of value-judgments. Values can be derived from one another, and they are
valid only if they can be traced back to "our highest values". Therefore, science may also be employed to assess, through "a formal logical judgement," whether our value-judgements are internally consistent (see Weber 1949: 54-55). Here again, science cannot go beyond analyzing the internal validity of a system of values; however, its external validity is only "a matter of faith" (see Weber 1949: 55).

The third relation that Weber establishes between science and values is both the strongest and the most complicated. He approaches this argument from a methodological point of view although it also involves cultural and political elements. I may add that this methodological explication of the relation between science and values supports my thesis that theoretical shifts in sociology are motivated by critical and political interests on the part of social actors. It is also part of this thesis that these critical interests are essentially ontological, but are mistakenly directed towards epistemological resolutions. These points will be elaborated on more fully towards the end of this dissertation; however, for the moment, let us consider Weber's position.

Weber mentioned that the youth of his time sought to make their life meaningful through science because they thought science was "the way to art" (see Weber 1989: 17-18). He argues that this attitude is based on a misconception of science, for science is always provisional while a "work of art which involves genuine ‘fulfilment’ can never be surpassed" (Weber 1989: 12). Weber wishes to argue that there is a fundamental difference between a metaphysical desire for ‘meaning’ and an empirical scientific endeavor. He does not use the terms ontology and epistemology, but I think the crux of his argument can be summarized in these terms. At least insofar as meaningfulness can be understood as an ontological matter while science as science— not as a discourse— is
concerned with epistemological questions and not questions of meaning. In any event, he does not use this language, but instead he constructs his argument from a methodological point of view.

The provisional nature of science is the central notion in Weber's philosophy of science. He says that every scientist "knows that what one has worked through will be out of date in ten, twenty, or fifty years" (Weber 1989: 12). The question is: why is that so? To answer this question, we need to know Weber's conception of science. He says:

It is not the "actual" interconnections of "things" but the conceptual interconnections of problems which define the scope of various sciences. (Weber 1949: 68)

He emphasizes two aspects of science i.e., of being a conceptual construction and of addressing some problems. If we carefully examine these two characteristics, it becomes evident that science has to be selective and thereby provisional. Weber argues that science always deals with the individual phenomenon, and we can never exhaust describing "all the individual components of this 'individual phenomenon'" (Weber 1949: 72). An attempt to capture the "essence" of the phenomenon in terms of casual relationships and "laws" can only have value as a "heuristic means" (Weber 1949: 76).

Thus, we have to be selective in our scientific treatment of the world; we have to decide what is "worthy of being known." That is to say, we have to decide what constitutes a problem for us. This is where our cultural values intervene in, or at least provide the presuppositions for science. Weber refers to this significance of values in science as "value-relevance" (see Weber 1949: 76). Value-relevance is more important for "cultural sciences" because they "analyze the phenomena of life in terms of their
significance” (Weber 1949: 76). Therefore, Weber concludes we have to start with cultural presuppositions, for:

A chaos of “existential judgments” about countless individual events would be the only result of a serious attempt to analyze reality “without presuppositions.” ... Order is brought into this chaos only on the condition that in every case only a part of concrete reality is interesting and significant to us, because only it is related to the cultural values with which we approach reality. (Weber 1949: 78)

In short, sociologists always choose their subject matter according to their cultural values because “we are cultural beings, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it significance” (Weber 1949: 81). In other words, as cultural beings we have an attitude towards the world in which we live, and frequently this attitude is contemptuous, or if you will, critical. That is why Weber argues that one’s ideals, which are his source of cultural values, become meaningful only in “a struggle against another’s ideals” (Weber 1949: 60). As a result of this struggle, the “concrete form in which value-relevance occurs remains perpetually in flux, ever subject to change…” (Weber 1949: 111). The struggle for existence transforms our culture and subsequently our science. From this conception of scientific change, it does not follow that scientific findings are invalid or epistemologically relative. The new science is simply different from the old one because it has a different subject-matter that it seeks to explain. Science is forgetful of the forces that are driving it; it believes itself to be an end in itself:

All research in the cultural sciences in an age of specialization, once it is oriented towards a given subject matter through particular settings of the problems and has established its methodological principles, will consider the analysis of the data as an end in itself. It will discontinue assessing the value of the individual facts in terms of their relationships to ultimate value-ideas. Indeed, it will lose its awareness of its ultimate rootedness in value-ideas in general. And it is well that it should be so. But there comes
a moment when the atmosphere changes. The significance of the unreflectively utilized viewpoints becomes uncertain and the road is lost in the twilight. (Weber 1949: 112)

Once we start to reflect on our ideals in our struggle for existence, we may adopt different values because their political power in our life is more acceptable or desirable to us. As a result, we construct different scientific theories corresponding to our new values. We might say that the age of Weber was an age of acute reflection on values. In the late twentieth century in the West, similar concerns have arisen. Weber decided to explain values as “a matter of faith” in the final analysis (see Weber 1949: 55). After the Reformation, only a few people such as Søren Kierkegaard (1983) could defend faith. Weber was a pessimist; he did not have faith even in science. That is why his theory was a trembling stance which could not resolve the political problem of his age. And at the very last moment, when it is the time for Weber to render his judgment with regard to the iron cage of scientific rationality, he hesitates at the edge of science and values:

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals. For the last stage of this cultural development, it might be said: “Specialists without spirit, sensualist without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.”

But this brings us to the world of judgments of value and of faith, with which this purely historical discussion need not be burdened. (Weber 1930: 182)

The burden of faith is too heavy for the shoulders of science. Weber made science modest enough not to accept such a heavy burden. But, how can we ever condemn the iron cages in which we live if we do not dare to have faith in some ideals? It is in the context of this debate that both Weber and Kierkegaard— who are almost contemporary— reflect on the
same problem. While Weber hesitates between science and faith, Kierkegaard chooses faith. But, Kierkegaard says he is not capable of understanding it:

It is supposed to be difficult to understand Hegel, but to understand Abraham is a small matter. To go beyond Hegel is a miraculous achievement, but to go beyond Abraham is the easiest of all. I for my part have applied considerable time to understand Hegelian philosophy and believe that I have understood it fairly well; I am sufficiently brash to think that when I cannot understand particular passages despite all my pains, he himself may not have been entirely clear. All this I do easily, naturally, without any mental strain. Thinking about Abraham is another matter, however; then I am shattered. ... I am constantly repelled, and, despite all its passion, my thought cannot penetrate it, it cannot get ahead by a hairsbreadth. I stretch every muscle to get a perspective, and at the very same instant I become paralyzed. (Kierkegaard 1983: 32-33)

Abraham I cannot understand; in a certain sense I can learn nothing from him except to be amazed. ... our generation does not stop with faith, does not stop with the miracle of faith, turning water into wine—it goes further and turns wine into water. (Kierkegaard 1983: 37)

Weber did not reject faith and science, but he also did not simply accept them. He preferred to work with contradictions rather than reconciling them, for he did not have a logical way of doing so. In his name, many sociologists have decided to reject faith in favor of science. But the struggle of ideals did not leave science alone, and the result is the constant discontinuities and theoretical shifts that are an everyday reality of the discipline.

Karl R. Popper: A Rational Critique

I began my analysis with classical sociologists such as Comte, Durkheim, and Weber in order to show that they construct their theories in a highly political context. They all had critical interest in social policies; I showed that even Weber, who is widely believed to be a zealous proponent of scientific objectivity, never relinquished his interest in the practical implications of science. He only sought to make our awareness of the
relation of science and politics deeper. He even explained how sciences are transformed as a result of the interest of the ethico-political actors in new problems that have political or practical implications for them. Comte and Durkheim identified themselves as "positivist," while Weber, who he did not insist on that label, has also been identified as such (see for example Adorno 1976a: 59).

However, as Anthony Giddens notes, "'Positivism' over recent years has become more and more a term of abuse than a technical term of philosophy" (Giddens 1995: 136). Giddens makes a distinction between two ways that this term is used: the specific and general. Comte, Durkheim, and the members of the Vienna Circle, for example, used this term in a very specific way in social theory. Though they had in mind different notions of 'positivism', they had a more or less clear impression of what it meant. The term has also been employed in a diffused manner. I have already discussed the characteristics of this latter conception of positivism through Kolakowski in his discussion of Comte. Giddens also refers to those characteristics, which have to do with the belief in sense-impressions as the exclusive basis of valid knowledge, and with the subsequent separation of science and values (see Giddens 1995: 136-37). The logical positivists of the Vienna Circle also adhered to the core ideas of what Giddens refers to as this diffused notion of positivism (see Popper 1996: 45).

The positivism of the classical sociologists was clearly different from this later version of positivism, which they referred to as radical empiricism. These days, many writers use the term "positivism" in a pejorative sense to refer to this radical empiricism. One may wonder why. A close examination of the contemporary debate around positivism shows that its negative connotation is largely due to its attempt to sever all
direct ties between science and politics. I emphasize “direct” because I believe that, given the epistemological and scientific orientation of modern societies, by dismissing all forms of knowledge that cannot be reduced to sense-impressions as metaphysical or political, this positivism indirectly establishes science as the only criterion for social and personal politics.

Classical sociologists had serious reservations about this totalitarian and indirect involvement of science in ethico-political matters. They wanted science to play a self-conscious and restricted critical part in the practical affairs of social life. They did not dismiss the question of ethics as a meaningless metaphysical curiosity as did the logical positivists. That is why Comte assigned philosophy the task of dealing with ethics; Durkheim believed in the rationality of ethics as a work of “society,” which did not commit itself to erroneous principles. Weber assigned values to the cultural realm. The new positivism considered critical interests to be largely “empty metaphysics” (see Giddens 1995: 177). This meant the exclusion of all other forms of knowledge—whether philosophical, cultural, commonsense, or knowledge of the marginalized voices—from politics. While Habermas has interpreted this as a condemnation of “practical questions to irrationality” (see Giddens 1995: 179), Foucault sees it as a totalitarian attempt to silence all other voices:

The observing gaze manifests its virtues only in double silence: the relative silence of theories, imaginings, and whatever serves as an obstacle to the sensible immediate; and the absolute silence of all language that is anterior to that of the visible. Above the density of this double silence things can be heard at last, and heard solely by virtue of the fact that they are seen. (Foucault 1973: 108)

According to Foucault, this neutralization of other voices by positive sciences “would guarantee bourgeois morality a universality of fact and permit it to be imposed as a law
upon all forms of insanity” (Foucault 1965: 259, 206-207, 254-58). Adorno must have had a similar understanding of positivism when he commented in a more Weberian view that: “Positivism is the puritanism of knowledge. What puritanism achieves in the moral sphere is, under positivism, sublimated to the norms of knowledge” (Adorno 1976a: 55-56).

However, this positivistic orientation to science gave rise to different anti-positivist movements both in society in general and in the academic community. For example, insofar as the masses of people felt deprived of a meaningful political life, they manifested their contempt in counter-cultural and new conservative movements. In North American academia, a wide range of responses was formulated. In the social sciences, for example, the Frankfurt School, linguistic theories such as those of Mead and Habermas, postmodern theory and feminism gained recognition as alternative critical orientation to science. For the purpose of showing that the critical interest of the classical sociologist in science was also shared by non-sociologists, I have chosen to discuss Karl Popper’s response. The significance of Popper is that he makes one of the most successful epistemological attempts to save the critical moment of science which the classical sociologists were interested in.

As in the case of Weber, my reading of Popper is also informed by the role his writings played in the post-revolutionary debate in Iran. Immediately after the Islamic Revolution, the confrontations between different fractions of the movement which were concealed until then, surfaced. Secular groups, particularly the Marxists, began criticizing the Islamic government for being “reactionary” and opposed to scientific laws of history and society.
In this context Abdulkarim Soroush, a student of Popper, emerged as one of the most eminent defenders of Islamic thought against what he would sometimes refer to as "scientific dogmatism." He began to deliver public lectures on national TV and in various mosques from a Popperian position on such subjects as Hegel's philosophy of history, the philosophy of science and the question of knowledge and value. His main objective was to provide the public with a more realistic picture of science. People were reminded of the dangers of both scientism and anti-scientific policies. On the one hand, the atomic bomb and the fate of Hiroshima were cited as examples of blind scientism. On the other hand, it was argued that too many political and ethical expectations from science might backfire and lead to an anti-science attitude. Joseph Stalin's opposition to the science of genetics, which Stalin considered to be anti-Communist, was a favored example. These arguments played an important role in discrediting Communist ideology in the eyes of many intellectuals.

Gradually the honeymoon between religious conservatives and Popper's philosophy turned into a strong sense of repulsion. The conservatives had a new spokesman, Reza Dawary, a second generation student of Heidegger. Dawary criticized liberalism for being a manifestation of Western hegemony. He suggested that Iranians should maintain their own distinct cultural and political identity. Dawary and Soroush represented opposing socio-political forces in the Iranian society. The fight became personal and even extended to Popper and Heidegger's personal political history during the Second World War.

Soroush had introduced the other side of Popper's philosophy into Iranian politics. He argued that according to Popper's falsification thesis, we could not prove or
verify anything; therefore, all ideas and social policies had to be considered provisional and open to constant scientific criticism. Soroush accepted that social policies could not be derived directly from science, but he insisted that science was able to reject them. During this debate, Popper’s *Open Society and its Enemies* was translated into Persian at least twice and widely distributed. Soroush also argued that the main thesis of *The Open Society* is based on Popper’s falsification principle. A government and its social policies could not claim democratic legitimacy simply because they were established by the support of the majority. Democratic legitimacy was also a negative process. That is to say, a legitimate politics is not positively established by the majority vote, but it is rather earned through a negative process of public criticism. If a political system is open to critique to the extent that it can be rejected and changed without physical force and violence, it has democratic legitimacy. This was how Soroush read *The Open Society*. Now, let us put this in the context of Popper’s general project of the philosophy of science.

In his opening address to the Sixteenth German Sociology Congress in 1961, titled *The Logic of the Social Sciences*, Popper, like Weber, insisted that “Knowledge does not start from perceptions or observations or the collection of data or facts, but it starts from problems” (Popper 1976a: 88). He went on to add that “The method of the social sciences, like that of the natural sciences, consists in trying out tentative solutions to certain problems” (Popper 1976a: 89). In these two brief statements, Popper’s idea of *rational criticism* is succinctly summarized. Let us elaborate them. To begin with a problem means “scientific discovery depends on instruction and selection” (1985a: 83). That is to say, scientists start with *instructions* received from within a theoretical
structure according to which they select their problem and the relevant data. According to Popper, "All observations are theory-impregnated: there is no pure, disinterested, theory-free observation" (Popper 1985a: 84).

To understand Popper's assertion that scientific findings are tentative solutions to certain problems, we need to consider his views on induction. Popper argues that science consists of law-like statements which are based on observation or experiments with individual instances. No matter how numerous our observations might be, there is no logical way of inferring a universal law regarding an infinite number of instances based on a finite number of experiments. Therefore, all scientific laws must be regarded as hypothetical statements because empirical observations cannot prove anything. However, even one instance of a contradictory experimental finding, i.e. a counterinstance, is enough to refute a law-like hypothetical statement (see Popper 1985b: 102). According to Popper, this process of refutation is a deductive one, and this is why he calls his approach rational criticism (see Popper 1976a: 98-99). The critical moment of Popper's philosophy lies exactly in this thesis, which is also referred to as the falsification principle: science cannot logically prove its theories, but it can refute them.

In addition to being an epistemological critique of positivism, Popper's philosophy also has critical significance with regard to ethico-political questions. At the Sixteenth German Sociology Congress, Adorno and Habermas attacked Popper for being a positivist, and thereby for not allowing the possibility of rational critique. Popper strongly denied this charge. He charged that they did not understand his position and their replies to him were nothing but "empty verbalism" and "trivialities in high-sounding
language” which some German sociologists are taught to excel in (see Popper 1976b: 295-97):

But the fact is that throughout my life I have combated positivist epistemology, under the name ‘positivism’. I do not deny, of course, the possibility of stretching the term ‘positivist’ until it covers anybody who takes any interest in natural science, so that it can be applied even to opponents of positivism, such as myself. ... I have always fought for the right to operate freely with speculative theories, against the narrowness of the ‘scientific’ theories of knowledge and, especially, against all forms of sensualistic empiricism. ... Finally I have not only stressed the meaningfulness of metaphysical assertions and the fact that I am myself a metaphysical realist, but I have also analysed the important historical role played by metaphysics in the formation of scientific theories. (Popper 1976b: 299-300).

Popper has every right to be disturbed by the accusation of positivism, for his theory of knowledge has challenged the totalitarian tendency of the later positivism. He makes science more modest than Weber did, for Weber only denied science the possibility of making ethical claims while Popper, in addition, barred it from even making definitive factual statements. However, he acknowledges that he may be called a positivist if one stretches the term so much that it covers anyone who has an interest in science. This interest, which Popper shares with the classical sociologists discussed here, is a critical interest.

Popper describes his theory as a critical approach in a Kantian sense (Popper 1976a: 90). This means that he seeks to establish the limits of knowledge and show what we can legitimately expect from it. Popper has an interest in the part that science can play with regard to the practical implications of knowledge. He would perhaps agree with Adorno that:

Science should be the recognition of the truth and untruth of what the phenomenon under study seeks to be. There is no knowledge which is not,
at the same time, critical by virtue of its inherent distinction between true and false. (Adorno 1976b: 83)

Among modern social scholars, it was Foucault who most explicitly formulated the theory of the politics of truth and systematically explained how establishing or rejecting some ideas as true can have an ethico-political significance. Even though Popper did not always theorize the political implications of truth, he was attentive to scientific claims to truth. This was, perhaps, because he was aware of the highly esteemed position of science in modern culture. As Popper notes, he believed in “the right to operate freely with speculative theories,” but he does not want to let free speculations pass as science. Given the power of science in modern societies, it is absolutely necessary that ideas not make claims to scientific status unless they are formulated such that they can potentially be refuted. Put differently, science must be subjected to rational criticism. Otherwise, our political differences will be resolved through violence:

Man has achieved the possibility of being critical of his own tentative trials, of his own theories. These theories are no longer incorporated in his organism, or in his genetic system: they may be formulated in books, or in journals; and they can be critically discussed, and shown to be erroneous, without killing any authors or burning any books: without destroying the ‘carriers’. ... If the method of rational critical discussion should establish itself, then this should make the use of violence obsolete: critical reason is the only alternative to violence so far discovered. (Popper 1976b: 292)

We can conclude that Popper’s theory of rational criticism is significant for the purpose of critique in two ways. On the one hand, it opposes the totalitarian tendency of positivism, which becomes the only political voice after silencing all others. And on the other hand, it seeks to resolve political issues through a rational scientific process rather through speculative ideas, which in most cases leads to violence in the political arena. Popper tries to achieve these objectives by honoring scientific theories as solutions to
practical problems, but in a provisional manner, i.e. through openness to criticism. This is the critical significance of the falsification principle. Thus, a brief history of how Popper arrived at this principle may further support our understanding of its function as a critique.

Popper explains that in his youth, Austrian society “was full of revolutionary slogans and ideas, and new and often wild theories” (Popper 1981:93). He mentions that he was interested in Einstein’s theory of relativity, Marx’s theory of history, Freud’s psycho-analysis, and Alfred Adler’s so-called “individual psychology” (Popper 1981: 93). He happened also to work for Adler in relation to the welfare of children of the working class in Vienna. Popper says that he gradually became suspicious of the explanatory power of theories of Marx, Freud and Alder. He could not explain why once his friends studied these theories, it seemed to them that “the world was full of verifications” of these theories (Popper 1981: 94). He reports on an eye-opening incident:

Once, in 1919, I reported to him [Adler] a case which to me did not seem particularly Adlerian, but which he found no difficulty in analysing in terms of his theory of inferiority feelings, although he had not even seen the child. Slightly shocked, I asked him how he could be so sure. “Because of my thousandfold experience,” he replied; whereupon I could not help saying: “And with this new case, I suppose, your experience has become thousand-and-one-fold.” (Popper 1981: 94)

Popper goes on to say that either Adler or Freud’s theories, though different, could explain this case. In fact, he “could not think of any human behaviour which could not be interpreted in terms of either theory” (Popper 1981: 95). However, Einstein’s theory had made some specific predictions, and one could definitely show if they did not prove true. Thus, Popper came to the conclusion that “the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability” (Popper 1981: 97). In other words,
science earns its reputation by making its claims available for refutation without resorting to ambiguous and tautological statements in order to protect itself from criticism. As such, science will deserve to be an ethico-political force by establishing the truth in a culture that believes scientific truth has value. This is basically a Weberian argument, though more logically sophisticated and explicit.

Given the epistemological orientation of Western culture, which both Comte and Foucault trace back to Christianity, it is quite understandable that Popper and all the sociologists I have discussed in this part considered logical theoretical constructions to be the most effective form of critique. Popper, for example, was so excited by the prospect of resolving practical problems through imaginative theoretical constructions that he proudly describes himself as “a champion of the primacy of the theoretical and the hypothetical” (Popper 1996:89). These scholars, whom we may consider “positivists” in the extended sense of being interested in science, shared a passion for theory and critique. As I explained, their theories, to various degrees, did influence the course of politics in many different societies.

However, the primacy of theory which characterizes Western culture cannot be explained solely in terms of the epistemological legitimation of scientific theories. We cannot say that theory is a critical force because it happens that modern culture values scientific theories, because one can argue that science itself, through a complicated process, is responsible for the rise of this culture. Besides, Popper shows that, epistemologically speaking, as logical constructions scientific theories cannot affirm even factual statements. And Weber too argues that there is no logical relationship between scientific theories and ethico-political ideas. Therefore, we should pause and ask: Why
are theories considered politically relevant as far as our actual practices are concerned? Is it because of a false belief on the part of non-scientists? If so, why are these scholars themselves interested in theory as a political means?

Popper comes very close to offering an epistemological justification for the political interest in theory. From an epistemological point of view, he seeks to keep science politically relevant in a modest way. He agrees with Durkheim that "One can affirm nothing that science denies;" however, he does not assert that "one can deny nothing that science affirms," for he does not believe that science can affirm anything. According to Popper's philosophy, science, whose function is refutation, logically cannot have any political significance except that of nullifying the political power of the knowledge that people have somehow formed. In other words, science is political in a negative sense, i.e. as a force (political) of depoliticization. But, restricting himself to an epistemological conception of knowledge and formal rules of logic, he cannot explain where those forms of knowledge that become politically void as a result of being scientifically falsified get their political significance in the first place. Weber provided the best answer to this question from that point of view which conceives theory only as a logical construction. He insisted that the ethico-political significance of theory is only a cultural matter, not a logical one.

Both Weber and Popper understand scientific theories only as logical and epistemological constructions. In other words, science is understood in epistemological terms as a series of propositions which have a logical relationship with one another. Adorno recognizes the significance of logic and rationalist epistemology in Popper's
philosophy, and hence he begins his response to Popper by explaining the weakness of "logical" approaches to knowledge:

I interpret the concept of logic more broadly than Popper does. I understand this concept as the concrete mode of procedure of sociology rather than general rules of thought, of deduction. (Adorno 1976b: 105)

To understand the positive power of knowledge and its appeal to political actors in spite of its logical indifference to ethics and politics, one needs to move beyond the epistemological conception of critique and science. This is what Adorno sought to do, and he comes very close to Foucault's conception of knowledge as discourse in his response to Popper. He proposes what I would characterize as a discursive notion of logic in place of the formal one:

[T]he cognitive ideal of the consistent, preferably simple, mathematically elegant explanation falls down where reality itself, society, is neither consistent, nor simple, nor neutrally left to the discretion of categorial formulation. Rather, on the contrary, it is anticipated by its object as the categorial system of discursive logic. Society is full of contradictions and yet determinable; rational and irrational in one, a system and yet fragmented; blind nature and yet mediated by consciousness. (Adorno 1976b: 106)

An epistemological conception of knowledge is too sensitive to contradictions to allow theory to influence socio-cultural processes in a contradictory fashion. But, this is what happens every day with regard to sociological theories. What contradiction can be more serious than theory having no logical political significance, and yet exerting political power exactly in the name of being a logically sound theory? Adorno resolved this contradiction by making a distinction between the formal logic of theory construction and the discursive logic of social practice.

Adorno and many other scholars have shown that we need to move beyond the epistemological understanding of knowledge in order to explain its political significance.
The attempts to go beyond epistemology have taken different directions. Habermas, for example, tries to weaken the primacy of theory through a linguistic approach to truth and ethics. And in the field of the sociology of knowledge, some scholars have worked towards a sociological understanding of science. There are also those who try to analyze science and knowledge as ideology.

In what follows, I will explain the extent to which all of these approaches to knowledge and science are still epistemologically oriented. Though a step forward, they stop short of resolving the dilemma of science and values (or politics). I will argue that Foucault's understanding of the discursive moment of science is the only complete shift beyond the epistemological conception of science, for theory understood as a discourse, is primarily an event rather than a logical construction. I shall also argue that critique is above all an ontological matter, and so to this degree, both discourse and its politics should be understood in non-epistemological terms.
Part II
The Foucault Shift
Chapter IV
A Marxian Prelude

Marx on Critique: A Digression

In Part I, I focused on the works of the classical sociologists and Karl Popper to show critical potentials of the epistemological approach to society, ethics and politics. I also explained some of the tensions and limits of such an approach. In this part, I seek to explore the prospects of an alternative ontological approach to the same question mainly through Foucault’s work. I will argue that ontological critical practices will have a positive impact on sociological theorization because it does not resolve political issues through scientific theories. To show that such an approach is not a strange element in sociological debate, I begin this part with a discussion of Marx’s ontological orientation. I am well aware that Foucault himself did not find Marx’s theoretical position close to that of his. In fact, he believed that Marxism belonged to the same modern episteme that he sought to criticize in his works. However, I intend to show that there is an ontological dimension in Marx’s work, though not as theoretically advanced as that of Foucault.

Thus, this chapter should not be viewed as a digression from my main thesis, which deals with the explanation of theoretical shifts in sociology. Here, I am also concerned with discussing two theoretical shifts introduced into the social sciences as a result of Marx’s writing on critique: one by Marx and the other by his readers. Among the classical sociologists, Marx represents a discontinuity insofar as he deliberately tries to move beyond the consciousness-model and epistemological conception of theory and

165
critique. Nevertheless, later, others brought this shift (which was to have profound consequences for theory and practice) into conformity with the consciousness-model of thought. I say “others” because I do not want to attribute this reversal to any particular group (for example, to Marx’s disciples, or to his critics). Rather, I think this shift was so radical in the context of the general episteme of the time¹ that even Marx himself did not have any readymade conceptual tool for explaining his conception of critique and knowledge. It needed first to be understood within the existing episteme in order to have any meaning. Thus, the general episteme of Western thought appropriated Marx’s digression as a mainstream intellectual contribution through a process of double negation. That is, Marx first criticized the approach of the critics of ideology for being purely epistemological, but Marx’s readers read his critique as an epistemological form of criticism.

I will explain that Marx shifted from an epistemological conception of theory and practice to an ontological one. However, the rise of the critique of ideology was responsible for turning Marx onto his head. That is to say, the critique of ideology turned Marx’s thesis upside-down by bestowing primacy to theories and ideas, albeit a false primacy. Even though the term ideology has a negative connotation in Marx’s writings, he does not use it to designate a “false consciousness.” He employs this term in its original sense as the “science of ideas.” I will argue that Marx is critical of the ideological approach to thought because of its inherent epistemological orientation. In this context, I discuss Marx as a prelude to Foucault’s shift to discourse. I do not intend to imply that Foucault’s approach to science and knowledge is informed by his reading of

¹ I use this qualification because in other periods in the West and in other cultures what I am referring to here as a radical shift was a conventional wisdom. In the course of my discussion of Foucault’s notion of
Marx. On the contrary, Foucault expresses little interest in Marx. However, I would like to suggest Marx’s views on knowledge and critique are an indication of how the status of knowledge in the West has become problematic. Marx’s views also provide us with some clues on how this question might be approached.

Let us begin with some of the concerns raised regarding the status of positive sciences in Marx’s work. In *The German Ideology* Marx criticizes the empirical sciences for their indifference to practical matters, and asserts, “As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists” (Marx and Engels 1970: 48). Marx goes on to argue, as though the positivism of empirical sciences were false, and claims, “Where speculation ends—in real life—there *real* positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men” (Marx and Engels 1970: 48; my emphasis). I would like to make two observations with regard to these remarks.

First, from these quotations we may infer that Marx is not willing to work within the existing positivistic model of science, and this is the reason for using the adjective “real” to distinguish his positive science from empiricism. As I mentioned, positivism was adopted as a form of critique by many, but Marx’s writings are an indication that there were those who had serious concerns with regard to the critical status of this approach. In France, positivism, perhaps as a result of Comte’s efforts, was accepted by some members of the working class as a means of achieving their political objectives. However, Marx and his fellow Council-members in the International Working Men’s Association thought otherwise, and banned a French society of proletarians from joining critique this point will be further clarified.
the Association until they abandoned their “positivist” principles. Here is Marx’s account of the incident:

On February 8, 1870, the Paris “Society of Positivist Proletarians” applied to the General Council for admission. The Council replied that the principles of the positivists, the part of the society’s special rules concerning capital, were in flagrant contradiction with the preamble of the General Rules; that the society had therefore to drop them and join the International not as “positivists” but as “proletarians,” while remaining free to reconcile their theoretical ideas with the Association’s general principles. Realising the justness of this decision, the section joined the International. (Marx and Engels 1969: 261)

Thus, the “positivists” under the pretext of the General Rules were asked to get rid of their positivism and “freely” reconcile their theoretical ideas with those of the General Council.

Given Marx’s contempt for the positivism of his day, we should explain the significance of its rejection by Marx. This brings me to a second observation with regard to the above quotations from The German Ideology. A few lines after the sentences quoted above Marx says that his principles distinguish him from “the ideologists” (Marx and Engels 1970: 48). Thus, we may suspect that there is something common between the empiricists and the ideologists because Marx seeks to move beyond both of these groups. Since I believe that has to do with the latter group’s granting of primacy to theory over practice, let us elaborate this point.

It is true that Marx makes the claim that his premises can “be verified in a purely empirical away” (Marx and Engels 1970: 42). But as we noted, he also makes a distinction between his real positive science and that of others. Besides, as Thomas Kemple notes, “Marx is not interested in elaborating a scientific or pedantically bookish conception of historical events...” (Kemple 1995: 60). For example, Kemple points out:
Marx elaborated a theory of the proletariat before he had empirically verified the real existence of this class, before he had read the bourgeois economists of his day, and without at the same time conceiving of a program for the exercise of this class's political power. (Kemple 1995: 124)... For this reason, then, particular formulations by Marx often appear to be abstract or even fictional with respect to the historical realities they are supposed to refer or apply to. (Kemple 1995: 128)

This kind of remark on Marx would not surprise us if they were made by a hostile critic of Marx. But Kemple is a sympathetic reader, and by making these comments he seeks to challenge conventional readings of Marx. To bring Marx's ontological conception of critique to light, he has to be even more emphatic:

Today even Marxists, if not many bourgeois political economists, tend to look back nostalgically on the clarity of the scientific achievement and empirical application of Marx's theory of surplus value. Insofar as anyone thinks anything about Marx anymore, his work tends to be viewed at best as an impressive speculative venture and at worst as a mere speculation that is now outdated as much as by new scientific revelation of capitalism's inner workings as by the "illuminated picture" [...] or "inverted image" [...] of social reality projected through the smoke screens of its ideological media. (Kemple 1995: 162-63)

Kemple argues that today Marxists are faced with two crises: "a crisis of relevance" due to a "lack of manifestly 'objective' conditions for revolution," and "a crisis of identity" because "their own critical science becomes either forgotten or assimilated into the established division of (academic) labor" (Kemple 1995: 171). According to Kemple, we need to move beyond traditional readings of Marx if we are to get over these crises. He insists that there is an ontological moment in Marx's theory, which is "a theory that puts the empirical verification of its abstractions second to a theoretical truth that anticipates (without thereby predicting) its own historical realization" (Kemple 1995: 125). Therefore, the significance of Marx's work for a reader
at the turn of the millennium, in an era of postindustrial capitalism in the West, lies in the capacity of Marx’s theory for an ontological critique of contemporary political economy.

Kemple discusses Marx’s interest in aesthetics to show how this dimension of his theory may contribute to a critique of contemporary society. Later, we will see that Foucault also considers aesthetics an ontological form of critique that does not give rise to many of the dilemmas inherent in epistemologically-oriented forms of critique. With regard to Marx, Kemple notes:

His concern is with the potential of art to express a natural truth that is held fast to one’s heart ... The radical potential of the aesthetic dimension of critical thinking lies in its double aspect as both seductive and alluring charm (Reiz) and a repulsive stimulus or irritation (Reiz) that presents the beautiful image of some other form of human existence which is both timelessly past and yet to be realized. (Kemple 1995: 175; my emphasis)

In this passage, I have emphasized “natural” and “existence” to underscore the idea that this dimension of critique has little to do with epistemological validity or empirical verification. Rather, it is an existential experience. Although aesthetics constitutes a very privileged ontological realm, there are many other human experiences that are of an ontological nature, and they may also be significant for the purposes of critique.

Thus, let us consider the ontological or existential moment of critique in Marx’s work from another angle. Technically speaking, I understand critique in its Foucauldian sense as resistance to governmentality. More generally, it is a reaction against the social processes which gives rise to human discomfort and suffering. In his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Marx makes the observation that human beings are sensuous subjects, and as such suffering beings:

To be sensuous is to suffer (to be subjected to the action of another). Man as an objective sensuous being is therefore a suffering being, and because he feels his suffering [Leiden], he is a passionate
Therefore, we can say that for Marx, critique is a passion for attaining a new state of being. As Kemple argues, he “envisions the potential emergence of what he calls ‘a different subject’ who is free to develop in mutual relationships with others ‘who renew themselves even as they renew the world of wealth which they create’” (Kemple 1995: 41, quoting Marx 1973: 712).

The act of self-renewal (or self-formation) is always carried out under constraints of social conditions that have to be transformed. When we say critique is ontological, we want to underscore the idea that it is the existential experience of these conditions that induces a critical response on the part of the social subjects, not their “theoretical” explanations of such conditions. Many engage in an epistemologically-oriented critique of theories in order to transform social subjects because they overlook this ontological dimension of social experience and fail to see that social theories understood as discourse are events rather than logical constructions. I will discuss the discursive dimension of social theories in my analysis of Foucault’s approach to science. Here I will discuss Marx’s interest in the ontological aspect of critique.

With regard to the question of social suffering, Marx refers to his experience of shame in Holland for being a German. Here again, we can see the part that existential experiences such as shame and self-esteem play with respect to critique:

It is a truth which at the very least teaches us to see the hollowness of our patriotism, the perverted nature of our state and to hide our faces in shame. I can see you smile and say: what good will that do? Revolutions are not made by shame. And my answer is that shame is a revolution in itself... Shame is a kind of anger turned in on itself. And if a whole nation were to feel ashamed it would be like a lion recoiling in order to spring. I admit that even this shame is not yet to be found in Germany; on the contrary the
wretches are still patriots. (Marx to Ruge, March 1843, in Marx 1975b: 199-200)

Let me draw actual historical support for this ontological conception of revolution in Marx from a strange source, the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Both Marxists and so-called impartial analysts alike have written on the Iranian Revolution. With the exception of Foucault (1988), I know of no study that has even bothered to entertain national shame as a cause of the Revolution. The Revolution is explained in terms of too much modernization in a backward country which was not ready for it, or a class conflict between modern capitalists and traditional forces of feudalism. I have always thought that there must be a reason why the western-educated intellectuals and the Shia’ priesthood who economically speaking were better off than the rest of the population, were the most active elements in the Revolution. Universities and theological schools were the birthplace of revolutionary movements.

Universities were the main point of socio-cultural contact between Iran and the West. One of the revolutionary themes introduced by Sorbonne-educated sociologist Ali Shariati into Iranian universities was *Bazgashte be Khishtan* (‘Returning to Ourselves’). Shariati was, without any doubt, among the most influential revolutionary thinkers in the universities. He emphasized the Islamic identity of Iranians and that it was imperative to return to Islamic culture and resist Western cultural hegemony. In a correspondence with his son, who was studying in the US before the Revolution, he shared some of his experiences in Paris as a young man. He advised his son not to limit his interactions only with the Iranian community in the US, but to develop a more balanced personality by also

---

2 Unfortunately, at the time of writing this dissertation, I have no access to references in order to document my accounts of the Revolution. I thus report only what I have clear personal memory of.
interacting with non-Iranians. But, he warned his son about a risk involved in such ventures. He described his personal feelings of humiliation in Paris as a result of coming into contact with the Western culture. He was so humiliated that he decided to commit suicide. The great Persian poet of the thirteenth century, Rumi, saved him. Shariati began reading Rumi in order to renew his self-esteem, and he told his son that it was such an uplifting experience that he wanted him to be in contact with his cultural heritage too. I discussed Shariati as an example of why well-to-do, Western-educated Iranians at the peak of economic prosperity became so discontented with who they were.

Now, let me continue my account with a consideration of Ayatollah Khomeini, who was undoubtedly the most powerful revolutionary voice within the Islamic world. He did not make many autobiographical comments about himself. On the very few occasions that he did refer to his personal experience, he expressed deep sorrow for the humiliation inflicted upon the nation by the Shah’s regime. Perhaps, his most important speech was delivered thirty-five years ago when the Shah granted American military personnel stationed in Iran total immunity against prosecution for crimes they might commit in Iran. Here is the general tone and terms of that speech:

We are from God and turn unto him. I am not able to express the sorrow of my heart. My heart is under immense pressure. Since I heard the news of the recent events in Iran I could not sleep. I am so grieved that with the sorrow of the heart I am counting the days and expecting my death. They sold our dignity for a few American dollars. Hereby I tell the world that our people did not sell themselves, it was a puppet government who brought this indignity upon them. Hereby I declare the parliament that ratified this shameful treaty as illegal. Members of the parliament were supposed to represent people in the areas that the people authorized them. No one had given them the authority to do this to us. Some of them told me they were forced to vote for the treaty, I told them they should have resigned instead of betraying the nation. Today, an American’s dog has more legal right in this country than an Iranian. If the Shah of Iran by accident kills a dog which belongs to an American, he can sue the Shah in
the Iranian court. But if an American kills the Shah, we cannot prosecute him. He must go to the States and they will decide his punishment. Today, I tell the American president that he is the most hated person in the eyes of the Iranian people for the indignity he has inflicted upon us. (Ayatollah Khomeini)³

One can cite many more examples such as this from other political activists who got involved in political movements because of their existential experience of indignity. As Marx said, “shame is a revolution in itself.” However, revolutionary feelings can only be experienced when one has a sense of dignity and self-esteem:

Man's self-esteem, his sense of freedom, must be re-awakened in the breast of these people. This sense vanished from the world with the Greeks, and with Christianity it took up residence in the blue mists of heaven, but only with its aid can society ever again become a community of men that can fulfil their highest needs, a democratic state. (Marx 1975b: 201)

Shame, self-esteem, suffering, and aesthetic experiences are all ontological events. That is to say, they act as a real and concrete, as opposed to abstract and logical, force on the subject's self. They leave their marks on the self, and as such they transform it. Kemple has brought this largely neglected aspect of Marx's critical theory into light. He argues that it is in this context that Marx's work becomes relevant for us, “not just because his "theory" has kept up with our history but because we may read in it the trace of some ineffable if irresistible charm that somehow both attracts and repels us” (Kemple 1995: 192). To further support the idea that Marx sought to move beyond an abstract and logical notion of theory to a more ontological (and one might add, aesthetic) one, in what follows I briefly examine Marx's criticism of ideology, which is widely believed to be the crux of his critical approach. I do not deny the significance of Marx's criticism of

³ This is a free translation from the audio tape of the speech. There is some paraphrasing, and the order of some sentences is not exact.
ideology for his critical theory. However, I will argue that it should be understood as an attempt to move beyond the epistemological notion of science and critique rather than as an attack on a false consciousness.

With regard to the question of ideology, *The German Ideology* is perhaps the most cited work of Marx. I believe “German Ideology” in the title of the book can be changed to “the German conception of Knowledge,” “the German Approach to Knowledge,” or “the German Epistemology” without any fear of misrepresentation. In other words, it is a critique of a theory of knowledge, not knowledge itself. Even though the title and the contents of the book may suggest that Marx is concerned with the particular theory of knowledge prevailing in Germany, a careful analysis will show that his concern is also with the epistemological conception of knowledge in general.

It is the primacy of theory over practice (or the concrete conditions of life if you will) that is being rejected in Marx’s critique of ideology. Let us start with a comparison between Marx and Popper, who describes himself as a champion of the primacy of theory. Popper focuses on theory as an abstract logical construction, rather than as a discursive event which need not be free from contradictions. Thus, he argues that:

... if contradictions need not be avoided, then any criticism and any discussion becomes impossible since criticism always consists in pointing out contradictions either within the theory to be criticized, or between it and some facts of experience. (Popper 1966: 215)

This is why for Popper critique is rational, and science plays a very crucial part in this regard. And “rational” in this Popperian context means deductive rules of logic. While Popper approaches knowledge in terms of its logical rationality, a postmodern writer such as Jean-François Lyotard understands it with reference to the rules of language games (see Lyotard 1984: 14-17). And Habermas speaks of communicative rationality as “a
standard for evaluating systematically distorted forms of communication” (Habermas 1992: 50). These writers in the final analysis commit knowledge to some rules of “rationality” understood in its epistemological sense as abstract mental criteria. It is alleged that without such criteria discussion, communication, and critique becomes “irrational”.

In his criticism of ideology Marx argues that the rationality of epistemological theories is abstract and separated from the real conditions of life. As Marx puts it: “It goes without saying that, in theory, it is easy to make an abstraction of the contradictions that are met with at every moment in actual reality. This theory would therefore become idealised reality” (Marx and Engels 1975: 116). To move beyond this theoretical idealization of the reality, Marx feels that he should refute the ideological approach to science and theory. Such an ideological approach is essentially idealistic; it idealizes the reality, and the Germans are best at this according to Marx: “If the Englishman transforms men into hats, the German transforms hats into ideas” (Marx and Engels 1975: 96). It is in this sense that Marx criticizes the Germans for their ideological approach.

The pejorative connotation of the term ideology in Marx’s work has very little to do with the popular conception of ideology as class interests disguised under the mask of science. It is probably Engels who is partly responsible for the formulation of this notion of ideology although it is true that Engels is listed as the co-author of several major works by Marx, including The German Ideology.

In fact, Marx himself never refers to ideology as a false form of knowledge which is opposed to a correct form. Rather, he criticizes and refutes it as an approach to theory and knowledge. For Marx, an ideological approach is a critical attempt to correct ideas
according to some reference to certain epistemological criteria. I suspect that in addition to Engels’s words, Marx’s preface to *The German Ideology* has been a source of confusion for many readers. In the very first sentence of his preface, Marx uses the phrase “false conceptions,” in a polemical reference to the Young Hegelians. One may get confused about whom Marx is speaking in the first sentences of the preface, if one does not put it in the context of the whole book, or does not take note of the polemical nature of the preface. This is how Marx begins:

Hitherto men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions about themselves, about what they are and what they ought to be. They have arranged their relationships according to their ideas of God, of normal man, etc. The phantoms of their brains have got out of their hands. They, the creators, have bowed down before their creations. Let us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas, dogma, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they are pining away. Let us revolt against the rules of thoughts. Let us teach men, says one, to exchange these imaginations for thoughts which correspond to the essence of man; says the second, to take up a critical attitude to them; says the third, to knock them out of their heads; and—existing reality will collapse. (Marx and Engels 1970: 37)

It should be noted that these are the words of the Young Hegelians such as Feuerbach that Marx is caricaturing. It was Feuerbach, who suggested God is a creation of men, and now the creators have bowed down before their creation. It was the Young Hegelians who believed people were under the spell of false consciousness because their brains, i.e. their ideas, “got out of their hands.” It was they who sought to fix people’s false ideas radically through critique. Marx is not accusing them of being “ideologically motivated”; rather he is criticizing their ideological form of critique. These ideologists were true believers of a consciousness model of knowledge, which understands knowledge merely as a mental phenomenon. It was in this context that Marx first wrote his widely quoted sentence:
“Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life” (Marx and Engels 1970: 47).

It is against the Young Hegelians’ zeal for a theoretical critique of the socio-political realities that Marx proposes his ontological approach to social change. Social transformations are carried out by suffering social actors, not by an ideological “revolt against the rules of thoughts.” Marx’s criticism of the ideologists is directed toward a philosophy of knowledge that gives primacy to theory over practice. According to Marx, these ideologists conceive of historical transformations in terms of “theoretical struggles,” and believe “The ‘idea’, the ‘conception’ of the people in question about their practice, is transformed into the sole determining, active force, which controls and determines their practice” (Marx and Engels 1970: 60). Marx seeks to move beyond theory as conceived in the consciousness model. He questions a model of thought, an approach to knowledge, which is what I am calling the epistemological critique. This is why, when he criticizes Feuerbach as an ideologist, he says “[H]e wants to establish consciousness of this fact, that is to say, like other theorists, merely to produce a correct consciousness about an existing fact” (Marx and Engels 1970: 60). There should be no doubt that the ideologists criticized by Marx were epistemologists, for epistemology has no other concern but the production of “correct consciousness.” Ideology is concerned with the mental activity of human beings in a very narrow sense of the word (that is, as apart from their practical, material activity).

I have no intention of suggesting that Marx does not make judgments about theories as being true or false. In fact, in his preface to the first edition of Capital, Marx introduces his work as a “free scientific inquiry” that will undoubtedly provoke many
enemies (Marx 1977: 92). I want to argue that Marx, unlike other classical sociologists, does not seek to transform social life by means of scientific theories. Therefore, after a discussion of Thomas Kemple’s work, which established this point in the context of Marx’s project in general, I sought to show that Marx’s criticism of ideology provided additional evidence in support of this reading. This means that Marx’s conception of theory and critique is basically an ontological one. It is quite natural for him to believe his theory is a true account of reality, but this truth cannot be assessed by formal logical criteria. It is a truth about social life acquired in direct contact with it:

> [T]hese theoreticians are merely utopians who, to meet the wants of the oppressed classes, improvise systems and go in search of a regenerating science. But in the measure that history moves forward, and with it the struggle of the proletariat assumes clearer outlines, they no longer need to seek science in their minds; they have only to take note of what is happening before their eyes and to become its mouthpiece. So long as they look for science and merely make systems,...they see in poverty nothing but poverty, without seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overthrow the old system. (Marx and Engels 1975: 117; my emphasis)

According to Marx, an ontological theoretician is not speculative thinker, she is rather a kind of “mouthpiece” insofar as her existential experience is the reality of the conditions that she is describing.

Let us compare the above passage taken from *The Poverty of Philosophy*, which is supposed to have been written by both Marx and Engels, with some of Engels’s writings. As we have noted, Marx does not oppose science to ideology. For Marx, science and ideology belong to the same category of epistemological approaches to critique and knowledge. In a “Supplement to the Preface of 1870” to *The Peasant War in Germany*, Engels writes:

> The German workers have two important advantages over those of the rest of Europe. First, they belong to the most theoretical people of Europe, and
have retained the sense of theory which the so-called “educated” classes of Germany have almost completely lost. Without German philosophy, particularly that of Hegel, German scientific socialism—the only scientific socialism that has ever existed—would never have come into being. Without the workers’ sense of theory this scientific socialism would never have entered their flesh and blood as much as is the case. (Engels 1969: 169)

This emphasis on the significance of scientific theories for socio-political transformations is more in agreement with Comte than Marx. In his praise of Hegelian philosophy, Engels also forgets that Marx criticized this philosophy in its most radical form as formulated by the Young Hegelians. According to Marx, “Hegel’s task is not to discover the truth of empirical existence but to discover the empirical existence of the truth” (Marx 1975a: 98), which is another way of saying that Hegel’s theory was an abstract form of consciousness.

In short, Marx’s criticism of ideology is not directed against its falsehood as much as it is against its abstract nature. That is why he does not seek to replace the ideologists’ abstractions with a theoretical abstraction of his own. Rather, he suggests that a true knowledge of social life must be formed ontologically. He considers the primacy of theory over practice to be an upside-down historical construction. Since “consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life process” (Marx and Engels 1970: 47), in their emphasis on consciousness ideologists are manifesting their actual life process. According to Marx: “If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of the objects on the retina does from their physical life-process” (Marx and Engels 1970: 47).
Thus, it seems that whenever Marx wants to call our attention to abstract theories, he refers to their ideological character; however, when he wants to emphasize that a theory is represented as science but is actually a false conviction, he uses terms like doctrine or theology. For example, he criticizes Proudhon for writing like the theologians, who think, “Every religion which is not theirs is an invention of men, while their own is an emanation from God” (Marx and Engels 1975: 112). Marx charges that for someone like Proudhon, every other theory is a reflection of the socio-historical conditions except his. That is to say, for him, “there has been history, but there is no longer any” (Marx and Engels 1975: 113). We see that this is exactly the opposite of the conventional critique of ideology. Given the evidence in support of Marx’s conception of critique as ontological, it is hard to argue that Marx criticizes Proudhon for what he is himself guilty of.

In sum, Marx is interested in assigning an active role to knowledge in the sphere of politics and social life. In his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, he declares, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it” (Marx and Engels 1970: 123). For Marx, a critically relevant knowledge must be arrived at ontologically. He thinks epistemologically-formulated theories are too abstract to enable us to “catch a glimpse of the material conditions” (Marx and Engels 1975: 117). Then how should we interpret Marx’s insistence on the significance of “the real positive science”? One possible answer is Kemple’s, which was discussed above. Marx was not primarily interested in empirical and scientific theories in view of the political, and more generally, ontological status of such claims in Marx’s work. Rather, we may learn more about Marx’s conception of critical theory by looking into the aesthetic aspects of his work. I also think that the ontological direction shown by Marx is further advanced
through Foucault. In the rest of this dissertation, I seek to show that the dilemma that the social sciences are put in by their critical interests is most successfully addressed by Foucault's critical project.
Foucault's preoccupation with science is rooted in his interest in its political functions. He thinks he is able to show that "the least glimmer of truth is conditioned by politics" (Foucault 1978: 5). He wishes to explain how science is integrated into discourse to produce truth and power. According to Foucault, it is as discourse that science and knowledge assume their political characters. The political character that Foucault associates with scientific discourses is the power to form the subject by resorting to certain truths. Even though every science has a discursive aspect (for example, mathematics is also a discourse), only some sciences are involved in the discursive formation of the social subject (see Foucault 1991b: 65; 1997g: 177). I will discuss the formation of the subject later and in relation to the question of genealogy. However, here I intend to specify Foucault's conception of discourse, and explain which aspects of discourse are responsible for its political character.

**Discourse as an Event**

What is discourse? The *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory* gives ten different meanings for the term:

1. Orderly, coherent thought. 2. The presentation of such thought. 3. Speech, as opposed to writing. 4. Any instance of use of language as opposed to the system of language on which use depends. 5. Spoken utterance or written texts of more than one sentence. 6. The study of effective writing. 7. In the theory of narrative, the presentation or mode of telling of the story. 8. In a phrase like "discourse community," a shared set
of assumptions, procedures, and specifically defined terms. 9. The interaction between language and reality that produces experience or the world-as-understood. 10. A shared understanding of a significant area of social experience within a given culture at a given time in history. (Harris 1992: 66).

Harris believes that Foucault uses the term discourse primarily in the sense of the eighth meaning. He claims that “the use of the term discourse to describe modes of thought defined by cultural assumptions has become strongly associated with the work of Michel Foucault” (Harris 1992: 67). By “cultural assumptions” he means something like the culture of a particular scientific community that individuals have to master in order to become members of that community and work under its common paradigm. It is suggested that Foucault uses discourse in a very similar way to Kuhn’s concept of paradigm. However, I believe that while Foucault’s notion of discourse may overlap with several of the applications of the term ‘paradigm’, it does not fully correspond with any of them. Hence, we need to have an independent description of discourse in Foucault’s work.

In the background of Foucault’s theory of discourse lies the recognition that one cannot reduce the shifts and changes in thought to the successive development of some universal and stable intellectual force. In other words, discontinuities are frequently the facts that the historians of thoughts and science have to reckon with. This invites a new conception of knowledge and science which is different from the traditional unities accorded to the sciences. The notion of discourse is meant to serve as a basis for an understanding of knowledge and science that takes their discontinuities into account. As we shall see, it is discourse as an event which can shed light on these scientific discontinuities, rather than an epistemological understanding of science.
It is common to note that Foucault was interested in scientific fields. To study them, he had to begin with these fields as they were given to him. He had to start with the disciplinary unities such as *medicine, psychiatry, biology, penology, grammar,* and the *human sciences,* but in order to question them and find a form of unity for them that does not imply a line of continuity in these domains. Foucault never explicitly discusses why science requires some kind of unity. But it seems to me that, metaphysically speaking, he is inclined toward believing that *to be means to have unity,* for example, for a domain of knowledge to be *a* science, it must show some kind of unity or oneness.

He begins by rejecting all these unities and similar notions because they are “connected with the postulate of continuity” (Foucault 1998e: 302; see also 1972a: 21-30). He describes notions such as *tradition, influence, development, teleology or evolution,* and *the spirit of an age* as “readymade syntheses” that have very precise functions. For example, he argues:

> Take the notion of tradition: it is intended to give a special temporal status to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar); it makes it possible to rethink the dispersion of history in the form of the same; it allows a reduction of the differences proper to every beginning, in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin; tradition enables us to isolate the new against a background of permanence, and to transfer its merit to originality, to genius, to decisions proper to individuals.... (Foucault 1972a: 21)

There are similar problems with regard to the other notions which are discussed in detail by Foucault. He also questions the unities that are given in terms of the book and *œuvre.* He argues that their unities are relative and a matter of interpretation. Here I cannot consider all the reasons Foucault gives for why these accepted forms of unity should not be trusted. However, the point that we need to consider is that one cannot grasp scientific
discontinuities through them. On the contrary, they give the false impression of historical continuity within the scientific domains. This is while, according to Foucault:

Each discourse undergoes constant change as new utterances (énonces) are added to it (consider the strange entities of sociology or psychology which have been continually making fresh starts ever since their inception). (Foucault 1991b: 54)

After questioning the traditional notions of unity and continuity, he is compelled to abandon the “lines of demarcation between disciplines or the groups with which we have become familiar” (Foucault 1998e: 303). It is then that “an entire field is set free” (Foucault 1972a: 26). This field is nothing but the discursive field; this is how Foucault describes it:

[I]t is constituted by the set of all effective statements (whether spoken or written) in their dispersion as events and in the immediacy that is proper to each. Before it is dealt with as a science, a novel, a political discourse, or the work of an author, or even a book, the material to be handed in its initial neutrality is a population of events in the space of discourse in general. (Foucault1998e: 306)

Thus, before we can think in terms of science or knowledge, that is, before we think epistemologically, we are faced with an event. This event present itself to us in the form of an ensemble of statements. At this level what we have are some utterances (spoken or written) which are, first and foremost, events that take place before us. It is this understanding of science as a discursive event that guides the archaeological approach.

In the above passage, we are introduced to two major characteristics of discourse: first, being a totality of statements, and second, being an event. With the description of discourse in terms of statements, Foucault feels he needs to make a distinction between discourse and language. In language, it is possible to have an infinite number of statements based on a finite set of rules while in discourse statements are always finite.
As Foucault puts it, discursive statements “may be innumerable, they may, in sheer size, exceed the capacities of recording, memory, or reading: nevertheless they form a finite grouping” (1972a: 27).

The second characteristic of discourse, which is of a very critical significance, is that discursive statements are events. Since it is this characteristic of the statement and discourse that makes the analysis of discourse different from all forms of the analysis of language, we need to fully appreciate this concept of the statement. Foucault believes what makes his notion of discourse different from the current usage of the term is his understanding of the statement as a function rather than as a sentence, a proposition, or a formulation\(^1\) (see Foucault 1972a: 80, 87, 108, 115). Foucault believes that with regard to these unites the most important thing is their correctness, whether they are ‘acceptable’ or not (Foucault 1972a: 107). With regard to statements one can only describe their possibility; their correctness is not an issue.

Some examples may explain why the place of statements in discourse is not that of sentences in language or propositions in logic. Foucault gives many examples of utterances that cannot be considered as sentences. Here are a few such utterances that are clearly statements with certain functions in specific discourses, but do not constitute a sentence: “a genealogical tree, an accounts book, ...an equation of the nth degree, or the algebraic formula of the law of refraction, ...a graph, a growth curve, an age pyramid, a

\(^1\) Foucault defines “formulation” as “an event that can always be located by its spatio-temporal coordinates, which can always be related to an author, and which may constitute in itself a specific act (a ‘performative’ act, as the British analysts call it)” (Foucault 1972a: 107). In The Archaeology of Knowledge he clearly distinguishes statements from speech acts as described by the English analysts, but Dreyfus and Rabinow refer to a letter that Foucault wrote in response to John Searle, who had objected to this distinction. In that letter Foucault wrote, “I was wrong in saying that statements were not speech acts, but in doing so I wanted to underline the fact that I saw them under a different angle than yours” (Foucault’s letter to Searle, 15 May 1979 as cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 46n.). I cannot render any judgement here with regard to this
distribution cloud" (see Foucault 1972a: 82). Statements are also not the same as logical propositions, because, as Foucault explains, a "defined propositional structure" is not "the necessary and sufficient condition of a statement" (Foucault 1972a: 80). This is how he elaborates upon this observation:

‘No one heard’ and ‘It is true that no one heard’ are indistinguishable from a logical point of view, and cannot be regarded as two different propositions. But in so many statements, these two formations are not equivalent or interchangeable. They cannot occupy the same place on the plane of discourse, nor can they belong to exactly the same group of statements. If one finds the formulation ‘No one heard’ in the first line of a novel, we know until a new order emerges, that it is an observation made either by the author, or by a character (aloud or in the form of an interior monologue); if one finds the second formulation, ‘It is true that no one heard’, one can only be in a group of statements constituting an interior monologue, a silent discussion with oneself, or a fragment of a dialogue, a group of questions and answers. (Foucault 1972a: 81)

After negatively delimitating the statement, Foucault defines the statement as “a function of existence that properly belongs to signs” (Foucault 1972a: 86). Again, we should note that while language is also a collection of signs, its units are not equivalent to statements, because in language “signs that make up its elements are forms that are imposed upon statements and control them from within” (Foucault 1972a: 85). In other words, it is the structure of the existence of signs that is found in language rather than its function, which is the case in the statement. The existence which is proper to the statement is a functional existence.

Before discussing the function of the statement, let us turn back to the problem of unity. If discourse is conceived as a totality of statements, a question arises as to how a series of dispersed and heterogeneous statements are individualized as a discourse.
Foucault examines several hypotheses with regard to this question. He tries, without success, to account for the unity of discourse in terms of the unity of its object, its style, the coherency of its concepts, and the identity and persistence of its themes. Upon a close examination, it can be shown that within a discourse there is a wide range of variations and discontinuities with regard to these categories. How could they be the source of the unity of discourse when they do not have a unity of their own? After rejecting these traditional criteria of discursive unities, Foucault chooses to explain the unity of discourse in terms of rules of discursive formations. First, let us see why traditional explanations of the unity of discourse are not acceptable.

First, the criterion of the object: One cannot explain the individuality of discourse in terms of the unity of its object in the face of the dispersion and heterogeneity of its statements, for two reasons. First, because it is a mistake to assume that the object of a statement is an independent being that can be isolated and examined for its true identity. In other words, the object of a statement exists only at the level of the statement in the space that the very statement which utters it opens up. Foucault gives the example of mental illness: “mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations,...” (Foucault 1972a: 32). Second, it can be shown that the object that discursive statements refer to is not fixed once and for all. It changes through time and across institutions. For example, all the sociological statements about deviant behavior do not refer to the same object. Furthermore, similar statements about deviance do not have the same object in religious, legal, and political institutions.
Given the fact that the objects are constituted and constantly transformed in the space created by statements, one should look into the rules that govern the emergence and coexistence of these statements for the explanation of the unity of discourse. We should not think in terms of epistemological notions such as the "domain" of objects, or the point of reference. Instead, Foucault "a bit arbitrarily" suggests that we use the term "referential": "I will say, for example, that 'madness' is not the object (or referent) common to a group of propositions but is, rather, the referential or law of dispersion of different objects or referents put into play by an ensemble of statements whose unity this law defines precisely" (Foucault 1998e: 314). So, with respect to the object of discourse, we are dealing with the rule of the formation of objects. This is one set of the rules of discursive formations, the rules that, for example, permit a statement such as "The golden mountain is in California" to appear in a novel as opposed to a geography book or a travel guide (Foucault 1972a: 90).

The second criterion traditionally used to account for the unity of discourse is the style or form of enunciation instead of the object or concept. For example, one can say that what makes sociological statements distinct from those of social philosophy is not the fact that social philosophers, unlike sociologists, do not talk about social facts but, rather, the distinction is said to be due to their different styles of talking. Sociological statements, as Karl Popper would perhaps say, are formulated and stated in a way that makes them empirically falsifiable while those of social philosophy are more of an ethical and political nature and empirically unfalsifiable. But, here again, this criterion is quite arbitrary and does not stand close scrutiny if applied to what goes on as sociology. One can readily find a wide range of diverse forms of statements as well as practices and
regulations that constitute the field we call sociology. There are descriptive as well as ethical, political statements in sociology; there are empirical and also abstract theoretical statements; there are different institutional regulations, various techniques of analysis, and many pedagogical practices. In other words, there is no such thing as a unique sociological style of looking at social facts. Today, both Habermas and James Coleman are studied in sociological theory courses. This heterogeneity of styles is a fact of the discipline in many different areas as well.

In the face of the enunciative divergence of discourse we should look for the unity of discourse in the rules according to which all different of forms of enunciation become possible within one single discourse. Foucault refers to theses rules as the rule of the formation of enunciative modalities or the rule of formation of discursive syntactic types (see Foucault 1972a: 50; 1998e: 320).

The third criterion that could be responsible for the unity of discourse is the coherence of its conceptual architecture, in other words, the existence of a series of internally consistent concepts whose content and use are established once and for all may individualize a group of heterogeneous statements (Foucault 1972a: 34-35; 1998e: 316). But there are many discourses that do not have such conceptual coherence and yet they do possess discursive unity. Take the example of classical sociology and its critical concept of society. While it is widely used and accepted by Durkheim, Weber rarely refers to this concept. This term is interjected in the title of Weber's Economy and Society by its editors, but it is not even mentioned once in the index of its two large volumes. There is no notable consensus in the discipline with regard to key concepts such as society, social facts, social institutions, social actors, social structures, social bonds,
sociological method, social conflict and social order for example. Their content and use varies in the hands of different sociologists. Nevertheless, we can speak of sociology as a discipline with discursive unity.

Foucault suggests that the unity of discourse must be conceived in such a way so that disperse, heterogeneous, and incompatible concepts can be understood to coexist with one another. In other words, we should look for "the rule of their insurmountable plurality" (Foucault 1998e: 318). These concepts do not arise as a result of "illusions, prejudices, errors, and traditions," they follow certain "discursive regularities and constraints" (Foucault 1972a: 63). Here, we are dealing with the third rule of discursive formations, i.e., the rule of the formation of concepts or the rule of discursive semantics.

The fourth criterion usually suggested for the individualization of discourse is "the identity and persistence of themes" (Foucault 1972a: 35). That is, a particular idea is so general and preeminent that it can be found in various forms in all the statements of a discourse. For example, the ideal of mutual human interactions might be singled out as a theme present in all sociological statements regardless of their subject matter. They may be about society, social institutions, social order, social conflicts, economic exchanges, marital relationships, or international relations. In all these cases and many more we find some form of mutual human interaction present. But, as Foucault argues, a general theme cannot explain the unity of a discourse because "a similar option can reappear in two types of discourse, and a single discourse can give rise to several options" (Foucault 1998e: 320). For instance, the theme of mutual human interaction might be a general theme in economic discourse too if the idea of exchange assumes a central position in it. Or sociological discourse may give rise to two or more equally important themes such as
social interaction and humans' social nature. Another example would be the idea of human behavior being always a matter of a rational choice in certain circumstances. This idea, as formulated by James Coleman (1990), is broad enough to cover almost all areas of sociological interest. It has not yet been widely adopted by the discipline but it could and can still be integrated in sociological discourse as a general theme along the themes of interaction and humanity's social nature. The point is that, in a discourse, several themes may be accepted and worked with. Therefore, the unity of themes cannot account for the unity of discourse.

Foucault argues that in every discourse there is a field of strategic possibilities. There are different thematic choices available for a discourse. We should find out why, among these possibilities, only some were realized and others were not. We cannot assume that certain choices were made simply because a logical chain of inference made them inevitable. There are rules that govern the operation of this field of possibilities and our task is to bring them into light and show how they "permit the activation of incompatible themes, or, again, the establishment of the same theme in different groups of statement" (Foucault 1972a: 37). Foucault calls these last rules of discursive formations the rule of the formation of strategies or the rule of discursive operational eventualities (Foucault 1998e: 320).

The four sets of rules described above are the rules of discursive formations. Foucault offers a general outline for each set of these rules (see 1972a: 40-76). However, since my objective here is only to define discourse and explain Foucault's view of its political character, it is not necessary to go into a further discussion of each particular rule of formation. But we should know that once we have identified a complex of rules
that governs the emergence, dispersion, coexistence, transformation, and disappearance of certain objects, modes or styles of statements, concepts, and thematic choices with regard to a group of statements, we have been able to pinpoint the positivity of a discourse. Foucault argues that it is this positivity that characterizes the unity of discourse (see Foucault 1972a: 126; 1998e: 321).

By delineating the positivity of a discourse, we are able to empirically describe a discursive field at the level of “statement-event” (Foucault 1998e: 321). Positivities are not “merely the doublets of established disciplines,” or “the prototypes of future sciences” (see Foucault 1972a: 180). As Foucault puts it, “they form the precondition of what is later revealed and which later functions as an item of knowledge or an illusion, an accepted truth or an exposed error, a definitive acquisition or an obstacle surmounted” (Foucault 1972a: 182). Once we acknowledge that what is revealed as truth, or exposed as an illusion and error, is preconditioned by a whole sets of rules and regulations, we should not have much problem recognizing the political nature of scientific discourses.

Let us sidestep the politics of discourse for the moment and formulate a definition of discourse on the basis of the foregoing discussion. We have already defined discourse as “an ensemble of statements.” It was mentioned that the statement is not a sentence or proposition but rather a function of the existence of signs. Now, we can develop our definition of discourse a step further and say: “Discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence” (Foucault 1972a: 107). And if we know what is meant by the rules of discursive formations, then we can simply define discourse “as
the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (Foucault 1972a: 107).

It has already been mentioned that statements and subsequently discourses are different from linguistic units. This characteristic of the statement and discourse as an event distinguishes them from all linguistic systems and epistemological forms of knowledge. An analysis of discourse is not concerned with either the conditions of the acceptability, or the consciousness or the unconsciousness of the subject. It does not seek to “reconstitute another discourse” of a discourse (Foucault 1972a: 27). Instead in discursive practices and regulations, it seeks to answer “how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?” (Foucault 1972a: 27). In other words, we are interested in “the law of existence of statements, that which rendered them possible” (Foucault 1991b: 59). Statements appear and come into existence like events, and it is in this sense that they have rules of formation. Foucault elaborates extensively on this characteristic of statements in various places. This is how he succinctly summarizes his whole argument for the Paris Epistemology Circle:

[A] statement is always an event that neither language nor meaning can completely exhaust. A strange event, certainly: first, because, on the one hand, it is linked to an act of writing or to the articulation of a speech but, on the other hand, opens for itself a residual existence in the field of memory or in the materiality of manuscripts, books, and any other form of record; then because it is unique like every other event, but is open to repetition, transformation, and reactivation; finally, it is linked both to the situations that give rise to it, and to the consequences it gives rise to, but also at the same time and in quite another modality, to the statements that precede it and follow it. (Foucault 1998e: 308)
In short, discourse is formed as an event under some rules and in relation to other discursive and non-discursive events. Thus, the analysis of discourse is not a textual or documentary analysis, it is rather an analysis of the 'archive'.

On the basis of this conception of discourse, we can make some brief remarks with regard to discourse. First, some negative characterizations:

1- Discourse is not "a mere intersection of things and words" (Foucault 1972a: 48). It is not things said about things, but it is things done to things.

2- Discourse cannot be explained in terms of the phenomenon of subjectivity and in relation to notions such as the expression, communication, or externalization of ideas and thoughts (Foucault 1972a: 55). Subjectivity is a function of discourse itself, a position in it that may be "filled in certain conditions by various individuals" (Foucault 1972a: 115).

3- Discourse is not a linguistic system, and it cannot be reduced to systems of signification or structures, it is rather a functional unit (see Foucault 1972a: 28, 49, 156, 200; 1998c: 290). In other words, a 'deconstructive' or textual approach is not suitable for the study of discourse. It is the laws of existence that should be studied and not its laws of intelligibility.

4- Discourse does not coincide with science; it does not reveal the formal criteria of the scientificity of a science. But it can account for the factual existence of a science (see Foucault 1998e: 322-325).

Here are some positive characterizations of discourse:

1- Discourse is a practice (see Foucault 1972a: 46, 49, 54).

---

2 This point will be elaborated in the section on archaeology.
2- Discourse is construction but not an arbitrary one. It is a construction that has its own rules of formation (see Foucault 1972a: 25, 38, 74, 181).

3- A discursive formation and a positivity may give rise to a form of knowledge [savoir], not a science. At the level of discursive positivity it does not render itself to epistemological scrutiny (Foucault 1998e: 324). Put differently, discursive truth is the truth of power, not an epistemological truth (see Foucault 1998j: 39-45; 1978: 68).

4- Unlike science, “the initiation of a discursive practice is heterogeneous to its subsequent transformations” (Foucault 1998i: 219). In other words, future developments are each as distinct and separate formations from the work of initiators. This is why there is such a tendency in discursive fields to “return to the origin” (Foucault 1998i: 219). For example, Foucault argues that Marx and Freud stand in a position of externality to those who discursively return to them. Their works, unlike those of Galileo and Newton, cannot be refuted by latter discursive practices (Foucault 1998i: 219). Thus, every discourse is a new discourse with its own positivity; the new discourse is not a transformation of previous discourses (see Foucault 1970: 207-208). With each discursive positivity, a discontinuity is introduced in the history of discourse.

5- Discourse is an autonomous entity but it is not solitary. Horizontally a discourse is connected with other discursive events while vertically it is related to non-discursive events (Foucault1998g: 284-285; also see 1998e: 308). It might appear that the autonomy of discourse implies its independence from socio-political conditions. As will be clarified later, with his autonomous conception of discourse Foucault seeks to avoid the reductionism of the epistemological critique of ideology and sociology of
knowledge. Broadly speaking, Foucault covered the relation of discourses among themselves in *The Order of Things* while the relation with non-discursive events was studied in *Madness and Civilization, The Birth of Clinic, Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*.

After shedding light on some aspects of discourse, we may direct our attention to the political nature of discourse. It was noted that discourse is an event that is made possible by practices that are governed by some rules of formation. Foucault makes the observation that no other civilization apparently has more respect for discourse than western civilization. But he thinks that there is a “profound logophobia” behind this “apparent logophilia” (Foucault 1972b: 228-229). This is why in western societies institutional preparations are made to assign to discourse its proper place “within the established order of things, ...a place which both honours and disarms it” (Foucault 1972b: 216). There are three aspects to statement-events that discursive control seeks to master: a manifest materiality of spoken or written objects, an uncertain power and danger, and a transitory existence not belonging to us (see Foucault 1972b: 216). Foucault explains that “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality” (Foucault 1972b: 216). He divides these procedures and rules into three categories: external rules, internal rules, and rules for the subjection of discourse.
External Rules of Discourse

These are rules of exclusion that seek to control the elements of power and desire in discourse, i.e., the power of the truth that is produced by discourse and the will to this truth. Foucault identifies three such rules found in western society. First, prohibitions that cover the objects, rituals, and rights to speak. Not all people are allowed to speak and those who have permission to speak cannot talk about anything they wish, or the way they want to (see Foucault 1972b: 216). Foucault believes this is why "speech is not merely the medium which manifests – or dissembles – desires; it is also the object of desire...[and why] speech is no mere verbalization of conflicts and systems of domination, but also ...[why] it is the very object of man’s conflicts" (Foucault 1972b: 216).

The second type of exclusionary rules is the procedure of division and rejection. Binary oppositions are established within a culture between different voices or types of statements. The opposition between reason and folly can serve as an example of such a rule. Certain groups of people or individuals are reduced to a status such that whatever they say is "mere noise" (Foucault 1972b: 217). This, too, is a form of silencing.

The third system of exclusion is the opposition between true and false (Foucault 1972b: 217). Foucault acknowledges that "as a proposition, the division between true and false is neither arbitrary, nor modifiable, nor institutionalized, nor violent" (Foucault 1972b: 218). However, he argues that it is easy to show a historical division governs our will to truth. We can demonstrate historically that even up to the sixth century true discourse was understood in terms of its force to inspire or terrorize the individual. But the time came when true discourse was no longer an ontological exercise of power; it was
understood in epistemological terms. In the nineteenth century, a new scientific epistemology emerged that held as true only those discourses that could be experimentally verified, and everything else was not true. With respect to the institutional base for this new will to truth, Foucault points out that:

[T]his will to truth, like the other systems of exclusion, relies on institutional support: ...practices such as pedagogy – naturally – the book-system, publishing, libraries, such as the learned societies in the past, the laboratories today. But it is probably even more profoundly accompanied by the manner in which knowledge is employed in a society, the way in which it is exploited, divided and, in some ways, attributed. (Foucault 1972b: 219)

These are some systems of control imposed on the exterior of discourse in order to master its power of truth and its will to truth.

**Internal Rules of Discourse**

The internal rules are "concerned with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution" (Foucault 1972b: 220). They are mechanisms through which the transitory existence of a discursive event, i.e. the element of chance, is internally controlled. Foucault refers to three such discursive constraints: the multiplicity of commentaries, an author's fertility, and the development of a discipline.

First, in a every culture one can find a type of discourse that "disappears with the very act which gave rise to it; and those forms of discourse that lie at the origins of a certain number of new verbal acts, which are reiterated, transformed or discussed" (Foucault 1972b: 220). The latter kinds of discourse provide the possibility of an infinite number of commentaries or new discourses. While it may seem that this is a sign of the richness of discourse, Foucault argues that it is actually due to its poverty. Unlike
linguistic units, statements are rare and "the meanings to be found in them are multiplied" (Foucault 1972a: 120). In other words, "to interpret is a way of reacting to enunciative poverty, and to compensate for it by multiplication of meaning; a way of speaking on the basis of that poverty, and yet despite it" (Foucault 1972a: 120). Thus, commentary functions as a form of preserving a particular discourse as a privileged point of reference; and every return to it is supposed to finally reveal "what has silently been articulated deep down" in it (Foucault 1972b: 221).

Secondly, the author, not as an individual but as a function, is "the unifying principle in a particular group of writings or statements" (Foucault 1972b: 221). This role, of course, varies from one type of discourse to another. For example, today this function is more important in literature than in science. However, as far as the formation of discursive statements is concerned, the individual who functions as an author imposes some constraints on what is said. The author-function is another principle for controlling the element of chance. Here is how Foucault explains the author: "What he writes and what does not write, what he sketches out, even preliminary sketches for the work, and what he drops as simple mundane remarks, all this interplay of differences is prescribed by the author-function" (Foucault 1972b: 222).

The third internal system of control used to constrain the transitory nature of the event of statements and their chance appearances is the formation of disciplines. Foucault reminds us that:

A discipline is not the sum total of all the truths that may be uttered concerning something; it is not even the total of all that may be accepted, by virtue of some principle of coherence and systematisation, concerning some given fact or proposition.... [disciplines] consist of errors as well as truths, errors that are in no way residual, or foreign bodies, but having
their own positive functions and their own valid history, such that their roles are often indissociable from that of truth. (Foucault 1972b: 223)

Another point is that the exterior of every discipline is populated with propositions, beliefs, and ideas that are not errors, and yet are not qualified to be integrated into the discipline. As Foucault puts it, “a proposition must fulfil some onerous and complex conditions before it can be admitted within a discipline…” (Foucault 1972b: 224). Thus we can say that disciplines function as a system of internal control of discourse in the sense that they permanently reactivate the rules of the game (Foucault 1972b: 224).

**Rules for the Subjection of Discourse**

The third group of rules are responsible for “a rarefaction among speaking subjects,” i.e., who are permitted to employ discourse (Foucault 1972b: 224). Material manifestations of discourse in spoken or written forms are too precious to be totally available to everyone. In every discourse there are areas designated as protected territories. Rules of employment regulate the access to these areas by identifying the qualified subjects who can speak on the protected discursive topics. These rules cover areas of *verbal rituals*, *fellowships of discourse*, *doctrinal groups*, and the *social appropriation of discourse*. These rules are complementary and sometimes even diffused, but for the purpose of clarity they will be discussed separately.

*Verbal rituals* have to do with how a speaker who represents a discourse should behave in her speech. For example, a qualified criminologist should not engage in public and academic dialogues, in interrogation or recitation of the discourse on *crimes* in the same passionate manner that a minister of the church speaks of *sins*. In fact, a *careless* usage of the term *sin* in reference to a crime that she should have described as a *deviation*
from socially and culturally accepted mores may immediately disqualify her as a representative of criminology. In short, for an individual to be qualified to represent a discourse, she should practice a wide range of rituals in her behavior, speech, and even gestures (see Foucault 1972b: 225).

Put crudely, ‘Fellowships of discourse’ are procedures for and attempts at keeping discourse circulating only within a closed community, “according to strict regulations, without those in possession being dispossessed by this very distribution” (Foucault 1972b: 225). There are procedures of secrecy and disclosure in every discursive community. We should not be deceived by the apparent availability of information in modern society, because even “the act of writing, as it is institutionalized today, with its books, its publishing system and the personality of writer, occurs within a diffuse, yet constraining, ‘fellowship of discourse’” (Foucault 1972b: 226).

Although the formation of doctrinal groups at the surface appears to be in direct opposition to ‘fellowship of discourse’, in reality this is not the case. It is also a form of constraint. While anyone can adhere to a doctrine, through such adherence he is linked to certain types of utterance that at same time bar him from all others (Foucault 1972b: 226).

Finally, there are rules and procedures for the social appropriation of discourse. Because of its power, discourse is both the site and the object of intense social conflicts and therefore its appropriation is socially regulated. Foucault identifies the regulation of this area as a function of the educational system in every society. This how he puts it:

Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social
conflict. Every education system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with knowledge and the powers it carries with it. (Foucault 1972b: 227)

The three sets of rules of controlling discourse, i.e., external rules, internal rules, and rules for the subjection of discourse, are the principles of rarefaction of discourse. That is to say, these rules are responsible for discourse being intrinsically a political force to the extent that they try to exercise control over it and institutionally appropriate it. In this sense, discourse is rarified to the degree that it cannot be manipulated at will by different actors. Foucault believes that since the disappearance of the sophists from Western culture, the West has constantly tried to master discourse with the introduction of some forms of rarefaction into discursive practices (Foucault 1972b: 227). He thinks that this logophobia has to do with the existence of discourse as an event, its power, and its chance appearance. These are the areas that should be brought under control, and this is what rarefaction is all about.

We are now able to say that discourse has its own politics in light of its controlled power and its regulated nature as an event. An analysis of the politics of discourse cannot be done merely by raising the question of conspiracy or formulating statements such as “the personal is political”. It should show how under certain social conditions a particular type of discursive formation is adopted, and how this discourse functions in relation to those non-discursive events. Methodologically speaking, such an undertaking must observe the following principles:

1- The principle of reversal: We should show that the source of discourse is “the negative activity of the cutting-out and rarefaction of discourse” (Foucault 1972b: 229). It is not the positive role of a founding figure or of a discipline.
2- The principle of *discontinuity*: Principles of rarefaction do not mean that there is a repressed speech *in* the discourse that we should bring to light. On the contrary, discourse is an exclusionary practice and a discontinuous activity. That is to say that once excluded from a particular discourse, other voices are not to be found there. We should look elsewhere for them if we are interested. We must treat discourse in itself and as a discontinuous field (see Foucault 1972b: 229).

3- The principle of *specificity*: Discourse should not be reduced to a pre-discursive system of signification which provides for a meaningful communication. Discourse is a practice and, as Foucault puts it, "We must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them; it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity" (Foucault 1972b: 229).

4- The principle of *exteriority*: Again, rarefaction of discourse does not imply the existence of hidden meaning or interests that should be uncovered by the analyst, the same way critics of ideology and psychoanalysts treat a discourse as the manifestation of class interest or an unconscious. The politics of discourse is not a conspiracy or a secret activity; it is found in the very explicit existence of discourse. The power of discourse lies in its being an external reality, that is to say, in being a regulated event.

In this approach, discourse is not a given fact, but rather it is a historically constructed event, fragile and dependent on a whole series of practices. This means that discourse is 'eventualized'. 'Eventalization' is a term that Foucault uses in some of his later works to designate the procedure of analysis that he uses in the study of discourse to reveal its precariousness, and to identify how its disappearance might be possible (see Foucault
1997d: 59). According to him, eventalization involves two steps. First is “a breach of self-evidence” (Foucault 1991a: 76). This shows that there is nothing in our discursive practices that makes them necessary or self-evident. The second is to show how these practices came into existence as a result of an operation of a complex of “the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on” (Foucault 1991a: 76). This second aspect of eventalization leads to “pluralization of causes” (Foucault 1991a: 76).

In short, following Foucault, my interest in science and knowledge is directed at their discursive dimension. Power establishes itself as truth in discourse, and it is as truth that knowledge exercises power. Epistemology has long been struggling with the problem of the relationship between “is” and “ought to”, i.e., between description and prescription. While epistemology is still searching for an answer, we can rest with the answer formulated by means of the discursive understanding of knowledge:

Within other discourses of knowledge in relation to discourses of possible knowledge, each statement considered true exerts a certain power and creates, at the same time, a possibility. Inversely, all exercise of power, even if it is a question of putting someone to death, implies at least a savior-faire. (Foucault 1997d: 66-67)

I will elaborate on this aspect of knowledge in my discussion of genealogy while the fragility of discourse or its eventalization will be covered in the section devoted to the notion of critique. However, at this point, I should consider Foucault’s notion of archaeology, which is a comprehensive expansion of the analysis of discourse as outlined above.
Toward Archaeology

Archaeology is the term that Foucault somewhat arbitrarily chose to designate his approach to science (see Foucault 1970: xi), although later he decided not to use this term (see Foucault 1998d: 444). Since I consider the approach that this term was supposed to name to be a valid approach to science, and one which Foucault never abandoned, and since no other term was coined by him in its place, I continue to use this term for the sake of consistency.

The main reason for putting the term archaeology aside must have been the confusion that it had created. By designating his approach to science as archaeology, Foucault wanted to underline the fact that he dealt with sciences not at the level of their scientificity, but at the level of discursivity, where they are ensembles of statement-events and neither linguistic units nor logical or epistemological propositions. We have already seen some of the reasons why he wants to treat sciences as discursive events and what kind of epistemological justifications he provides for his position. At the end of my discussion of archaeology I will mention one other reason why Foucault chooses to stay at the level of discourse.

If we have been able to establish the existence of a scientific event that is created and regulated by means of some rules and practices, then we should be able to see why it cannot be studied by means of those approaches that choose ideas, meanings and propositions as their objects of study. It may not be studied by them simply because it is not an idea, or a meaning. Archaeology is different from other analyses of science and knowledge in so far as it does not deal with science epistemologically. It does not study them as scientific or mental phenomena. Nor does it treat them linguistically, that is, by
studying science as a meaningful text. Instead, the ‘archaeological’ study of discourse must be directed toward the analysis of what Foucault calls the *archive*.

Like archaeology, the term archive can also cause confusion, for one can associate the archive with organizational documentary collections. In fact, Dorothy Smith wants to make the case that science, which she also assumes to be discursive, should be studied in light of available documents (see Smith 1984). Indeed, in order to expand the notion of archaeology beyond such appeals to documentary evidence, Foucault points out that archaeology “does not treat discourse as *document*, as a sign of something else...; it is concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a *monument*” (Foucault 1972a: 138-9).

An archaeology of this monument involves the analysis of the archive. Bearing in mind that this monument is nothing but discourse as we described it above, with regard to the definition of its archive, Foucault can define the archive this way:

> I shall call an *archive*, not the totality of texts that have been preserved by a civilization or the set of traces that could be salvaged from its downfall, but the series of rules which determine in a culture the appearance and disappearance of statements, their retention and their destruction, their paradoxical existence as *event* and *things*. (Foucault 1998e: 309)

This notion of archive implies a totally different approach of study from textual or epistemological analysis, and archaeology assumes exactly such a task.

In very general terms this is how Foucault defines archaeology: “Archaeology describes discourse as practices specified in the element of the archive” (Foucault 1972a: 131). However, a more expanded version of this definition would be as follows:

> The never completed, never wholly achieved uncovering of the archive forms the general horizon to which the description of discursive formations, the analysis of positivities, the mapping of the enunciative field belong. The right words – which is not that of the philologists – authorizes, therefore the term *archaeology* to describe all these searches. (Foucault 1972a: 131)
The differences between archaeology and other disciplines that are also concerned with knowledge and science will become more clear as I compare analysis of discourse with epistemologically oriented forms of analyses later. At this point, I would like to make some general comments on the archaeological approach:

1- Archaeology can be understood as a science that has to observe some epistemological criteria of scientificity. But its treatment of science is not itself an epistemological endeavor (see Foucault 1998e: 324).

2- In this regard, archaeology is not in the same category with hermeneutical analysis, the critique of ideology, the philosophy of science, and the sociology of knowledge (see Foucault 1972a: 154, 163, 169).

3- Archaeological analysis is purely descriptive. A description of discourse is archaeological when we are “able to determine the specific rules in accordance with which its objects, statements, concepts, and theoretical options have been formed” (Foucault 1972a: 72). Again here the stress should put on “the rules”, not ideas, hidden interests, or opinions (see Foucault 1972a: 70). In this capacity archaeology deals with the intradiscursive dependencies of discourse (Foucault 1991b: 58).

4- Since there is a horizontal relationship among discourses, archaeology must also study their interdiscursive dependencies (see Foucault 1991b: 58). On the other hand, archaeological studies are always limited to specific discursive formations and cannot analyze general and universal cultural patterns. Thus, they do not seek to identify totalizing themes such as ‘the progress of reason’, or ‘the spirit of a century’ (Foucault 1991b: 54-5). As far as interdiscursive dependencies are concerned, archaeology attempts to describe the episteme of a period. As Foucault puts it: “In
any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one *episteme* that
defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in theory or
silently invested in practice" (Foucault 1970: 168). Foucault also emphasizes that the
*episteme* is not "a sort of grand underlying theory, it is an open and doubtless
indefinitely describable field of relationships...it is a complex relationship of
successive displacements" (Foucault 1991b: 55).

5- Discourses are also related to non-discursive events, i.e., events that "may be of a
technical, practical, economic, social, political, or other variety" (Foucault 1998e:
308). Therefore archaeology must also study *extradiscursive* dependencies of
discourse (see Foucault 1991b: 58).

6- In *Madness and Civilization* and *The Birth of Clinic*, for example, Foucault
undertakes an archaeological study of *extradiscursive* dependencies while
*interdiscursive* dependencies were taken up in *The Order of Things*. *Intradiscursive*
dependencies are nevertheless analyzed to different degrees in these and almost all of
his studies.

With these points, I would like to conclude the description of archaeology as a distinct
field of study.

As promised, I should now offer one more reason for why Foucault chose an
archaeological approach instead of an epistemologically oriented study of science. I have
already mentioned why, epistemologically speaking, archaeology is a legitimate field of
scientific investigation. But there is yet another justification for this method of
investigation, which is more political than epistemological. If, like Foucault, one is
interested in the politics of the self and how the self is formed, one will eventually have
to undertake a *genealogical* study of the subject. It was through the *genealogy* of the subject that Foucault came to the field of discourse and archaeology. As will be discussed later, genealogy of the subject shows that "All the practices by which the subject is defined and transformed are accompanied by the formation of certain types of knowledge" (Foucault 1997g: 177). This is because knowledge as discourse is also a form of power that can shape the subject. In other words, the subject is a creation of discursive politics. While archaeology examines *rules* of discourse, genealogy studies its role in the formation of the *subject*. In short, genealogy and archaeology are two sides of the same coin, and anyone who is interested in the politics of the self must adopt an archaeological approach to science. Otherwise, one will not be able to study the discursive aspect of science, which is the part involved in the formation of the modern self.

Since one aspect of this dissertation is concerned with the development of a new field of study with regard to science in the works of Michel Foucault, I need to make more comparative analyses of this field. This new approach, which we may also call the analysis of discourse to cover both its archaeological and its genealogical dimensions, performs two tasks, both of which are also assumed either by epistemology proper, or by epistemologically-oriented sciences. The first task has to do with explaining how a science becomes possible. This question has traditionally been addressed by epistemology in terms of the conditions, origins, nature, and general criteria of *legitimate* knowledge and sciences. As we have already seen, an analysis of discourse articulates the same issues in terms of rules of discursive formations. The second task is concerned with the political function of science. In this field, too, we find such modes of investigation as
the sociology of knowledge, the critique of ideology, semiology, the history of ideas and so on. These are all epistemologically oriented in the sense that they conceive science and knowledge in terms of ideas, opinions, or logical propositions. Even textual analyses such as semiology and some versions of hermeneutics\(^3\) have not been able to move completely beyond epistemological conception of knowledge insofar as they are concerned with the question of *meaning*. But analysis of discourse, as we have seen, treats knowledge as a regulated *event*, which is not an epistemological notion. In what follows, I will show that this approach can successfully help us to move beyond epistemology and effectively ask the political questions of science.

Sociology as a discipline has always been self-reflective to the degree that one of its sub-specialties is the sociology of sociology. Terence C. Halliday documents some of the self-reflective studies within the discipline (see Halliday 1992). However, the present state of the discipline is a good indication that these studies have not successfully addressed the source of the theoretical confusion within the discipline. However, understanding sociology as a discourse can explain why it is *inherently* such a powerful political means of critique in an epistemologically oriented culture such as that of the West. It is in this context that we are able to understand, and perhaps prevent, the theoretical invasion of the discipline by politically motivated discursive practices.

---

\(^3\) Here I am excluding Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which I consider to be an ontological version of hermeneutics. See below for more.
Departures

My main concern here is to show what Foucault wants to leave behind and why. The predominant theme of analysis in Foucault's studies is the genealogy of the modern subject. He finds the history of science a promising field for the study of the genealogy of the subject for two reasons:

All the practices by which the subject is defined and transformed are accompanied by the formation of certain types of knowledge, and in the West, for a variety of reasons, knowledge tends to be organized around forms and norms that are more or less scientific. There is also another reason, maybe more fundamental and more specific to our societies. I mean the fact that one of the main moral obligations for any subject is to know oneself, to tell the truth about oneself, and to constitute oneself as an object of knowledge both for other people and for oneself. (Foucault 1997g: 177)

In other words, Foucault feels that he has to take on the question of knowledge through the genealogy of the subject. As he stated, in the West and in the context of the constitution of the subject, it is the scientific organization of knowledge that must be studied, not knowledge in general. This is why Foucault declares: "My objective for more than twenty-five years has been to sketch out a history of different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves: economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, and penology" (Foucault 1997h: 224). One can easily see that he is taking on specific forms of knowledge that have a claim to scientificity, namely the positive sciences. We can also note that he gives special attention to the human sciences. It comes
as no surprise that he devotes the final pages of some of his major studies to discuss how, in modern western society, a new economy of power and a new knowledge of man are interrelated through the human sciences. One can find examples of this view of the human sciences in Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (1994a: 344-387), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1994b: 195-199), and *Discipline and Punish* (1995: 295, 304-305).

As a critical thinker Foucault seeks to expose these positive sciences, whose extraordinary powers are used to form social subjects. His main objective is to show that one should not accept them at their face value but rather should “analyze these so-called sciences as very specific ‘truth games’ related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves” (Foucault 1997h: 224). In other words, these technologies that Foucault (1997h: 225) calls the technologies of the self involve a set of practices that present themselves, in light of scientific truth games, as self-evident. For Foucault, exposing the relationship between the economy of power and these sciences is a “matter of shaking this false self-evidence, of demonstrating its precariousness, of making visible not its arbitrariness, but its complex interconnection with a multiplicity of historical processes, many of them of recent date” (Foucault 1991a: 75).

But, is this very different from other second-order sciences such as the history of ideas, the sociology of knowledge (or the sociology of science), the critique of ideology, the philosophy of science and different epistemologies, that take up the first-order sciences as their object of study? In comparison with the sciences they study, these disciplines may be called second-order sciences because they are sciences of science, rather than sciences of concrete events or facts. I will argue that Foucault criticizes these forms of analyses of science for two fundamental reasons, both of which have to do with
the fact that they are conducted within the positivist paradigm of consciousness. First, they fail to grasp the discursive relevance of the first order-sciences. The second reason has more to do with the fact that in spite of their claim of being second-order analyses, and thereby being impartial with respect to the contents of these sciences, in the final analysis, they do not do justice to the scientific integrity of the first-order sciences. Because of these two flaws, Foucault formulated his own approach to knowledge as discourse. To appreciate the contributions of Foucault’s discourse analysis, we should look more specifically at his objections to what I refer to as second-order analyses of knowledge.

It must be noted that Foucault’s move beyond these approaches is made possible through three theoretical formulations: discourse, archaeology, and genealogy. We have already discussed Foucault’s conception of discourse and archaeology. Genealogy will be explained after the discussion of second-order analyses.

Beyond Epistemology

To understand Foucault’s shift, we must situate him in the larger context of the modern western approach to knowledge. Foucault’s studies aim to document how the modern western approach to knowledge is epistemological and methodical. The transformation of positivism from a critical attitude to a technical procedure for the production of truth resulted in a range of epistemological impasses in the social sciences. Almost in all cases, these epistemological impasses have become manifested as binary oppositions in different disciplines that deal with forms of knowledge, oppositions such as the following:
• subjective versus objective
• science versus ideology
• realism versus constructivism
• realism versus idealism
• realism versus pragmatism
• materialism versus idealism
• rationality versus irrationality
• qualitative versus quantitative
• interpretative versus empirical
• descriptive versus prescriptive
• theory versus research
• absolutism versus relativism
• essentialism versus social constructivism
• natural science versus human science
• holism versus reductionism
• idiographic versus nomothetic
• observation versus participation
• verification versus falsification
• diachronic versus synchronous
• descriptive versus analytical
• induction versus deduction
• patriarchal versus feminist
• modern versus postmodern
The length of the list indicates how deep the problem is. These categories, some of which are variations or subsets of the others, are symptoms of a fundamental dilemma facing western approaches to knowledge. Any student of sociology knows that there is no consensus in the discipline as to how this impasse might be overcome even with regard to a single one of these divisions. There are some researchers who accept one side of these opposing views and work with it. However, in many cases, researchers in search of a "middle ground" that avoids the "extremes," try to reach some sort of compromise between the two positions. It is difficult for those who find this so-called middle ground not to produce haphazardly conducted studies for which it is even more difficult to offer any epistemological justification. To many contemporary social scientists and philosophers, this is itself an indication that western science is in a state of crisis.

As to the nature of the crisis, it seems that most contemporary thinkers are of the opinion that this 'epistemological crisis' can be resolved with the formulation of new epistemologies. With very few exceptions, it might be argued that most of the continental writers who have attended to this crisis—for example, Jean François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Jürgen Habermas, and Jacques Lacan—have searched for an epistemological alternative rather than an alternative to epistemology. Peter Dews considers all of the above authors except Habermas to be poststructuralist. He claims that poststructuralism can be viewed, among other things, as a reaction against the structuralist human sciences' tendency not to discuss their own epistemological standpoints (see Dews 1987: 3-4). According to Dews, poststructuralism is a critical intellectual movement whose "fundamental criterion is the fostering of an epistemic and evaluative pluralism" (Dews 1987: 217). He tries to show that this kind of critical response to structuralism has created...
political and epistemological dilemmas for each of these thinkers. The crux of his argument is that poststructuralism is mainly entrapped in the conflict between what Lyotard calls the ‘white terror of truth’ and the ‘red cruelty of singularities’ (Dews 1987: 217). This dilemma has forced poststructuralist critique in the direction of pluralism and the rejection of universality. It has also given rise to a second dilemma, insofar as the rejection of universality results either in epistemological relativism and self-contradiction or in political impotency. In addition, in this epistemological pluralism, which is supposed to secure political pluralism, there is nothing to prevent the “perspective of one minority from including its right to dominate others” (Dews 1987: 217).

According to Dews, a poststructuralist critique cannot escape this dilemma except through Habermas. A critique that is perplexed by epistemological relativism and political impotency can hardly remain critical. He believes that Habermas’s version of critical theory, which is based on intersubjective communication, is the best alternative political position as well as the most acceptable epistemological pluralism. In short, the epistemological impasse of the modern western approach to knowledge gave rise to some critical responses that, in turn, created some new epistemological dilemmas of their own. The critique of ideology and some versions of the interpretive methodology are two such responses. Before discussing these responses, I should note that I do not dispute Dews’s observation that poststructuralist writers are critical thinkers; however, with regard to his reading of Foucault’s works as an epistemological critique, I cannot but disagree with him.

I will deal with Dews’s reading of Foucault later. For the moment, I wish to continue with my account of this crisis of knowledge. In principle, there can be two types
of responses to this crisis: one can either formulate an *epistemological alternative* to existing epistemologies, or move towards an *alternative to epistemology*. There are very few writers who are even willing to accept the possibility of a non-epistemological resolution let alone formulate a non-epistemological approach. Against such a resolution, they usually raise the pseudo-logical objection of self-contradiction. Jacques Derrida is one such scholar. More than any other contemporary writer, Derrida is mindful of what he calls metaphysical oppositions (Derrida 1987: 19-20). He criticizes structuralism for working within the framework of metaphysical oppositions. According to Derrida, structuralism always naively grants non-critical privilege to one side of an opposition over the other (see Derrida 1987: 5, 20). Derrida believes any attempt to *destroy* such metaphysical binarisms is doomed to failure. Here are some examples of how he sees a crisis in the works of some who have attempted to move beyond the dualist metaphysics of western thought:

Artaud keeps himself at the limit, and we have attempted to read him at this limit. One entire side of his discourse destroys a tradition which lives *within* difference, alienation, and negativity without seeing their origin and necessity. To reawaken this tradition, Artaud, in sum, recalls it to its own motifs: self-presence, unity, self-identity, the proper, etc. In this sense, Artaud’s “metaphysics,” at its most critical moments, fulfills the most profound and permanent ambition of Western metaphysics ... Through this complicity is articulated a necessary dependency of all destructive discourses: they must inhabit the structures they demolish, and within them they must shelter an indestructible desire for full presence, for nondifference: simultaneously life and death. (Derrida 1987: 194)

On the one hand, structuralism justifiably claims to be the critique of empiricism. But at the same time there is not a single book or study by Lévi-Strauss which is not proposed as an empirical essay which can always be completed or invalidated by new information. (Derrida 1987: 288)

And nowhere else and never before has the concept of *crisis* been able to enrich and reassemble all its potentialities, all the energy of its
meaning, as much, perhaps, as in Michel Foucault's book ... Crisis of reason, finally, access to reason and attack of reason. For what Michel Foucault teaches us to think is that there are crises of reason in strange complicity with what the world calls crises of madness. (Derrida, 1987: 62-63)

In the following chapters, I will fully respond to his accusation of self-contradiction, which is the most common criticism raised against Foucault's work. Derrida argues that our thoughts are embedded in the language of metaphysics—founded on binary oppositions. Therefore, we may not destroy this language, but we can and should resist it:

Emancipation from this language must be attempted. But not as an attempt at emancipation from it, for this is impossible unless we forget our history. Rather, as the dream of emancipation. Nor as emancipation from it, which would be meaningless and would deprive us of the light of meaning. Rather, as resistance to it, as far as possible. (Derrida, 1987: 28)

It is obvious that Derrida is dealing with the crisis of knowledge from an epistemological point of view while he does not foresee any non-epistemological alternative. This is why he reads the writings of prominent thinkers who have attempted to move beyond the metaphysical epistemology as self-destructive. He is profoundly aware of the fact that the paradoxes and dilemmas of our knowledge have no solution. But what does resistance to this language mean in light of this awareness? Resistance to knowledge is exactly what Foucault is interested in, but only as an ontological critique. This is not what Derrida has in mind. He sees the history of the dualist metaphysics as consumed by the attempts at balancing, equilibration, overturning, or reducing binary oppositions, and he thinks that "it is necessary to seek new concepts and new models, an economy escaping this system of metaphysical oppositions" (Derrida 1987: 19). Derrida's formulation of this economy is still metaphysical and epistemological, though it proceeds "through a certain organization, a certain strategic arrangement which, within the field of metaphysical
opposition, uses the strengths of the field to turn its own stratagems against it, producing a force of dislocation that spreads itself throughout the entire system, fissuring it in every direction and thoroughly *delimiting* it" (Derrida 1987: 19-20). In other words, one should deconstruct this metaphysical language by recognizing the irreconcilability and irreducibility of differences rather than by attempting to destroy it (or provide radical alternatives to it).

In short, for Derrida, deconstructive resistance is neither a radical shift nor a non-epistemological alternative. This is why he does not see any breakthrough in Foucault’s critique and accuses him of self-contradiction. He is correct that any attempt at formulating an epistemological alternative to Western metaphysics is doomed to failure, for it leads to nothing but self-contradiction. But, he fails to conceive the possibility of any non-epistemological form of critique. He does not even notice the ontological moment of Foucault’s critique. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose interest in “doing ethico-political criticism” has motivated her to combine elements of both Foucault and Derrida in her work, also does not see that these two have radically different critical projects. Thus, in the very first sentences of her essay, where she is trying to locate herself in the context of Derrida’s and Foucault’s critical projects, she defines critique in a completely non-Foucauldian manner:

What is the relationship between critical and dogmatic philosophies of action? By “critical” I mean a philosophy that is aware of the limits of knowing. By “dogmatic” I mean a philosophy that advances coherent general principles without sufficient interest in empirical details. (Spivak 1996: 142)
I will argue that this definition of critique as awareness of "the limits of knowing" is based on an epistemological conception of critique, while Foucault seeks to explain that critique is essentially ontological.

The inability to understand the ontological character of critique has deepened the dilemmas of modern philosophy. Many critical thinkers have attempted to resolve this dilemma by drawing more "limits" for knowing. In an epistemologically oriented culture such as that of the West, these epistemologically-oriented critical attempts have led to ethico-political impasses too. An extremely limited knowledge cannot be a secure or legitimate ground for ethical and political actions. This is how Jean-François Lyotard saw the postmodern condition of the advanced industrial societies of the West when he wrote his report on the status of knowledge in these societies (see Lyotard 1984: 6-8). Pluralism is a logical outcome of such a condition. However, this pluralism justifies itself only in a negative manner by arguing that if nobody knows the truth, then anything may count as truth. I believe that in the absence of a positive ground, this epistemologically justified pluralism has further perpetuated the ethico-political problems that it was designed to resolve. Given this widespread negligence of the possibility of an ontological form of critique, I think I am justified to devote a good part of this work to the task of explaining how Foucault’s approach moves beyond the epistemological conception of critique. This, I shall argue, may put pluralism on a positive ground.

First, let us define epistemology simply and broadly as philosophy of knowledge dealing with the questions regarding the nature of truth and knowledge and the necessary conditions of knowledge. Foucault usually refers to this function of epistemology as an investigation into the legitimacy of knowledge (Foucault 1997d: 48-49). Generally
speaking, since second-order sciences engage in such an investigation, they cannot but imply some epistemological judgements with respect to the findings of the sciences they analyze. In other words, they make inferences about the scientific contents as being either truthful or erroneous. To overcome this problem as well as some other shortcomings of these second-order sciences, Foucault formulates his own approach, i.e. the *archaeology of knowledge*, as he indicates in the title of one of his major works and in the subtitle of two others. Foucault explains that he formulated this approach to the question of knowledge in order to conduct “an examination of eventualization,” rather than “an investigation into legitimacy” (Foucault 1997d: 50). He stresses that even when his analysis deals with the contents of knowledge, it is “not attempting to find out what is true or false, founded or unfounded, real or illusory, scientific or ideological, legitimate or abusive.” Foucault is very careful to point out that his choice of investigation into the domain of knowledge does not accuse the others “of leading nowhere or of not providing any valid results” (Foucault 1997d: 48).

The question is: How can Foucault engage in an investigation of science without taking any position with regard to its legitimacy as a science? In other words, his endeavor is either a first-order science itself with its own independent domain of objects or a second-order analysis of various sciences as its subject matter. If the latter is the case, then how can it avoid implying any epistemological inference with regard to the sciences that it studies? Here I will seek to show that Foucault’s archaeological analysis is a first-order science, and thereby fundamentally different from other approaches to the question of knowledge.
Many students of Foucault have remarked on the confusion that his usage of the terms *connaissance* and *savoir* has caused for the translators, editors, and readers of his works (For examples, see Rabinow 1997b: xliii-xliv; Faubion 1998: xxiv-xxxi; and Foucault 1972a: 15n). For instance, in his *Introduction* to the second volume of the *Essential Works of Foucault*, James D. Faubion, discusses different ways that these two terms are used in French (see Faubion 1998: xxiv-xxxi). He also tries to clarify Foucault’s usage of them through some examples. However, I believe that how these terms are used in ordinary French is ultimately not much help in understanding their technical usage by Foucault. Instead, we need to recognize that when Foucault uses these two terms in a technical manner to explain the archaeological approach, he uses the term *connaissance* for science and *savoir* for a discursive knowledge. For example, discussing the unity of clinical discourse, he makes clear that:

> [T]he unity of clinical discourse is in no sense the unity of a science or a set of knowledges [*connaissances*] attempting to acquire a scientific status.... It is an enunciative ensemble both theoretical and practical, descriptive and institutional, analytical and prescriptive, made up of inferences as well as decisions, of assertions as well as degrees [decrees]. (Foucault: 1998e: 323-324; my correction)

He goes on and adds that he uses the term *savoir* (knowledge) in connection with such a discursive unity:

> The set thus formulated from the system of positivity, and manifested in the unity of a discursive formation, is what might be called a knowledge [*savoir*]. Knowledge is not the sum of scientific knowledges [*connaissances*], since it should always be possible to say whether the latter are true or false, accurate or not, approximate or definite, contradictory or consistent; none of these distinctions is pertinent in describing knowledge [*savoir*]...(Foucault 1998e: 324)

Having made this terminological clarification, let us see how Foucault’s archaeology can remain epistemologically neutral with respect to the scientific contents
of the sciences that it analyzes. He can manage to do so because he chooses to deal with
the discursive aspect of sciences; in other words, because he makes a distinction between
the two:

Discursive formations are neither current sciences in gestation, nor
sciences formerly recognized as such, then fallen into desuetude and
abandoned as a result of new requirements of our criteria...In order to
characterize them, the distinction between scientific and nonscientific is
not pertinent: they are epistemologically neutral.....Knowledge cannot be
analyzed in terms of knowledges; nor can positivity in terms of rationality;
nor can the discursive formation in terms of science. And one cannot ask
that their description be equivalent to a history of knowledges, a genesis of
rationality or the epistemology of a science. (Foucault 1998e: 324-325).

Therefore, when Foucault speaks of the discursive nature of knowledge, he is not
speaking of scientific knowledge (connaissance), but rather of that knowledge (savoir)
“which is the set of the elements (objects, types of formulation, concepts and theoretical
choices) formed from one and the same positivity in a field of a unitary discursive
formation.” We should also note that discourses can be formulated around sciences but
science does not have a discursive nature, for “it should always be possible to say
whether the latter are true or false, accurate or not, approximate or definite, contradictory
or consistent,” something which cannot be said about a discourse. Indeed, Foucault has
discovered a new object of study in the discursive aspect of science that is not reducible
to science, to mental representations, or to non-discursive social events, even though this
object is related to all of them. Thus, an archaeological study is itself a first-order science
because its treats a factual event, i.e. discourse, as do other first-order sciences. This is
why it can be argued that archaeology is, for example, closer to chemistry than to the
philosophy of science or the sociology of knowledge.
It is crucial for the purpose of this dissertation to distinguish between science and discourse. I have not come across any writer that focuses on the significance of this distinction for Foucault’s project. As we will see later, even Foucault detects a tendency on the part of his readers to miss this point. I believe that the distinction between science and discourse is overlooked by the students of Foucault mostly because they fail to take note of the fact that his critique is ontological, and that his discourse analysis tries to move beyond epistemology. Since Foucault’s distinction between science and discourse is the bedrock of my thesis, his own comments in this regard are worth quoting at length:

Under the general term of the ‘conditions of possibility’ of a science, two heteromorphous systems must be distinguished. The first defines the conditions of the science as a science: it is relative to its domain of objects, to the type of language it uses, to the concepts it has at its disposal or it is seeking to establish; it defines the formal and semantic rules required for a statement to belong to the science; it is instituted either by the science in question, insofar as it poses its own norms for itself, or by another science, insofar it imposes itself on the former as a model of formalization; at any rate, these conditions of scientificity are internal to scientific discourse in general and cannot be defined other than through it. The other system is concerned with the possibility of a science in its historical existence. It is external to the former system, and the two cannot be superposed. It is constituted by a field of discursive sets which have neither the same status, units, organization, nor the same functioning as the sciences to which they give rise. These discursive sets should not be seen as a rhapsody of false knowledges, archaic themes, and irrational figures which the sciences, in their sovereignty, definitively thrust aside into the night of prehistory. Nor should they be imagined as the outline of future sciences that are still confusedly wrapped around their futures, vegetating for a time in the half sleep of silent germination. Finally, they should not be conceived as the only epistemological system to which those supposedly false, quasi- or pseudo-sciences, the human sciences, are susceptible. (Foucault 1998e: 326)

Faubion suggests that, if pressed, Foucault “might at least have agreed with those analytical philosophers who argue that knowledge is always defeasible, that claims to know perfectly justifiable in one context might turn out to be both unjustified and false in
another” (Faubion 1998: xxv). And yet he expresses his surprise that: “Foucault is too often read as a relentless epistemological relativist, a disbeliever in truth – which is odd, because he is entirely prepared to take a great many would-be purveyors of truth more or less at their words” (Faubion 1998: xxv). I believe that the relativistic reading of Foucault is unfounded. The question of relativism is meaningful only in relation to the question of the truth and falsehood; however, we saw that Foucault’s archaeology is not concerned with the question of truth in an epistemological manner. In other words, at the level which he conducts his studies, i.e. at the level of discursive knowledge (savoir), truth or falsehood is not an issue. Where it is an issue, i.e. at the level of scientific knowledge (connaissance), he believes that “it should always be possible to say whether the latter [scientific knowledges] are true or false, accurate or not, approximate or definite, contradictory or consistent” (Foucault 1998e: 324). It seems to me that relativistic reading of Foucault usually misses the following points: 1) Foucault’s critique is not an epistemological critique, and 2) Foucault distinguishes between science and discourse even though the latter may have a hold on scientific knowledge. The fact that he uses the term discourse in reference to sciences such as psychiatry, medicine, biology, economics, mathematics, sociology and so forth (see 1991b: 54; 1972a: 188-189), should not be viewed as an attempt to obscure this distinction. In such cases he is emphasizing the discursive aspect of sciences without wishing to imply that they have no reality other than being discourse.

Foucault does not discredit epistemological accounts of the sciences. Rather, he wants to be able to ask different questions of the human sciences, and to study them at the level of discursive practices instead of at the level of their scientificity.
Beyond the History of Ideas

Foucault’s attempt to move beyond epistemology is interlocked with the departure from a host of other forms of the analysis of science, which he generally calls the history of ideas. Foucault implies a close kinship between the history of ideas and analyses such as the history of science, the critique of ideology, hermeneutical and interpretative disciplines, and the sociology of knowledge. Foucault’s main objection to the history of ideas is its failure to recognize the unity of discourse, and the fact that it is irreducible to other non-discursive events.

Foucault identifies four thresholds that a scientific discourse may pass through. The first one is “the moment at which a discursive practice achieves individuality and autonomy” (Foucault 1972a: 186). This is the threshold of positivity, after which a scientific discourse achieves an autonomous status, and thereby becomes irreducible to social conditions, ideas, logical propositions, economic interests and so forth. The second threshold is crossed “when in the operation of a discursive formation, a group of statements articulated, claims to validate (even unsuccessfully) norms of verification and coherence, and when it exercises a dominant function (as a model, a critique, or a verification) over knowledge” (Foucault 1972a: 186-187). With this, the threshold of epistemologization is crossed. The third threshold is the threshold of scientificity, which Foucault defines as “when the epistemological figure thus outlined obeys a number of formal criteria, when its statements comply not only with archaeological rules of formation, but also with certain laws for the construction of propositions” (Foucault 1972a: 187). Foucault describes the final threshold as “when this scientific discourse is able, in turn, to define the axioms necessary to it, and the elements that it uses, the
propositional structures that are legitimate to it, and the transformations that it accepts, when it is thus able, taking itself as a starting-point, to deploy the formal edifice that it constitutes, we will say that it has crossed the *threshold of formalization*” (Foucault 1972a: 187).

Foucault finds it necessary to point out that: 1) these thresholds are not crossed by all discourses, and they may stop at different stages; and 2) they are not crossed in order and in an evolutionary manner; each discourse is unique in the way it achieves these thresholds. Mathematics is “the only discursive practice to have crossed at one and the same time” all four thresholds (Foucault 1972a:188). But mathematics is a bad example for generalizing about other sciences because each discourse’s passage through these thresholds is unique. The failure to recognize the uniqueness of each discourse with respect to its crossing of the *thresholds of positivity, epistemologization, scientificity, and formalization* leads to a perception of science as a “linear accumulation of truths” (Foucault 1972a: 188). This, in turn, risks neglecting ruptures and discontinuities in the history of the sciences, the very question which this dissertation is concerned with, namely, the shift in sociological theories.

Sociologists’ awareness of shifts, ruptures, and discontinuities in their discipline is not unique. Foucault points out that these and other similar concepts of “discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series, and transformation present all historical analysis not only with questions of procedure, but with theoretical problems” (Foucault 1972a: 21). With regard to this acute awareness of discontinuity, Foucault writes:

At about the same time, in the disciplines that we call the history of ideas, the history of science, the history of philosophy, the history of thought, and the history of literature (we can ignore their specificity for the moment),...attention has been turned, on the contrary, away from vast
unities like 'periods' or 'centuries' to the phenomenon of rupture, of discontinuity. Beneath the great continuities of thought, beneath the solid, homogeneous manifestations of a single mind or of a collective mentality, beneath the stubborn development of a science striving to exist and to reach completion at the very outset, beneath the persistence of a particular genre, form, discipline, or theoretical activity, one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions. (Foucault 1972a: 4)

It is true that the historians of ideas have always detected changes in various disciplines, but, as Foucault argues, discursive changes do not constitute a process of becoming as the historians of ideas understand them. Rather, they are specific transformations, and should be analyzed as such in their specificity (see Foucault 1991b: 56). In the case of a discipline such as sociology the awareness of the change has always been acute, because as Foucault puts it, sociology and psychology “have been continually making fresh starts ever since their inception” (Foucault 1991b: 54).

Foucault identifies several possible types of discontinuities in discourse in terms of the following:

1. The epistemological acts and thresholds: “they suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and force it to enter a new time, cut it from its empirical origin and its original motivation; ... they direct historical analysis away from the search for silent beginnings... towards the search for a new rationality and its various effects” (Foucault 1972a: 4).

2. The displacements and transformations of concepts in different contexts and fields. That is, the differential effects of changes at the microscopic and macroscopic scales. For example, the failures of a particular scientist, and the development of a new method have different kinds of consequences for a science, and thereby their effects are also differential (see Foucault 1972a: 4-5).
3. *Architectonic* changes taking place as a result of the internal rearrangement of discourse to establish a new type of coherency (see Foucault 1972a: 5).

4. *Theoretical* transformations: “the most radical discontinuities are the breaks effected by a work of theoretical transformation ‘which establishes a science by detaching it from the ideology of its past and by revealing this past as ideological’” (Foucault 1972a: 5).

5. *Literary* organization and changes in “the particular structure of a given *œuvre*, book, or text” (Foucault 1972a: 5).

Foucault believes that the systematic investigation of these discontinuities in the history of thought is a necessary task. He does not think this task should be pursued through the traditional history of ideas, but through “a history of discursive practices in the specific relationships which link them to other practices” (Foucault 1991b: 64). He devotes Part IV of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (about 60 pages) to describing and elaborating the elements that distinguish an archaeological approach to knowledge from other approaches, especially from that of the history of ideas. This distinction between archaeology and other approaches to science is of most pivotal significance given that he sets aside one-third of his only methodological book to explain it, and given his comment that “I cannot be satisfied until I have cut myself off from ‘the history of ideas’, until I have shown in what way archaeological analysis differs from the descriptions of ‘the history of ideas’” (Foucault 1972a: 136). This is because Foucault believes in the relative autonomy of discourse. He thinks discourse should not be reduced to and explained in terms of the consciousness of the subject, his intentions, or systems of signs. In this respect, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* for Foucault is analogous to *The Rules of
Sociological Method for Durkheim. Durkheim argued that social facts had to be studied by sociology as a distinct scientific discipline, because they are irreducible to non-social phenomena. Foucault also insists that discourse has its own autonomous unity, and therefore it should be studied by archaeology as a distinct science.

After reminding the reader of the difficulty of defining a discipline like the history of ideas, Foucault tries to explain why he seeks to move beyond this approach. On the one hand, it has an epistemological conception of discourse. Thus, it becomes an "analysis of opinion rather than knowledge, of errors rather than truth, of types of mentality rather than forms of thought" (Foucault 1972a: 137). By performing this role, the history of ideas competes with the sciences they analyze from within their scientific organization. On the other hand, it "sets out to cross the boundaries of existing disciplines, to deal with them from the outside, and to reinterpret them. Rather than a marginal domain, then, it constitutes a style of analysis, a putting into perspective" (Foucault 1972a: 136-137). This function then assumes the role of the 'big brother' claiming a more comprehensive view of the truth from outside, and hence advances a reinterpretation, and a putting into perspective. That is to say, it is similar to the sociology of knowledge because it seeks to discern a "meaningful" relationship between knowledge and its social conditions.

Given the four thresholds of positivity, epistemologization, scientificity, and formalization that a scientific discourse may cross, Foucault (1972a: 189-190) identifies three different types of the history of science:

...
1. A *recurrential analysis*, which is conducted at the level formalization, and for sciences that have crossed this threshold. The history of mathematics can serve as a good example of this type of history, where:

What it possesses at a given moment (its domain, its methods, the objects that it defines, the language that it employs) is never thrown back into the external field of non-scientificity, but is constantly undergoing redefinition... in the formal structure that mathematics constitutes... (Foucault 1972a: 89)

2. An *epistemological* history of sciences, which is carried out within those sciences that have crossed the *threshold of epistemologization*. It seeks to discover:

[H]ow a concept – still overlaid with metaphors or imaginary contents – was purified, and accorded the status and function of a scientific concept...how a region of experience that has already been mapped, already partially articulated, but is still overlaid with immediate practical uses or values related to those uses, was constituted as a scientific domain... how, in general, a science was established over and against a pre-scientific level, which both paved the way and resisted it in advance, how it succeeded in overcoming the obstacles and limitations that still stood in its way. (Foucault 1972a: 190)

3. An *archaeological history*, which seeks:

[T]o outline the history of the sciences on the basis of a description of discursive practices; to define how, in accordance with which regularity, and as a result of which modifications, it was able to give rise to the processes of epistemologization, to attain norms of scientificity, and, perhaps, to reach the threshold of formalization. (Foucault 1972a: 190-191)

This archaeological analysis is distinct from the other ways of pursuing the history of the sciences which Foucault seeks to leave behind. He explains that:

The third of type analysis takes as its point of attack the threshold of epistemologization – the point of cleavage between the discursive formations defined by their positivity and epistemological figures that are not necessarily all sciences (and which may never, in fact, succeed in becoming sciences). (Foucault 1972a: 190)
For the purpose of this analysis, the scientific status of the sciences is irrelevant. For example, both mathematics (which is believed to have achieved all of four thresholds simultaneously) and the social sciences (which are constantly reminded of their lack of scientific status) can and should be studied through the archaeological analysis. They can be archaeologically analyzed because they both have achieved the threshold of positivity, which establishes them as autonomous and irreducible discursive entities. They should be studied archaeologically, because having become a discourse, they are now capable of exercising different degrees of power in a particular discursive community. In other words, regardless of whether a form of knowledge is true or false, epistemologically legitimate or illegitimate, once it becomes a discourse by crossing the threshold of positivity, it will be a concern for anyone who is engaged in a critical project within its field.

It should be emphasized that the archaeological analysis of discourse is not limited, applicable, or appropriate only to those types of knowledge that have not crossed the thresholds of scientificity and formalization. Many students of Foucault who have overlooked this point seem to be lost and confused on whether archaeology is a science, or if it deals with the sciences. For example, Faubion asserts that archaeological history belongs to what Foucault refers to as savoir (see Faubion 1998: xxvii). However, when he asks himself, “How close are connaissance and archaeological history?” (Faubion 1998: xxx), he fails to understand that these are analytical distinctions, and that the threshold of positivity is actually an aspect of connaissance. This is exactly why Foucault considers even mathematics as a discourse. The fact that mathematics has achieved formalization does not disqualify it from being a discourse because it has also achieved
the status of positivity (see Foucault 1972a: 188-189; 1991b: 54). Not being attentive to this point, Faubion claims that “Archaeology is neither a science nor a guarantor of connaissance; it can only offer savior....” (Faubion 1998: xxx). This view is based on the misconception that savoir and connaissance have to be separate ontological entities, which is far from Foucault’s explanation of the four thresholds that may be achieved by a set of knowledges. It should be evident from my argument here that savoir and connaissance may coexist in one body of knowledge, but can be studied separately by different kinds of histories of science.

Beyond the Philosophy of the Subject and Structuralism

Foucault’s path to ontological critique has to be paved both negatively and positively. The negative pavement involves those fields of the analysis that he wants to set aside. The positive is his explication of a genealogy of the modern subject. In other words, he wants to delineate the mechanisms through which the subject is constituted. Foucault believes that this genealogical delineation enables the subject to engage in an ontological critique of the mechanisms that constitute the self. I now wish to examine Foucault’s shift from the philosophy of the subject and structuralism to discourse analysis before proceeding to the genealogy of the subject.

Foucault sought to distance himself from several influential intellectual trends of the time. It has already been mentioned that one of the shifts he made was from the philosophy of consciousness to a discursive approach. He gives an account of this detour as a shift from the philosophy of the subject to “a genealogy of this subject” (Foucault 1997g: 176). For our purposes, it is important to understand this shift and its background.
In France after World War II, for several reasons the philosophy of subject was dominant. They included the impact of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* and *Crisis of the European Science*, the Cartesian orientation of the French university, and the fact that “given the absurdity of wars, slaughters, and despotism, it seemed then to be up to the individual subject to give meaning to his existential choices” (Foucault 1997g: 174). By the philosophy of subject Foucault means a philosophy which sets as “its task *par excellence* the foundation of all knowledge and principle of all signification as stemming from the meaningful subject” (Foucault 1997g: 174). However:

With the leisure and distance that came after the war, this emphasis on the philosophy of subject no longer seemed so self-evident. Two hitherto-hidden theoretical paradoxes could no longer be avoided. The first one was that the philosophy of consciousness had failed to found a philosophy of knowledge, and especially scientific knowledge, and the second was that this philosophy of meaning paradoxically had failed to take into account the formative mechanisms of signification and the structure of systems of meaning. (Foucault 1997g: 174-175)

Here again Foucault refers to the problem of knowledge, and more precisely refers to two problems. The first problem seems to be Foucault’s main concern, for it also involves the question of the political status of the sciences. It is this problem of the philosophy of consciousness for which he seeks a resolution. The second problem, even after having been addressed by structuralism through a theory of signification, does not keep Foucault engaged, because he wants “to restore to discourse its character as an event,” and as such he has no option but “to abolish the sovereignty of the signifier” (Foucault 1972b: 229; my emphasis). Thus, I only discuss his treatment of the first problem here, i.e., the failure on the part of the philosophy of consciousness to formulate a philosophy of science.
A philosophy of science should be able to explain "how new objects are able to enter a domain of knowledge and can be presented as objects to be known" (Foucault 1997c: 151). In other words, it is expected to write a history of problematization in human society. But phenomenology, on the one hand, claimed the analysis of "concrete things as one of its fundamental tasks," yet on the other hand, because of its academic orientation, it had its privileged objects of "phenomenological description, lived experiences or the perception of a tree through an office window" (Foucault 1997c: 149). Instead, Foucault thought that one should "analyze a number of collective and social experiences" (Foucault 1997c: 150).

However, the change of the object of the study from the tree to collective and social experiences was in itself not enough to establish a philosophy of science after the consciousness model. Thus Foucault felt he needed to take collective and social experiences into a field where they could be analyzed historically in the context of social institutions and social practices. Marxism, another dominant trend of the time, seemed to be a viable option for this objective. But, according to Foucault, for such an objective, Marxist analyses were "a bit like poorly tailored clothing" (Foucault 1997c: 151). Besides, he noted that "Marxism carried with it a fundamental theoretical and practical weakness: the humanistic discourse hid the political reality that the Marxists of this period nonetheless supported" (Foucault 1997g: 175).

It was through a historical analysis of the social experiences and a third dominant intellectual trend, i.e., the history of ideas, that Foucault sought to address the question of the problematization. In other words, he could ask how and why something became a problem in a society and entered the domain of thought. This led Foucault to what he
calls a *Critical History of Thought* (Foucault 1998f: 458). I will discuss the critical aspect of Foucault’s project later; here I would like to explain briefly what it means to understand science from the perspective of the history of thought.

Foucault moved beyond the philosophy of consciousness and the other dominant currents of the time, including the history of ideas through the history of thought. He explains that:

> In what is called the “history of ideas,” one generally describes change by giving oneself two expedients that make things easier:
> 1. One uses concepts that seem rather magical to me, such as influence, crisis, sudden realization [*prise de conscience*], the interest taken in a problem, and so on—convenient concepts that don’t work, in my view.
> 2. When one encounters a difficulty, one goes from the level of analysis which is the statements themselves to another, which is exterior to it. Thus, faced with a change, a contradiction, an incoherence, one resorts to an explanation by social conditions, mentality, worldview, and so on. (Foucault 1998c: 282-283)

The three dominant intellectual trends in France, and the problem of experiences of marginalized groups, which Foucault refers to as the “problem of experiences on the edge,” functioned only as Foucault’s points of departure, or as his points of reference (Foucault 1997c: 151-152). He thought they could not successfully explain scientific changes, i.e., the discontinuities in the history of science. The history of ideas, which had assumed this task, either provided no explanation, appeared only as magical concepts, or adopted a reductionist approach.

Foucault is not the only scholar who rejects the explanatory value of concepts like influence, tradition, and crisis. Many sociologists have also noted that scientific transformations cannot be explained in terms of the immanent development of ideas or intellectual influences on scientists. However, Foucault’s approach to the relationship between knowledge and social conditions is unique. He does not think that thought can...
be reduced to social events and explained by them. One of the difficulties of understanding Foucault is reconciling these two views. On the one hand, Foucault rejects any explanation of theoretical shifts with reference to individual intellectual concepts. On the other hand, he also does not accept their conventional sociological explanation in terms of social conditions. Foucault tries to explain these changes with reference to discourse itself. It is through discourse that he makes his way out from between the *individual* and the *social*.

As already noted, there have been other thinkers who also did not believe that concepts such as influence and interest could illuminate any significant aspect of the shifts in the field of knowledge and science. At this point it is helpful to consider an example. For this purpose, I have selected Lucien Goldmann, and I should note that he is not an arbitrary choice. He is being considered here because I believe he is a scholar who could be understood to be very close to Foucault with respect to the question of change in science, but was unable to move beyond what is pejoratively referred to as sociologism. Goldmann notes that we can approach an author's works and ideas in one of three ways:

[B]y methods of textual analysis which I shall call 'positivistic'; by intuitive methods based upon feelings of personal sympathy and affinity; or finally, by dialectical methods. (Goldmann 1964: 8)

He dismisses the intuitive methods as non-scientific and tries to show how the dialectical methods are superior to the 'positivistic' ones. According to him, the criterion of superiority is coherency, and it is a characteristic of dialectical methods. The positivistic methods are not able to delineate the relationships between the whole and the parts and thus he maintains that:

[T]he ideas and work of an author cannot be understood as long as we remain on the level of what he wrote, or even of what he read and what
influenced him. Ideas are only a partial aspect of a less abstract reality: that of the whole, living man. And in his turn, this man is only an element in a whole made up of the social group to which he belongs. An idea which he expresses or a book which he writes can acquire their real meaning for us, and can be fully understood, only when they are seen as integral parts of his life and mode of behaviour. Moreover, it often happens that the mode of behaviour which enables us to understand a particular work is not that of the author himself, but that of a whole social group; and, when the work with which we are concerned is of a particular importance, this behaviour is that of a whole social class. (Goldmann 1964: 7)

After reading the above passage, one may wonder what links the criterion of coherency and the notion of social class. Hence, it is helpful to explain how Goldmann establishes the link between the two. In the first place, he argues that there are accidental and essential elements in any scientific work. Secondly, he says that one should be able to separate the accidental from the essential elements in order to understand a work. Thirdly, he decides to focus on the social sciences because he says, without any elaboration, that the situation in the physical sciences is different. Fourthly, he notes that while an individual can “separate his ideas and aspirations from his daily life [,] the same is not true of social groups, for as far as they are concerned, their ideas and behaviour are rigorously and closely related” (Goldmann 1964: 17). Finally, Goldmann contends that it is a social group, in particular a social class, that is capable of having a world vision and the coherency of significant works are due to having stemmed from a ‘world vision’. Goldmann, who is a Marxist thinker, defines a ‘world vision’ as the “whole complex of ideas, aspirations and feelings which links together the members of a social group (a group which, in most cases, assumes the existence of a social class) and which opposes them to members of other social groups” (Goldmann 1964: 17).
Richard Swedberg, who has used Goldmann’s theory of change in the social sciences to explain certain sociological theories, makes the following observation:

Goldmann has noted that an author’s inferior works are often the ones that lend themselves most easily to explanation through his/her life story. This is certainly true of contemporary sociology wherein the spirit of “publish or perish” encourages professional contacts between sociologists to appear as the key to their theories...Contrary to this, however, is the fact that the more important works always stand by themselves. Little can be added to *Suicide* or *The Protestant Ethic*, for instance, by detailing their authors’ everyday lives. The fact that Durkheim had a close friend who committed suicide and that one of Weber’s grandfathers was a protestant capitalist adds nothing to the objective significance of these works. (Swedberg 1982: 2)

Thus, according to Goldmann and Swedberg, important scientific achievements such as *Suicide* and *The Protestant Ethic* cannot be explained in terms of some personal experiences. Rather, they must be understood as integral parts of a social class (see Swedberg 1982: 3). Foucault would agree with them that these works cannot be reduced to their authors’ biography and other people’s influences on them. However he would strongly resist the temptation to reduce them to some forms of class-consciousness, or to other social facts for that matter. His intellectual quest has been towards a third alternative, for “most historians prefer a history of social processes [where society plays the role of subject], and most philosophers prefer a subject without history” (Foucault 1997g: 176).

It is in light of a comment such as the above that we may follow Foucault’s path from the philosophy of consciousness to the genealogy of the subject and the history of thought. For as we noted he does not want to engage in a kind of sociologism that recognizes no subject but the *Society*. Nor does he wish to embrace an individualistic notion of a subject that has no history. He has to go beyond the philosophy of
consciousness (or subject) in order to conceive a historical subject, but at the same time he has to avoid transforming this subject into impersonal social entities such as Institutions and Society. It is exactly for this reason that he does not have anything good to say about two philosophies that have managed to move beyond the philosophy of the subject:

With the all-too-easy clarity of hindsight—what you call, I think, the “Monday morning quarterback”—let me say that there were two possible paths that led beyond this philosophy of the subject. First, the theory of objective knowledge and, two, an analysis of systems of meaning, or semiology. The first of these was the path of logical positivism. The second was that of a certain school of linguistics, psychoanalysis, and anthropology, all generally grouped under rubric of structuralism.

These were not the directions I took. Let me announce once and for all that I am not a structuralist, and I confess with the appropriate chagrin that I am not an analytic philosopher—nobody is perfect. I have tried to explore another direction. I have tried to get out from the philosophy of the subject through a genealogy of this subject, by studying the constitution of the subject across history, which has led us up to the modern concept of the self. (Foucault 1997g: 176; my emphasis)

Structuralism and logical positivism both abandoned the kind of philosophy of the subject that Foucault wished to distance himself from, but they could not articulate an alternative view of the subject, something like a genealogy of the subject. They eliminated the subject altogether in favor of structural relations and propositional meaningfulness.

As suggested by the description that Foucault uses for his project, i.e., a Critical History of Thought (Foucault 1998f: 458), and the demonstrative adjective of “this” in the above passage, Foucault does not want to eliminate the subject altogether. Habermas and others are wrong in also presuming that Foucault focuses only on social institutions, structures, and discursive practices that form the social subject. Disciplinary regulations are only half of the glass; the other half has to do with the critical thoughts of the subject. In other words, the coin of genealogy has two sides: discipline and critique. These two
sides can readily be observed if one understands how Foucault avoids the reductionism of sociologism as well as that of the philosophy of consciousness through the notion of thought. Foucault sees a reciprocal relationship between socio-political institutions and scientific discourses (see Foucault 1997k: 116). But there is yet a third element in this relationship: the subject.

The subject is required as the mediator between the discourse and the socio-political institutions. The goal of study is not simply to establish a relationship between the two. Rather, it is to see how while a scientific discourse presupposes some social organizations, they are also transformed by such a discourse (see Foucault 1997k: 116). A third constituent is also required with regard to this twofold goal, for there is no sense in speaking of socio-political or discursive developments without the human agent. The existence of all other social and institutional actors depends on the existence of the human subject, and any attempt at transforming them must involve this subject. Foucault wants to show that in modern western society, while the subject is constituted through certain discursive practices that are linked to some non-discursive events, in turn such a subject may also transform them through critical practices.

Familiarity with Foucault's effort to move beyond different epistemological fields is necessary to understand his work. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow must have not fully appreciated the significance of this epistemological bracketing when they considered giving their work the title *Michel Foucault: From Structuralism to Hermeneutics* (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: xi). While they changed it to *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* after Foucault and many others told them that "he was never a structuralist," they still insisted that "he thought structuralism
was the most advanced position in the human sciences" (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: xi, xii). How could they reconcile these two positions? According to them, the subtitle of *The Order of Things* originally was intended to be *An Archaeology of Structuralism* because Foucault thought that structuralism was the most advanced position in the human sciences. They argue that since Foucault “was not practicing the human sciences; he was analyzing discourse,” he could rightfully claim that he was never a structuralist (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: xi).

Dreyfus and Rabinow believe that in some of his studies Foucault is “under the influence of the structuralist enthusiasm sweeping Paris” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 16). However, Foucault has insisted that a notion such as *influence* cannot explain what happens in the field of knowledge (see Foucault 1972a: 21). In addition, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, which Dreyfus and Rabinow claim is written under the *influence* of structuralism, Foucault makes a request that should have been enough for them to explain his theory of discourse in non-structuralist terms. Here is Foucault’s request:

This last point is a request to the English-speaking reader. In France, certain half-witted ‘commentators’ persist in labelling me a ‘structuralist’. I have been unable to get it into their tiny minds that I have used none of the methods, concepts, or key terms that characterizes structural analysis. I should be grateful if a more serious public would free me from a connection that certainly does me honour, but that I have not deserved. (Foucault 1970: xiv)

Dreyfus and Rabinow do not seem willing to grant Foucault his wish to be dissociated from structuralism. Even though they would argue that Foucault finally got rid of the structuralist influence, they do not do so before liberating him from what they call “the illusion of autonomous discourse”.
According to Dreyfus and Rabinow, "the illusion of autonomous discourse" was a residue of the structuralist influence, that, in his later work, Foucault made "the subject of critical analysis" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: xii). They believe that *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* were written under the influence of "the illusion of autonomous discourse," because they assume that discursive practices form social practices and institutions. They allege that in these works Foucault neglected the fact that discursive practices are themselves affected by social practices (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: xii). Thus, they feel compelled to devote more than a third of their book to criticizing Foucault for attempting to "divorce discourse as far as possible from its social setting and to discover the rules of its self-regulation" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 17). The allegation that the autonomy of discourse means the separation of discourse from the social sphere could not be farther from truth.

Foucault’s archaeological approach does not divorce discursive events from non-discursive events. In fact, one can even show that the relationship between the two is mutual, not simply from discourse to the social. I assume that, in Dreyfus and Rabinow’s view, in order not to divorce discourse as far as possible from its social setting, Foucault had to adopt an approach similar to that of Lucien Goldmann and Richard Swedberg discussed above. I have argued that Foucault consciously distances himself from all sorts of epistemological approaches, including the sociology of knowledge. By withdrawing from epistemological fields of understanding discourse, Foucault seeks to avoid the reduction of the social to discourse and vice versa. Dreyfus and Rabinow fail to see that autonomy of two entities does not mean that they are divorced. In fact, there can be no
genuine relationship between something that is autonomous and another thing that is reduced to it.

I think the source of Dreyfus and Rabinow’s misgivings about the archaeological analysis of discourse is their perception that archaeology and structuralism are similar. They charge that archaeology resembles structuralism in two ways. First, it rejects any “recourse to the interiority of a conscious, individual, meaning-giving subject” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 57). Second, it does not take into account the background in which the participants make sense of what they do (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 57). But what they overlook is that these two exhibit only a negative resemblance. That is, archaeology resembles structuralism as far as it too is not a philosophy of the subject. Foucault is aware of this negative resemblance when he says that both logical positivism and structuralism moved beyond the philosophy of subject, but that he does not want to take these paths. In spite of this negative similarity, the reason why he does not want to take the path of structuralism lies in a positive distinction he maintains between his archaeology and structuralism. Positively speaking, Foucault’s archaeology is inclined toward a theory of thought in which the subject plays a significant role. Like structuralism, he rejects the subject of the philosophy of the subject, but he manages to bring in a critical subject through his theory of thought.

Foucault seeks to preserve both the autonomy of the subject and the social while at the same time avoiding reducing scientific discourses to either of them. Thus, he establishes a field of analysis wherein discursive events, non-discursive social events, and the subject can be viewed as autonomous entities interacting with one another. This interaction is such that it leads to the autonomous formation of each. In Foucault’s works,
discourse, the subject, and the social are manifest as a triad. In some works, it might be discourse which is overtly manifested, and in the others, the subject, or the social. But they are all present in all of his works in one way or another. One should not read Foucault without looking closely for the operation of this triad in the work being read. When the elements of this triad are not explicit in some work, they do not constitute hidden meanings or concealed interests. However, this implicitness can make its comprehension difficult for the reader.

Foucault insists that discourse (or a game of truth), regulatory social relations (relations of power), and the subject (or forms of relation to oneself and to others) are "the three fundamental elements of any experience" (Foucault 1997k: 117). As we know, Foucault's project is concerned with the genealogy of modern western society and the modern western subject, and so it is prudent to assume that these three elements are implicated in any experience of the modern western subject. But, as has already been indicated several times, there is no inseparable intrinsic link between the three as a whole. With regard to his studies of the experiences of madness, delinquency, and sexuality, Foucault remarks:

So that in these three areas—madness, delinquency, and sexuality—I emphasized a particular aspect each time: the establishment of a certain objectivity (discourse), the development of a politics and a government of the self (relations of power), and the elaboration of an ethics and a practice in regard to oneself (the subject). But each time I also tried to point out the place occupied here by the other two components necessary for constituting a field of experience. (Foucault 1997k: 116-117; parentheses are my additions).

Therefore, in any field of social experience we should study the interactions of these three components. Foucault comes to the conclusion that in relation to the role of the subject, the notion of thought is more appropriate for his project than concepts like
attitude and behavior. The significance of the notion of thought will be discussed in more
detail later, but first we should explain why Foucault also seeks to move beyond other
epistemologically-oriented approaches to knowledge.
A Case of Social Determinism

At the outset, let us exactly identify the problem we are concerned with here. Briefly, the problem is the socio-political aspects of science in which both Foucault (and discourse analysts) and those who engage in epistemologically oriented analyses of science are interested. Our purpose is to see if the sociology of knowledge (or the sociology of sociology) can produce self-reflective studies about the critical dimension of sociology which is the driving force behind theoretical shifts within the discipline. Since the sociology of knowledge approaches sociology as a scientific discipline, I will examine its position with regard to the question of science in general in order to be able to draw comparisons with Foucault’s approach.

What does it mean for science to be dependent on and shaped by some social processes? What are the epistemological and political implications of such a conception of science? Is a socially constructed science necessarily arbitrary and flawed? Is it necessary to question the epistemological legitimacy of science in order to conceive it as political? Put differently, from being social or political, can we infer that science is not epistemologically valid? My aim in this chapter is to show first, that one cannot make epistemological inferences about the truth-value of scientific statements based on the idea that scientific practices and findings are linked to social processes; and second, that this silence on epistemological matters does not mean that we cannot understand science to be
political. In fact, while the conventional sociological mistrust of science has never been able to make the question of politics an intrinsic aspect of science, the discursive understanding shows the operation of politics at the interior of science. But I should caution in advance that politics in its discursive sense does not necessarily imply something morally bad or epistemologically incorrect about science.

To compare the discursive approach to the question of knowledge with that of the sociology of knowledge, we need to specify how the sociology of knowledge conducts itself in general. For this purpose, I will refer to works by Karl Mannheim, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, and contemporary feminists such as Sandra Harding and Donna J. Haraway. The basic orientation of the sociology of knowledge can be demonstrated through these writers. I will show that regardless of the contents of its particular forms, the sociology of knowledge always seems to imply some epistemological and political positions. Finally, through Karl Popper and Foucault I will argue that these epistemological and political inferences about science and knowledge are either unfounded or misplaced. In other words, the political function of knowledge is not accurately addressed by the sociology of knowledge, and science's epistemological dilemmas are not resolved at that level either.

As Boudon and Bourricaud argue, the sociology of knowledge aims “to study the social ‘determinants’ of knowledge and particularly of scientific knowledge” (Boudon and Bourricaud 1986: 213). They also mention that even though Durkheim did not explicitly formulate a scientific programme of the sociology of knowledge, he was the first to introduce this insight into sociology (Boudon and Bourricaud 1986: 213). Others

---

1 For the purpose of this discussion, I use the sociology of knowledge in a general sense so as to cover the sociology of science too.
would argue that it was Marx who first got hold of this aspect of knowledge in his notions of substructure and superstructure (see Mannheim 1966: 278; Berger and Luckmann 1967: 6). Apart from the question of pioneering, Boudon and Bourricaud describe the nature of the sociology of knowledge and its epistemological implication through Durkheim very well:

The French sociologist put forward the thesis that some fundamental scientific concepts (like the concept of ‘force’) or some operative procedures (like those of classification) are a direct consequence of social experience. It is the social experience of moral prohibitions and of the sacred which would have given man the first concept of a force superior to that of the individual. The existence of social groups and their differentiations and hierarchies would have suggested to man the notions of gender and species, and more generally the concept of logical order and classification. What Durkheim proposes is in fact a despiritualization and socialization of the famous ‘a priori’ forms of understanding seen by Kant as the conditions for the possibility of knowledge. (Boudon and Bourricaud 1986: 213)

This clearly shows that from its earliest inception, the sociology of knowledge has proposed itself as a candidate for replacing non-sociological epistemologies. Boudon and Bourricaud’s comparison between Durkheim and Kant with respect to the possibility of knowledge is precisely to the point.

Being a positivist, Durkheim never intended to propose the link between science and social experience as a rejection of scientific objectivity. From the idea that we have come to grasp the notion of force as a result of our social experiences it does not follow that any physical theory of force is a pure reflection of our arbitrary social settings. From a positivist point of view we are always able to assess the credibility of such theory based on some experimental data. There is no difference in discovering the notion of force in light of social prohibitions or as a result of not being able to lift heavy objects. After such
a discovery, any scientific statement with regard to the notion of force must come from an objective methodical analysis of available experimental data.

Thus, it is easy for non-sociological epistemologies to resolve the problem raised by the Durkheimian intuition. The only inference drawn from this sociological observation is that perhaps under different social, institutional, and organizational conditions we might have discovered different aspects of our world. This is without any doubt true, but as the history of science clearly suggests we may have different discoveries by being more imaginative. In fact, Feyerabend’s suggestion of the methodological anarchy is a reasonable resolution if we believe that the role of social structures are limited to the level of discovery and not to the procedures of verification or falsification. A practice of methodological anarchy could thus be accepted as a strategy to “increase the scientist’s activity and his inventiveness” (Boudon and Bourricaud 1986: 216).

But the sociology of knowledge did not confine itself to this relatively modest claim of Durkheimian sociology. As mentioned above, most sociologists of knowledge consider themselves to be more the heirs of Marx than of Durkheim. There is a wide range of opposition, among philosophers as well as sociologists, to the idea that social forces can be neutralized through experimental procedures.

From a feminist perspective, Sandra Harding, for example, believes that “science is politics by other means, and it also generates reliable information about the empirical world” (Harding 1991: 10). She sets out to resolve the “seemingly contradictory understandings” of science as political and reliable. She believes while “the conventional philosophy of science, epistemology, or sociology of science” have not been able to do
this task, feminism and other countercultures within science may do so (Harding 1991: 10). According to Harding, science is political not simply because it is misused or abused. It is political through and through, from its ontological and epistemological assumptions to the selection of its object of the study, the formation of its concepts and research designs, its experimentation, and its consequences. In all these aspects scientists and social institutions make choices that are political. As Harding puts it, “The biases that enter science in the form of problematics—the definition of certain phenomena as problematic—are impossible to eliminate through the kinds of controls that biologists and social scientists think of as research methods” (Harding 1991:40).

Harding offers some explanations as to why socio-political biases cannot be eliminated through controlled scientific experimentation, but they seem to stop short of proving her case. For instance, we are told the difficulty is that these biases are not a simple link between social relations and science; rather, they determine “what gets to count as a problem” (Harding 1991: 40). In other words, she is suggesting that bad problematization results in bad science.

But the real question should be: how does problematization, biased or not, discredit the truth-value of a scientific finding? Let us assume that for some unethical political reasons someone problematizes our taken-for-granted views on smoking. Then he asks a major tobacco company to sponsor his research because he thinks he is able to show not only that smoking does not have any health hazards, but that it may also help smokers to stay slim. If we are only concerned with the truth-value of his findings, why should we dismiss them as untrustworthy? We cannot argue that since a scientist with evil intentions has conducted this research or since it challenges a “sacred” and “just”
cause such as preventing teens' smoking, we reject his findings. This seems too self-serving. In short, an epistemological attack on problematization does not fly very far if our aim is to show that scientific methods are inherently political.

Harding also tries to establish an intrinsic link between science and politics through technology by arguing that technology is a reflection of social desires, and is value-laden. Thus, since technology is produced on the basis of scientific information, one can say that science is not politically and morally neutral (see Harding 1991: 37). In response to those who may think that she is confusing scientific investigations with those fields in which there is an obvious focus on application, she rhetorically asks: “Is the moment of obviousness also the moment of redefinition as ‘separate’?” (Harding 1991: 38). This rhetorical question is another way of saying that she does not think the distinction between science and its application is a valid one. This theme is also developed by Harding with respect to the relation of “is” and “ought”. For example, she argues that a scientific description of racial differences is not without political consequences in a racist society (see Harding 1991: 88-9).

All these types of socio-epistemic criticisms of scientific practices stop short of proving that scientific procedures of experimentation are political. They are simply concerned with the consequences of science. In some instances Harding seems inclined to take a step further and argue that “gender, race, and class interests shape laboratory life and the manufacture of scientific knowledge” (Harding 1991: 101). But she never actually takes this step. She resists the term ideology, though without this magical concept she has no way of showing science to be inherently political. In fact, she speaks of “progressive” and “regressive” tendencies in modern Western science (Harding
As a feminist, she wishes to argue that a feminist science may have a social basis, but "the identification of social causes for the acceptance of a belief does not exclude the possibility that that belief does match the world in better ways than its competitors." (Harding 1991: 83).

Harding believes that it is absurd to reduce her position to a form of epistemological relativism (see Harding 1991: 139, 142). Indeed, she is right because she never appeals to a totalizing notion of ideology or false consciousness. She is only ready to go as far as Nancy Hartsock has gone, calling for a feminist standpoint epistemology, which produces "less partial and less distorted belief" (Harding 1991: 138). Does this mean that all sciences are partial to some extent and therefore false? They do not make it clear. However, Hartsock describes her epistemological position this way:

A standpoint is not simply an interested position (interpreted as bias) but is interested in the sense of being engaged. It is true that a desire to conceal real social relations can contribute to an obscurantist account, and it is also true the ruling gender and class have material interests in deception. A standpoint, however, carries with it the contention that there are some perspectives on society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible. (Harding 1987: 159)

As we can see with the standpoint theory of knowledge we are close to the notion of ideology and false consciousness, though this is not a totalizing argument. Therefore, Harding proposes the notion of a strong objectivity in which the subject of knowledge is a critical agent (Harding 1991: 161). This critical subject is capable of unmasking the political and moral causes of epistemological advantages or disadvantages of her scientific beliefs. This form of epistemological critique includes the creation of a new kind of person for scientific research (see Harding 1991: 72), as well as a sociology of knowledge that "directs us to provide symmetrical accounts of both 'good' and 'bad'
belief formation and legitimation” (Harding 1991: 149). It also involves “the
development of an oppositional theory from the perspective of the lives” of others

In sum, this version of the sociology of knowledge illuminates some political
aspects of science, but in a way that aims at achieving better critical scientific practices. I
have two observations in this regard. First, the epistemological critique suggested by
Harding leaves the most important question unanswered: How can one exactly
distinguish “good” science from “bad” science through such critical practices? The
second question is: By accepting the possibility of an “objective” science, doesn’t
Harding end up keeping the question of politics exterior to science? In other words, is
science political because its object of the study is preferred to others for political reasons,
or is it so because its application is linked to politics? In short, Harding does not prove
science as inherently political.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, co-authors of The Social Construction of
Reality, are also aware that the sociology of knowledge is an “epistemological
troublemaker” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 14). They argue that this field of
sociological inquiry “will have to deal not only with the empirical variety of ‘knowledge’
in human societies, but also with the processes by which any body of ‘knowledge’ comes
to be socially established as ‘reality’” (Berger and Luckmann 1967:3). Thus, they state
that: “the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social
construction of reality” (Berger and Luckmann 1967:3).

Berger and Luckmann do not talk about the political moment of knowledge. But if
we allow their theory of the social construction of reality to speak for itself we will
realize that this theory offers a profoundly political notion of knowledge. According to Berger and Luckmann, "All social reality is precarious. All societies are construction in the face of chaos" (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 103). The precariousness of societies and social institutions gives rise to the problem of legitimacy. That is, societies and their institutions cannot be justified by themselves. There is no inherently legitimate social practice, and every social practice must be legitimized. We find a high level of cohesiveness where there is every reason for disintegration due to heterogeneous and conflicting forces that are involved (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 62-65). The question is: what keeps an inherently fragile and collapsing social order in place and prevents its disintegration?

The social world is paradoxical in nature. On the one hand, it is a production of human activity. But on the other hand, in relation to its producers, it stands as an external reality. Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality seeks to explain the social both as an objective reality and as a human production. Habitualization of human behaviors gives rise to patterns of behavior that constitute social institutions. It is within institutionalized contexts that we experience an objective social reality which controls our behaviors and makes them predictable (see Berger and Luckmann 1967: 53-7).

While those whose behavior gives rise to a particular institutional order may understand its meaning, the generation that receives this order as a tradition does not have access to its original meaning. Thus, institutional orders must be legitimized for all those who face them as facts of life (see Berger and Luckmann 1967: 62). According to Berger and Luckmann, the cohesiveness of social institutions through time should be
explained in terms of “the socially available stock of knowledge” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 64). Knowledge as “a body of generally valid truths about reality” has a legitimating function, for “any radical deviance from the institutional order appears as a departure from reality” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 66). In other words, reality is a moral, or if you will, a political force.

We are now able to see how knowledge is understood as political, ideological, or value laden in the theory of the social construction of reality. This theory renders legitimacy to social institutions and thereby plays a significant role in the process of social control. Social institutions and societies could not survive the chaos that might have been created by their internal irreconcilable social contradictions, had they not been legitimized by means of knowledge. The processes of legitimization and its components are diverse and complex in any given society. However, Berger and Luckmann distinguish four general levels of legitimization: 1- the self-evident, pre-theoretical knowledge built into language, 2- theoretical propositions in a rudimentary form; 3- explicit and specialized theorizing; and 4- symbolic universes (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 94-8).

For the purpose of my argument here, I need not go into a detailed elaboration of these different levels of legitimation. But it should be noted that “the symbolic universe provides the ultimate legitimation of the institutional order by bestowing upon it the primacy in the hierarchy of human experience” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 98). Berger and Luckmann’s theory is more advanced than those theories that explain the political role of knowledge only in terms of ideology. They argue that knowledge legitimizes the social order at four levels. Technically speaking, ideology belongs to the third level, i.e.,
the level of specialized theorizing. However, they share the view that knowledge is, in one way or another, political.

Finally, there is one observation to be made. Berger and Luckmann think that they can free themselves from epistemological concerns about science by drawing a disciplinary line and saying these concerns belong to philosophy, which "is by definition other than sociology" (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 13). They make the very interesting observation that disciplines such as the sociology of knowledge are simply "epistemological troublemakers," and do not provide epistemological solutions. However, the fact is that so many troubles have accumulated and been handed down to epistemology that it is no longer capable of handling them. As a result, not only is the very scientific status of these disciplines under question, but other scientific fields have also come under fire. If there is a way out of this dilemma, it has to be sought in a field of investigation that can sever the tie between epistemology and politics. This has to be done by showing that the politics of science belongs to an ontological level rather than the realm of epistemology. It is knowledge as an event, as an ontological force, that is powerful and political.

Berger and Luckmann did not go further than suggesting that the legitimizing function of knowledge is political in the sense that it stabilizes a fragile social process. They did not wish to question the epistemological and ethical legitimacy of this legitimization. However, as we saw in the case of Harding, one can always be suspicious of science. If science has political applications, why should we not believe that those who know this fact do not make its production political too? In other words, why should it not
be political through and through? This is the position of many sociologists of knowledge, especially those who work within a Marxist perspective.

While some sociologists of knowledge have tried, without success, to avoid the total epistemological problematization of knowledge and science, others have radically questioned the epistemological validity of all forms of knowledge. This latter trend usually links itself to what it believes to be a Marxist critique of ideology. Here I will not repeat what I have already said about Marx’s critique of ideology. Rather, I want to show why some consider the sociology of knowledge to be a Marxist critique of ideology.

It was Marx and Engels who wrote: “Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life” (Marx and Engels 1970: 47), and “The idea of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (Marx and Engels 1970: 64). They also criticized historians for failing to comprehend this basic insight:

Whilst in ordinary life every shopkeeper is very well able to distinguish between what somebody professes to be and what he really is, our historians have not yet won even this trivial insight. They take every epoch at its word and believe that everything it says and imagines about itself is true. (Marx and Engels 1970: 64)

Neither of these quotations implies that all knowledge is deception or purely a manifestation of class interest. This is why it is believed that Marx envisioned a kind of critique of ideology like a sociology of knowledge through which the social causes of false consciousness could be revealed. In fact, Karl Mannheim thought the sociology of knowledge to be a scientific realization of Marx’s critical project.

Mannheim believed that the sociology of knowledge emerged as a result of the crisis of modern thought, which began with the formulation of a particular notion of ideology. The particular notion of ideology maintains that some “specific assertions may
be regarded as concealments, falsifications, or lies without attacking the integrity of the *total mental structure* of the asserting subject" (Mannheim 1966: 238). But, according to Mannheim, Marx precisely attacked this mental structure *in its totality*. This development is very significant because “the sociology of knowledge does not criticize thought on the level of the assertions themselves, which may involve deceptions and disguises, but examines them on the structural or [non-logical] level ...” (Mannheim 1966: 238).

Marxism could not successfully develop the sociology of knowledge as a district sociological perspective because it did not problematize knowledge *in general*. The concept of total ideology was only applied to the thought of the opponent (Mannheim 1996: 249). The sociology of knowledge achieved its distinct scientific status with the formulation of the *general concept* of ideology, which pointed to the “relationship between human thought and the conditions of existence *in general*” (Mannheim 1996: 248). Now that the crisis of thought has become *general*, no one is immune from ideology and false consciousness, not even the savvy insiders of science, unless they are critical.

Based on the general notion of ideology, we should note that ideology does not operate only horizontally, covering everyone. It also registers its mark vertically on all layers of thought. Mannheim argues that the social context of knowledge is not only relevant to the genesis of thought, it also penetrates into its forms and content (Mannheim 1966: 240). Such a conception of ideology may imply a belief in absolute relativism. But Mannheim insists that the epistemological problem of relativism is not a consequence of a sociological approach to knowledge. He suggests that the sociology of knowledge
“avoid the use of term ‘ideology’, because of its moral connotation, and shall instead speak of the ‘perspective’ of a thinker” (Mannheim 1966: 239).

According to Mannheim, the sociology of knowledge does not go further than to consider thoughts as perspectives, which means knowledge is formulated from a certain position (Mannheim 1966: 244). This assertion implies what he calls relationism (in contradistinction to relativism). According to him, “Relationism does not signify that there are no criteria of rightness and wrongness in a discussion. It does insist, however, that it lies in the nature of certain assertions that they cannot be formulated absolutely, but only in terms of the perspective of a given situation” (Mannheim 1966: 254). If there can be some criteria of rightness and wrongness, i.e., epistemological criteria of truth, then we may envision a perspective from which it is possible to acquire an unbiased knowledge.

Mannheim suggests two epistemological approaches to the question of truth. First, he argues for the possibility of detaching oneself from certain positions by moving into new social positions. This gives the person the ability to see the object from new perspectives (Mannheim 1966: 253). The sociology of knowledge can function as an aid in this practice, since it “becomes a critique by redefining the scope and the limits of the perspective implicit in given assertions” (Mannheim 1966: 256). Given the relational nature of knowledge, this approach allows one to ask “which of the various points of view is the best” (Mannheim 1966: 270). The second approach seeks to neutralize the institutional determination of knowledge by integrating various social vantage points (Mannheim 1966: 271). In relation to this approach, Mannheim puts his trust in the elite
group of a socially unattached intelligentsia. Years later, Sandra Harding also made a similar choice (see Harding 1991: 4).

In Defense of Science

Both the critical function of the sociology of knowledge and the authority of the socially unattached intelligentsia are severely criticized by Karl Popper. In a paradoxical way Popper argues that scientific objectivity can be secured precisely because science is social and political. He ridicules the sociology of knowledge as a *socio-therapy*, along with psychoanalysis and those philosophies which "unveil the 'meaninglessness' of the tenets of their opponents" (Popper 1966: 215). According to Popper, these approaches have become popular simply because they offer easy solutions to complicated problems. And the call to critical thinking does not mean anything while the sociology of knowledge insists on the generality of ideology without accepting any criterion for criticism. Popper emphasizes that we should at least accept the necessity of avoiding contradictions. Otherwise no criticism would be possible, since "criticism always consists in pointing out contradictions either within the theory to be criticized, or between it and some facts of experience" (Popper 1966: 215).

Popper argues that scientific objectivity is not a critical function of the 'freely poised intelligence' of an intelligentsia, but rather it is the result of a social process called scientific method. In other words, objectivity is not achieved because individual scientists are impartial and superficially rid themselves of their prejudices. As Popper puts it, "No amount of political partiality can influence political theories more strongly than the

---

2 Here Popper is referring to Wittgenstein.
partiality shown by some natural scientists in favour of their intellectual offspring" (Popper 1966: 217). Scientific method involves different degrees of hostility and cooperation. It has an intersubjective character that allows free criticism of everything by everyone who is willing to speak in the common language of experience (see Popper 1966: 217-18). This social and public character of scientific method is the best safeguard against bias and politics at the level of scientificity. Thus, Popper declares that “The empirical method has proved to be quite capable of taking care of itself” (Popper 1966: 220).

According to Popper, there is a contradiction in the Marxist sociology of knowledge. On the one hand, like Marx, it is interested in bringing human life under rational control. On other hand, by taking refuge in the notion of ideology, it rejects all principles of rationality. This contradiction has put the sociology of knowledge in the same category with “the irrationalist mystical tendencies of our time” (Popper 1966: 213). While Popper is successful in showing the contradictions of the sociology of knowledge, he does not resolve the dilemmas that gave rise to the discipline in the first place. Perhaps, as his student, Abdulkarim Sorouh (with whom I took a course in the philosophy of the social sciences), pointed out in his lectures, Popper’s philosophy is a form of rational criticism and does not assume the responsibility of offering solutions for what it criticizes. It is the responsibility of others who formulate theories to do their work such that fewer criticisms could be raised against their theories.

However, if one were not ready to let Popper get away with the defense that his task is a negative one, a general objection may be raised with regard to his views. As Ben-David explains, many philosophers, including P. K. Feyerabend, T. S. Kuhn, Imre
Lakatos, and Stephen Toulmin “found Popper’s concept of science insufficient for the analysis of scientific change and of the differences between scientific fields” (Ben-David 1991: 445). The explanation of scientific changes in Popper’s works is purely methodological. According to him, “most scientific results have the character of hypotheses, i.e., statements for which the evidence is inconclusive, and which are therefore liable to revision at any time” (Popper 1966: 221). Methodologically speaking, scientific changes happen as a result of falsifications of scientific statements that are not well formulated. But as Lakatos explains:

Popper’s criterion ignores the remarkable tenacity of scientific theories. Scientists have thick skins. They do not abandon a theory merely because facts contradict it. They normally either invent some rescue hypothesis to explain what they then call a mere anomaly, or, if they cannot explain the anomaly, they ignore it, and direct their attention to other problems. Note that scientists talk about anomalies, recalcitrant instances, not refutations. History of science, of course, is full of accounts of how critical experiments allegedly killed theories. But such accounts are fabricated long after the theory had been abandoned. Had Popper ever asked a Newtonian scientist under what experimental conditions he would abandon Newtonian theory, some Newtonian scientists would have been exactly as nonplussed as are some Marxists. (Lakatos 1987: 3-4, cited in Tweney, et al. 1981: 124).

In sum, after challenging the sociology of knowledge and its explanation of knowledge in terms of socio-political interests, Popper is not able to explain changes in scientific theories.

We must admit that theoretical transformations may have sources other than purely experimental refutations of previous findings. We find a widespread consensus among social scientists and philosophers that there is something more involved in change, something of a socio-political nature. We examined the sociology of knowledge to see where we can locate the socio-political causes of theoretical changes in science or
knowledge. First of all, the claim that politics penetrate science even at the level of scientificity is not substantiated. In other words, the scientific method per se is not shown to be political. If there are valid criticisms of scientific methods, they are basically related to methodological shortcomings, and not to political agendas. The only way that sociologists could bring politics into science at all levels was through the appeal to the concept of ideology. While it may problematize science, this approach makes it impossible for even critique to make any truth-claim. This has created an agonizing dilemma for social scientists as well as philosophers.

For example, Donna J. Haraway is not willing to rest the case in the sanctuary of disciplinary walls, as Berger and Luckmann do, in order to avoid the epistemological implications of her theory of knowledge. Nor is she satisfied with the notion of reflexivity and critique as a way out of the vicious circle of ideology, which is what Harding suggests. She knows that a theory of the social construction of reality cannot be confined only to those categories of the real that we find problematic. Everything, from planets and mountains to values and social norms, is a social construction as far as it exists for us.

Now that the genie is out of the bottle, there is no sacred knowledge left. Haraway recognizes that according to the theory of social construction, feminism is no less a social construction than are male-dominated sciences. She also knows that, as far as this theory is concerned, there is no epistemological or ethical criterion for preferring one body of knowledge to another. But I suspect she likes to think otherwise. She wants to find a way out of reducing all forms of knowledge to power or to signs. This is how she describes her fears and hopes:
All knowledge is a condensed node in an agnostic power field. The strong programme in the sociology of knowledge joins with the lovely and nasty tools of semiology and deconstruction to insist on the rhetorical nature of truth, including scientific truth. History is a story Western culture buffs tell each other; science is a contestable text and a power field; the content is the form.... This is a terrifying view of the relationship of body and language for those of us who would still like to talk about reality with more confidence than we allow the Christian right's discussion of the Second Coming and their being raptured out of the final destruction of the world...

So, the further I get with the description of the radical social constructionist programme and a particular version of postmodernism, coupled to the acid tools of critical discourse in the human sciences, the more nervous I get. (Haraway 1991: 185)

This is a challenge to science. However, in this dissertation, I have tried to show through Foucault that as far as sociology is concerned one can bracket epistemological questions while dealing with the political aspects of science. Let us further clarify this point. We acknowledge that certain politics may give rise to certain sciences and that sciences can also be put to political use. But these are all related either to pre-scientific contexts of science or to its consequences. As positivists would claim, they can all be taken care of as far as the truth-value of a scientific theory is concerned. In other words, where there is politics there is no epistemological concern, and where there is an epistemological concern politics can be taken care of.

Even if, like Lakatos, we argue that scientists do not accept new findings easily and often ignore the facts pointing to something contrary to what they believe, this can still be explained away as a practical or psychological matter rather than an intrinsic problem of scientific methods. In light of this argument, two questions must be addressed.

First, can scientific changes be explained either in terms of scientists' stubbornness, or as a result of refutations of existing scientific beliefs? I do not think
these two are plausible explanations because, if anything, stubbornness hinders rather than furthers change. Lakatos does not suggest that scientists' dogmatism towards their existing theories is the cause of their transformation. Rather, he reminds us that refutation is not powerful enough to overcome their dogmatism. Once a scientific shift takes place, we should not retrospectively fabricate a narrative of contradictory findings that could not be explained by existing theories. Perhaps powerful socio-political matters make scientists recognize the contradiction between theory and facts, and thereby formulate new theories.

Second, if we cannot situate the socio-political forces that drive scientific shifts at the level of scientific method, where should we locate them? Are they external to science? If we do not want to limit the politics of science to its misuses or abuses, at what level can science be intrinsically political? It has already been pointed out, and will be discussed at greater length below, that we need to bracket the epistemological aspects of science for this purpose. In response to this question, Foucault would say that there is an internal politics of science which belongs to the discursive level, and not to the epistemological level. Towards the end of this dissertation, I shall note that even this discursive link between science and politics is a historical invention that, in principle, can be severed. But meanwhile, let us see how Foucault seeks to avoid problems associated with the sociology of knowledge and other epistemologically-oriented studies of science.

It was noted that Foucault began his analysis from a group of statement-events that he called a “discursive formation” and the “controlled system of differences and dispersions” that governs it, i.e., its positivity (see Foucault 1998e: 321). A discursive formation together with its positivity constitute a field of knowledge [savoir] which does
not coincide with "the sum of scientific knowledges [connaissances]" (Foucault 1998e: 324). This knowledge [savoir] must be analyzed in terms of its "objects, types of formulation, concepts and opinions as they are invested in a science, a technical recipe, an institution, a fictional narrative, a legal or political practice, and so on" (Foucault 1998e: 324-5). As Foucault notes, what is usually referred to as the "conditions of possibility" of a science involves two distinct systems (Foucault 1998e: 326). One is epistemological and related to the conditions of scientificity of a science. But, the other is related to its conditions of historical appearance which have to do with its discursive field.

It is clear that the sociology of knowledge does not analyze the first system even though it may create some troubles for it, as Berger and Luckmann have stated. But, does it explain the second system? By definition, the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the actual conditions of the emergence of science. However, the sociology of knowledge, as it is practiced now, is limited mainly to investigating the social causes of science, and perhaps secondarily to the analysis of science as it relates to discursive practices. Foucault has shown that in order to explain the actual historical emergence of a science, one has to analyze the discursive formation, the positivity, and the knowledge [savoir] that are invested in it. He explains that:

If, for example, it was necessary to wait for the end of the eighteenth century for the concept of life to become fundamental in the analysis of living beings,...the reason is to be sought neither in the epistemological structure of biology in general, ... nor, moreover, in the error that would sustain men's blindness for so long. It resides instead in the morphology of knowledge, in the system of positivities, in the internal disposition of discursive formations. Even more, it is in the element of knowledge that the conditions of the appearance of a science, or at least of a discursive ensemble that acquires or claims the model of scientificity, are determined. (Foucault 1998e: 325).
As we have already seen, discourses have a horizontal relation among themselves in a given time and a vertical relation with non-discursive events. To analyze a discourse one has to account for both of these two kinds of relations. And they are exactly the domain of “archaeological” research. Thus, we may say that archaeology (or the analysis of discourse) presupposes the sociology of knowledge in a unique way. It deals with scientific theories, social institutions and practices in relation to one another. But as Foucault explains, archaeology allows him “to avoid every problem concerning the anteriority of theory in relation to practice, and the reverse” (1998b: 262). Foucault deals with “practices, institutions and theories on the same plane,” and looks for “the underlying knowledge [savoir] that makes them possible” (Foucault 1998b: 262).

In short, Foucault does not reject the basic sociological insight that knowledge must be studied in relation to social phenomena. However, the approach that he adopts for this purpose is not that of the conventional sociology of knowledge. His main objection to the conventional sociology of knowledge is that it is in the category of disciplines that seek to reduce discourse to non-discursive events instead of studying their relation on the same plane. In these disciplines:

When one encounters a difficulty, one goes from the level of analysis which is that of the statements themselves to another, which is exterior to it. Thus, faced with a change, a contradiction, an incoherence, one resorts to an explanation by social conditions, mentality, worldview, and so on. (Foucault 1998c: 283).

By avoiding different kinds of reductionism, Foucault is able to avoid the epistemological dilemmas of social constructivism faced by Donna Haraway. It is true that Foucault considers discourse as a construction (see Foucault 1972a: 25). However, first of all, being an ontological event, discourse is an epistemologically neutral construction. In
other words, at the level of discursivity we are dealing with a relation between power and truth which is ontological rather than epistemological. That is to say, through the power of discourse its object is actually created rather than imaginatively assumed. Secondly, even if from an epistemological point of view we may be interested in the question of truth, the power-knowledge relation does not imply an arbitrary construction of truth. A construction can also be accurate. Foucault is even ready to accept this with regard to some historical descriptions (see Foucault 1998c: 287). The following passage may serve as a general explanation of Foucault’s position on the question of construction and arbitrariness:

There are games of truth in which truth is a construction and other others in which it is not....This does not mean that there’s just a void, that everything is a figment of the imagination. On the basis of what can be said, for example, about this transformation of games of truth, some people concluded that I have said nothing exists—I have been seen as saying that madness does not exist, whereas the problem is absolutely the converse: it was a question of knowing how madness, under the various definitions that have been given, was at a particular time integrated into an institutional field that constituted it as a mental illness occupying a specific place alongside other illnesses....this does not mean what the person says is not true, which is what most people believe. When you tell people that there may be a relationship between truth and power, they say: “So it isn’t truth after all!” (Foucault 1997n: 297-8).

Now, we may conclude that the question of the appearances and transformations of the sciences cannot be adequately addressed by the sociology of knowledge for several reasons. All other fields of study that fail to grasp the discursive aspect of science have similar problems. We should therefore establish the advantages of archaeology (or the analysis of discourse) with regard to these fields one by one in order to be convinced that Foucault has introduced a genuine theoretical shift with significant sociological implications.
Chapter VIII
Beyond the Critique of Ideology and Interpretative Analysis

Ideology in Question

Since he commits himself to an ontological critique of the discursive forces of governmentality, Foucault also seeks to dissociate his approach from the critique of ideology and interpretative analysis. Foucault is vigilant in all of his works to caution against epistemologically-oriented analyses; however, this has been totally overlooked by commentators. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to see how he cautions and guards his discourse analysis against all forms of epistemological approach to knowledge. In the spirit of such cautionary measures, he rarely misses an opportunity to point out why he stays away from the critique of ideology or interpretative analysis. These two forms of analysis are closely related epistemologically-oriented fields and are also linked to the sociology of knowledge. Because of their close association, in many instances, Foucault often considers them in the same category and comments on them as one general approach. I will thus discuss his treatment of these two approaches together here.

In the chapter on Marx, the concept of ideology was discussed in the context of Marx's work, especially The German Ideology. Destutt de Tracy coined the term "Ideology" to refer to the science of ideas. This concept has been transformed through time; while it is mostly used in a pejorative sense today, some employ it to designate a

---

1 As it will be evident in what follows, the interpretative analysis (the hermeneutics) which Foucault puts in the same category as that of the critique of ideology is what Gadamer following Paul Ricoeur calls the hermeneutics of suspicion.
desirable or accurate belief system. In Iran, for example, phrases such as, "the ideology of revolution" and "the Islamic ideology" are very common. Lenin also used the term "ideology" in a positive sense. However, there is an epistemological connotation in all of the senses in which this concept is used that both Marx and Foucault find objectionable. In all its meanings, "ideology" is associated with "ideas", "opinions," "beliefs," or "mental phenomena".

Foucault argues that the analysis of ideas in terms of ideas is not an accurate account of them. In other words, the study of mental phenomena as entities which belong to the realm of mind, and which can only be understood as such, overlooks the fact that they are constituted through discursive practices. "Ideas" are not simply results of activities on the part of our consciousness. In addition, Foucault also does not find it helpful to conceive ideology as a disguise or "false consciousness." He argues that discourse is not "the expression of a world-view that has been coined in the form of words, nor the hypocritical translation of an interest masquerading under the pretext of a theory" (Foucault 1972a: 69). I will now elaborate on this very short statement, since it encapsulates Foucault's position on the question of ideology and its relevance to discourse analysis.

The debate over ideology has been a major preoccupation of sociology since the nineteenth century. As Boudon and Bourricaud note, there is no need to argue that even sociologists such as Durkheim and Weber, who rarely use the term ideology, are, in one way or another, concerned with related issues (see Boudon and Bourricaud, 1989: 208). Ideology has been an especially disturbing and troublesome notion in the context of the question of knowledge. Writers like Marx, Popper, Gadamer and Habermas all tried to
resolve the problem and to ease the tension. It is in light of these attempts that one can appreciate Foucault's position. We can appreciate the novelty and the profundity of his shift even more if we bear in mind that he is influenced by Nietzsche but does not engage in the "unmasking practices" of the critique of ideology, a point that will be clarified in the next section.

Gadamer versus Habermas: Intellectual Modesty is a Virtue

Both the critique of ideology and the interpretative analysis should be understood as responses to the crisis of knowledge and subsequent ethico-political crises. As we noted, modern positivism attempted to de-legitimize all other forms of knowledge, and to a large extent, it succeeded in doing so. In the absence of any other legitimate knowledge, the positive sciences emerged as a legitimate basis for ethico-political action. But as the legitimacy of the positive sciences was also challenged, and epistemological objections against them grew stronger and stronger, they had to be refined and re-legitimized through further critiques. We should understand the critique of ideology and the interpretative analysis in this context. This point is best illustrated by the debate between Habermas and Gadamer\(^2\). The debate is discussed here at length to clarify three major points. First, I wish to show what the critique of ideology is, and why it is not a useful tool of emancipation. Second, I hope to explain, through Gadamer, what is meant by an ontological critique. This is particularly important because we do not find any explicit and systematic definition of the *ontological* critique in Foucault's works; however,

\(^2\) Here I only discuss Habermas and Gadamer's debate as I have already dealt with Marx. I have also considered Popper's position in this regard in the chapter on the sociology of knowledge. My aim in reviewing these examples is to show that the debate over ideology in the epistemological tradition has led
Gadamer’s work can help us to understand the ontological critique better. Third, I want to see how an ontological critique, for the purpose of critique, can avoid the impasses of the modern sciences without being handicapped by what Derrida called self-destructive practices of any critique of metaphysics. I now discuss the debate between Habermas and Gadamer with these three objectives in mind.

Habermas, who unlike Gadamer, is inclined toward certain aspects of the Frankfurt School’s notion of false consciousness, characterizes Gadamer’s hermeneutics as simple hermeneutics, and claims that hermeneutics as a philosophy should be capable of distinguishing between false consciousness and consciousness which is not false. Epistemologically speaking, this is a valid concern regardless of whether or not there is anyone who is under the influence of false consciousness. Philosophy, which is a search for the truth, should in principle be able to distinguish a false truth from a genuine truth. From an epistemological point of view, to even deny the existence of something, one should, in principle, be equipped and capable of proving its existence. Hermeneutics might be qualified to approach the truth when the parties engaged in dialogue are open to and listen to one another. But, according to Habermas, in the case of a systematically distorted communication simple hermeneutics is useless.

Habermas challenges Gadamer with respect to the claim of his philosophical hermeneutics to universality by arguing that the kind of colloquial language which philosophical hermeneutics is concerned with is dialogical, while rational and scientific theories are monological (see Habermas 1985: 300). In addition, he argues that philosophical hermeneutics is a critique and not simply an art of communication (see to no successful resolution and that we should understand Foucault's discourse analysis as a response to this impasse.
Habermas 1985: 294). As a critique, Habermas is suspicious of the dialogical structure of colloquial language because it “serves not only to exchange messages but as well to shape and alter the attitudes which inform behavior” (Habermas 1985: 296). He offers the example of rhetoric as the art of “producing a consensus on questions which cannot be decided on the basis of compelling proof” (Habermas 1985: 296) to support his thesis that colloquial language has an ideological character. Therefore, one should not confuse natural languages with the monological languages of sciences, because natural languages have a power which can be “used for the purpose of obfuscation and agitation as well as for enlightenment” (Habermas 1985: 297). He writes:

Hermeneutical consciousness is incomplete, so long as it has not incorporated into itself reflection on the limit of hermeneutical understanding. The limit experience of hermeneutics is defined by specifically unintelligible expressions...

Such hermeneutical consciousness proves inadequate in the case of systematically distorted communication: here the unintelligibility results from faulty organization of speech itself...We thus have no universal criterion at our disposal which would tell us when we are caught up in the false consciousness of a pseudo-normal understanding and are viewing something merely as the kind of difficulty which hermeneutics can clarify, when in fact it requires systematic explanation. The limit experience of hermeneutics thus consists in the discovery of systematically produced misunderstandings— without at first being able to “comprehend” them. (Habermas 1985: 302-303)

For hermeneutics to overcome this shortcoming, it must adopt a monological language such as that used by Freud’s psychoanalysis (see Habermas 1985: 301). Habermas calls this monological hermeneutics “depth hermeneutics,” as opposed to what he refers to as Gadamer’s “simple hermeneutics”.

Gadamer, on the other hand, refers to Habermas’s approach as a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” because it calls for a critical reflection, and seeks to unmask one’s unconscious and hidden interests. He contends that “this radical suspicion was
inaugurated by Nietzsche and had its most striking instances in the critique of ideology on the one hand and of psychoanalysis on the other” (Gadamer 1984: 54). He believes that with the end of the romantic era and the rise of the modern epoch, the interest in the experimental sciences resulted in the epistemologization of knowledge, and, “as a consequence, hermeneutics also came to have an epistemological importance: to what extent are we justified in assuming that we have a correct understanding of the texts?” (Gadamer 1984: 57). He suggests that we should not attempt to reconcile what he sees as a radical opposition between this epistemologically-oriented hermeneutics and his own version of hermeneutics:

This radical position forces us to attend to the dichotomy of the belief in the integrity of the texts and the intelligibility of their meaning, and the opposed effort to unmask the pretensions hidden behind so-called objectivity (Ricoeur's “hermeneutics of suspicion”). The latter alternative was developed in the critique of ideology, in psychoanalysis, and in the thought inspired more or less directly by Nietzsche's own work. ... I see no way of reconciling the two. I think even Paul Ricoeur must in the end give up attempts to bring them together... (Gadamer 1984: 58)

As is evident from the above passage, Gadamer expects hermeneutical interpretation to be faithful to what he calls “the integrity of the texts and the intelligibility of their meaning,” a task which cannot be performed by the epistemologically oriented hermeneutics. He takes issue with Habermas's charge that hermeneutical universality is limited in the monological language of science. In fact, he adamantly argues it was “the so-called critique of ideology [that] called scientific neutrality into doubt. It questioned not merely the validity of the phenomena of consciousness and of self-consciousness (which was the case with psychoanalysis) but also the purely theoretical validity of scientific objectivity to which the sciences laid claim” (Gadamer 1981: 100).
It is true that Gadamer has raised serious questions in his writings about the epistemological and methodical foundations of the modern sciences. However, he does not attempt to fix them at those levels by prescribing alternative methodologies. Rather, he states that:

But now the question arises as to how we can legitimate this hermeneutical conditionedness of our being in the face of modern science, which stands or falls with the principle of being unbiased and prejudiceless. We will certainly not accomplish this legitimation by making prescriptions for science... And yet, over against the whole of our civilization that is founded on modern science, we must ask repeatedly if something has not been omitted... (Gadamer 1976a: 10)

What provokes both Gadamer and Foucault’s curiosity are the omissions and exclusions in scientific discourses. Foucault sees the exclusionary practices of the sciences as a function of their discursive formations, while Gadamer holds scientific methodology responsible. Referring to his hermeneutical critiques of the modern sciences, Gadamer elaborates on this problem:

My only concern there was to secure a theoretical basis that would enable us to deal with the basic factor of contemporary culture, namely, science and its industrial, technological utilization. Statistics provide us with a useful example of how the hermeneutical dimension encompasses the entire procedure of science. It is an extreme example, but it shows us that science always stands under definite conditions of methodological abstraction and that the successes of modern sciences rest on the fact that other possibilities for questioning are concealed by abstraction. This fact comes out clearly in the case of statistics, for the anticipatory character of the questions statistics answer make(s) it particularly suitable for propaganda purposes. (Gadamer 1976a: 10-11)

Marx also thought that theoretical abstractions concealed real socio-economic conditions of life. According to Gadamer, to understand these conditions, one should be free to ask questions that are not necessarily “scientific.” If we are interested in asking all possible questions, we should move beyond scientific methodology. This is very different
from attempting to fix the methodology of the sciences epistemologically. Gadamer is particularly interested in the possibility of asking all sorts of questions. He thinks that the restriction of this possibility by the sciences is due to the fact that it is extremely difficult to question:

As a student of Plato, I particularly love those scenes in which Socrates gets into a dispute with the Sophist virtuosi and drives them to despair by his questions. Eventually they can endure his questions no longer and claim for themselves the apparently preferable role of the questioner. And what happens? They can think of nothing at all to ask. Nothing at all occurs to them that is worthwhile going into and trying to answer. (Gadamer 1976a: 12-13)

The inability to ask questions is due to a lack of sufficient knowledge because not only is every statement a question, but every question is also a statement. Furthermore, without “an inner tension between our anticipations of meaning and the all pervasive opinions and without a critical interest in the generally prevailing opinions, there would be no questions at all” (Gadamer 1981: 107). This is why, according to Gadamer, nothing should be excluded and every voice ought to be heard. Referring to this hermeneutical interest in prevailing opinions, Gadamer makes this statement in *Truth and Method* which is perhaps the most widely quoted statement in the literature on hermeneutics: “Being that can be understood is language” (Gadamer 1994: 474). However, it is also perhaps his most commonly misunderstood statement. This is how he clarifies this principle:

The principle of hermeneutics simply means that we should try to understand everything that can be understood. This is what I meant by the sentence: “Being that can be understood is language.” (Gadamer 1976b: 31)

I notice a striking similarity between Gadamer’s hermeneutical interest in understanding everything that can be understood and Russian writer Mikhail Bakhtin’s
celebration of polyphony in literature. Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogic character of language is also very similar to Gadamer’s understanding of statements as responses to some prior questions (cf. Bakhtin 1984: 6, 63, 270, 284-285). These authors both have a strong commitment to multiplicity of human knowledge without fear of the so-called self-destructive relativism. We need to further explore Gadamer’s statement that “Being that can be understood is language” before we find out how Gadamer understands this “being” to be possible.

Gadamer is influenced by Heidegger’s existential ontology of historicity (see Gadamer 1976a: 9; Rosen 1997: 208). He emphasizes that we are always embedded in some tradition. This emphasis has been a source of confusion for some commentators on Gadamer’s work. They have criticized Gadamer for granting ultimate authority to tradition and prejudices. However, Gadamer insists that our embeddedness in tradition must be understood in light of the principle that “Being that can be understood is language”. As he says, this statement “simply means that we should try to understand everything that can be understood” (Gadamer 1976b: 31). Everything that encounters us, or presents itself to us, comes into language and speaks to us. Therefore, we should try to understand it; there is no good reason for ignoring its speech. Philosophical hermeneutics sees no difference in this respect between the “book of nature” and the “book of books” (see Gadamer 1994: 475). We can appreciate this principle even more after listening to Gadamer’s defense of our continuous usage of the expression “the sun sets” in the face of all scientific findings after Copernicus. His defense will be presented shortly, but for the moment let us stay on the question of our embeddedness in tradition.
In light of Gadamer's insistence on understanding everything that presents itself to us, we can now understand why he infers that we should also understand the tradition in which we are embedded from the assertion "Being that can be understood is language" (see Gadamer 1976c: 102-103), namely, because more than anything else, our tradition speaks to us. Nevertheless, Habermas refuses to read this statement as an invitation to understand one's own tradition, and thinks that it means the enthronement of tradition with all its prejudices as the final epistemological authority:

Gadamer, if I am correct, is of the opinion that the hermeneutical elucidation of unintelligible or misunderstood expression must always refer back to a prior consensus which has been reliably worked out in the dialogue of a convergent tradition. This tradition, however, is objective for us, in the sense that it cannot be confronted with a claim to the truth on principle. The inherently prejudiced nature of understanding renders it impossible—indeed, makes it seem pointless—to place in jeopardy the factually worked out consensus which underlies, as the case may be, our misconception or lack of comprehension. ...The attempt to cast doubt, abstractly, on this agreement—which is, of course, contingent—as a false consciousness is pointless, since we cannot transcend the conversation which we are. (Habermas 1985: 313)

Habermas's precautionary conditional sentence in the beginning of this passage seems very appropriate. As we will see in Gadamer's response, Habermas is not correct in assuming that Gadamer considers it impossible or pointless to break away from one's own tradition.

First of all, Gadamer concedes that he has emphasized "the assimilation of what is past and of tradition" more than any other element of understanding (Gadamer 1994: xxxvii). However, inferences such as those drawn in this analysis by Habermas are unfounded. Although it "is the nature of tradition to exist only through being appropriated, it still is part of the nature of man to be able to break with tradition, to criticize and dissolve it..." (Gadamer 1994: xxxvii).
Second and more importantly, Habermas thinks that the primacy that Gadamer grants tradition results in an epistemological authority. For Gadamer, embeddedness in tradition is an ontological condition of human beings and should not be confused with historicism, or determination of one’s knowledge by one’s historical conditions. Rather, he wants to call attention to the fact that our being is constituted by our tradition not simply our knowledge. In response to the argument that what we are is all that we have as the only valuable source of understanding, Gadamer makes this provocative statement: “It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being” (Gadamer 1976a: 9), and elaborates:

This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and the English Enlightenment. It can be shown that the concept of prejudice did not originally have the meaning we have attached to it. Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us. This formulation certainly does not mean that we are enclosed within a wall of prejudices and only let through the narrow portals those things that can produce a pass saying, “Nothing new will be said here.” (Gadamer 1976a: 9)

With this passage, we can form some ideas on what an ontological approach to knowledge might be. One’s mode of being is constituted by one’s knowledge. That is to say, knowledge is an ontological moment of our existence. What we understand is what we are and what we are is what we understand. For Gadamer, “understanding is not just one of various possible behaviors of the subject but the mode of being of Dasein itself”
Of course, it does not follow that our understanding is true or right, or that our being is perfect and in no need of transformation. On the contrary, we are always capable of being critical. It is the main thesis of this dissertation that the theoretical shifts in sociology are motivated by critical interests on the part of social subjects. However, I want to show that this critique is ontological, and by this I mean that our critical practices are informed, motivated by, and carried out within the totality of our life experiences as human beings. In other words, we engage in critique with every fiber of our being, and epistemology and methodology are too thin to encapsulate our life experiences. In this context I find reading Gadamer particularly insightful. We should also bear in mind that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is not a prescriptive guideline for understanding or critique. Rather, it is a description of how we understand. All he wants to do is to show that:

*Understanding* is not a resigned ideal of human experience adopted in the old age of the spirit, as with Dilthey; nor is it, as with Husserl, a last methodological ideal of philosophy in contrast to the naivete of unreflecting life; it is, on the contrary, the *original form of the realization of Dasein*, which is being-in-the-world. (Gadamer 1994: 259)

This is Gadamer's fundamental hermeneutical insight. In contrast, Habermas wants to know what we can do about those prejudices that are unjustified and erroneous in our tradition. Gadamer does not tell us what we should do; rather, he shows how we would act when we do anything about such prejudices. He emphasizes that our tradition is constantly being formed and transformed, so that his analysis of how we change our views and ourselves remains very general. He explains the process of change in terms of the *fusion of horizons*:

---

3 The term Dasein is used by Heidegger and Gadamer to refer the actual existence, which cannot be reduced to anything else. It is sometimes translated as "there-being" or "being-in-the-world".
In fact, the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves. ... In addition this process of fusion is continually going on, for there old and new are always combining into something of living value, without either being explicitly foregrounded from the other. (Gadamer 1994: 306)

Though an invaluable insight, this is still a very general description of how we alter our horizons ontologically. We are discussing Gadamer here to show that understanding is achieved ontologically, and that it is impossible to substitute this process of understanding with the critique of ideology. Therefore, let us leave the specific features of this process for Foucault to answer.

Let us see how Gadamer develops his argument against Habermas and for hermeneutical understanding. It seems to me that Habermas’s misreading of Gadamer is due to his belief that Gadamer grants an epistemological authority to tradition. In fact, Gadamer writes that authority belongs to another realm:

...For the idea that tradition, as such, should be and should remain the only ground for acceptance of presuppositions (a view that Habermas ascribes to me) flies in the face of my basic thesis that authority is rooted in insight as a hermeneutical process. (Gadamer 1976b: 314)

We should clarify this point that authority is rooted in insight as a hermeneutical process. First of all, authority is an insight, not a critical self-reflection such as the critique of ideology or psychoanalysis. And as an insight, it should not be equated with methodological investigations. Secondly, this authority is a hermeneutical process. That is to say, it is understanding, and as such is “the original form of the realization of Dasein, which is being-in-the-world” (Gadamer 1994: 259). In other words, the authority
belongs to the insight, and we experience insight ontologically through our existence.

According to Gadamer, this authority is relevant to all kinds of human experience:

The real power of hermeneutical consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable. Now if what we have before our eyes is not only the artistic tradition of a people, or historical tradition, or the principle of modern science in its hermeneutical preconditions but rather the whole of our experience, then we succeeded, I think, in joining the experience of science to our own universal and human experience of life. For we have now reached the fundamental level that we can call (with Johannes Lohmann) the “linguistic constitution of the world.” It presents itself as the consciousness that is effected by history [...] and that provides an initial schematization for all our possibilities of knowing. I leave out of account the fact that the scholar — even the natural scientist — is perhaps not completely free of custom and society and from all possible factors in his environment. What I mean is that precisely within his scientific experience it is not so much the “laws of irrefutable inference” (Helmholz) that present fruitful ideas to him, but rather unforeseen constellations that kindle the spark of scientific inspiration (e.g., Newton’s falling apple or some other incidental observation). (Gadamer 1976a: 13)

The “linguistic constitution of the world” means that every thing speaks to us and has a meaning for us, but this also means that “nothing comes forth in the one meaning that is simply offered to us” (Gadamer 1976c: 103). Therefore, understanding is never perfect and finalized. This may call into question the very “legitimacy” of hermeneutically achieved understanding by raising the problem of relativism and self-contradiction. As the reader may remember, one of our objectives in reading Gadamer is to show how an ontological conception of knowledge may open up a space for critique while avoiding the problem of metaphysical self-destruction raised by Derrida.

Gadamer’s analysis of this question provides one of his most insightful arguments. He begins by reminding us that if we hear that contradictions must be avoided because contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time, we should know that this concerns logical judgements since contradictory statements cannot be true at the
same time. This type of contradiction is a *logical* attribution of propositions. In this sense, nothing ontological can be described as contradictory to another ontological entity, let alone as contradictory to a proposition, which belongs to the epistemological domain. Therefore, our actual embeddedness in tradition, which is an ontological matter, cannot be contradicted with our affirmation of this embeddedness, which is a logical judgement. Gadamer's response to the argument that every critical attempt is self-contradictory is as follows:

Even if, as people who know about history, we are fundamentally aware that all human thought about the world is historically conditioned, we still have not assumed an unconditional standpoint. In particular it is no objection to affirming that we are thus fundamentally conditioned to say that this affirmation is intended to be absolutely and unconditionally true, therefore cannot be applied to itself without contradiction. The consciousness of being conditioned does not supersede our conditionedness. It is one of the prejudices of reflective philosophy that it understands matters that are not on the same logical level as standing in propositional relationships. Thus the reflective argument is out of place here. For we are not dealing with relationships between judgments which have to be kept free from contradictions but with life relationships. Our verbal experience of the world has the capacity to embrace the most varied relationships of life. (Gadamer 1994: 448)

The crucial point in this passage is the distinction between logical relationships and life relationships. The former should be free of contradiction, but the latter may be, and in fact are, full of contradictions. Contradictions in life relationships are the reflections of the diversities of human experiences. The reader should be reminded that Marx and Adorno made similar observations, but they did not *explicitly* formulate an ontological resolution to this dilemma. Here again, Gadamer argues that the monological structure of the methodological sciences impoverishes the diversity of human experience by insisting that these experiences must be expressed in non-contradictory propositions in order to be meaningful. In fact, one source of resistance to this positivistic understanding
of human experiences is the ontological understanding and even appreciation of the contradictions which scientific language seeks to eliminate. Gadamer offers an excellent example of this tension between our natural experiences and science:

Thus the sun has not ceased to set for us, even though the Copernican explanation of the universe has become part of our knowledge. Obviously we can keep seeing things in a certain way while at the same time knowing that doing so is absurd in the world of understanding. And is it not language that operates in a creative way, reconciling these stratified living relationships? When we speak of the sun setting, this is not an arbitrary phrase; it expresses what really appears to be the case. It is the appearance presented to a man who is not himself in motion. It is the sun that comes and goes as its rays reach or leave us. Thus, to our vision, the setting of the sun is a reality (it is “relative to Dasein”). Now, by constructing another model, we can mentally liberate ourselves from the evidence of our senses, and because we can do this we can see things from the rational viewpoint of the Copernican theory. But we cannot try to supersede or refute natural appearances by viewing things through the “eyes” of scientific understanding. This is pointless not only because what we see with our eyes has genuine reality for us, but also because the truth that science states is itself relative to a particular world orientation and cannot at all claim to be the whole. But what really opens up the whole of our world orientation is language, and in this whole of language, appearances retain their legitimacy just as much as does science. (Gadamer 1994: 449)

In light of this analysis, let us reconsider the question of epistemological impasses in modern science and the dilemma of binary oppositions. Dualities such as fact and value, unity and diversity, materialism and idealism are treated as irreconcilable oppositions by modern science. They are either reduced to each other, or both are reduced to a third category. Science can hardly respect the autonomy of these entities simultaneously. However, this is not the case with language. As Gadamer points out, language operates in a creative way and is able to reconcile stratified living relationships. We are able to reconcile scientific findings and our natural experiences that are in conflict with them. A linguistic conception of the world provides the opportunity for nature to be
expressed as it encounters us. This encounter is not, as is assumed by philosophies of consciousness, in the form of a transparent relationship between the world and mind like that of objects and their reflections in the mirror. The encounter is an event, a linguistic event in which we are forced to think. Foucault has a very similar conception of critique when he speaks of the history of thought (as opposed to the history of ideas) and eventualization. Let us see how Gadamer describes our encounter with the world:

Our inquiry has been guided by the basic idea that language is a medium where I and world meet or, rather, manifest their original belonging together. ...This drew us toward the dialectic of the Greeks, because they did not conceive understanding as a methodic activity of the subject, but as something that the thing itself does and which thought “suffers”. This activity of the thing itself is the real speculative movement that takes hold of the speaker. We have sought the subjective reflection of it in speech. We can now see that this activity of the thing itself, the coming into language of meaning, points to a universal ontological structure, namely to the basic nature of everything toward which understanding can be directed. Being that can be understood is language. The hermeneutical phenomenon here projects its own universality back onto the ontological constitution of what is understood, determining it in a universal sense as language and determining its own relation to beings as interpretation. Thus we speak not only of a language of art but also of a language of nature—in short, of any language that things have. (Gadamer 1994: 474-475)

This notion of the suffering of thought in its encounter with the world suggests that understanding is always an activity on the part of a subject. This brings us closer to the notion of critique and why we are witnessing profound theoretical shifts in the social sciences.

The external world with all its forces, whether scientific or natural, encounters us, and our only choice is either to accept what it communicates to us or to reject it. Bjørn T. Ramberg has the same understanding of Gadamer’s ontology: “For Gadamer, therefore, understanding is at its most fundamental an event—it is something that happens to us,
that makes us the subject we are. As an explication of understanding, consequently, Gadamer’s hermeneutics is not reducible to methodology. Its claims are ontological” (Ramberg 1997: 461). In other words, to use Foucault’s terminology, we have two options: to be critical or to be governmentalized. An event has happened to us and we cannot ignore it. We must constantly decide whether or not to be critical. Foucault tells us that science also encounters us with all its discursive power as an event, and we must think through suffering how we can respond to it. However, we should not forget that this choice is ontological in the sense that it has developed out of an event, a living experience, an experience of suffering, and that it leads to an existential transformation of the self. It is through this ontological critique that ethical and political issues are revealed to be inherent in scientific knowledge.

One advantage of an ontological approach to knowledge is its particular insight into the nature of the relation between science and ethics. I have already explained the confusion created by positivism, particularly logical positivism, over the relation of science and ethics. As a result, it has become a banal cliché to say that science has nothing to do with ethics and morality. Logical positivism went even further and declared that ethical propositions are meaningless. To this day, logic is struggling with the question over whether there is any relationship between factual statements and moral imperatives. As Weber argued, in real life we do relate these two types of statements with each other and make imperative inferences from factual statements, and vice versa. One epistemological response can be: we are illogical and irrational in these instances! But again, epistemological irrationalities are rationalities of our daily living experiences.
Gadamer explains how in an ontological approach to politics, ethics, and knowledge can be related very elegantly to one another without any epistemological tension:

Thus the order of being that consists in the orientation toward the one good agrees with the order of the beautiful. The path of love that Diotima teaches leads beyond beautiful bodies to beautiful souls, and from there to beautiful institutions, customs, and laws, and finally to the sciences (e.g., to the beautiful relations of numbers found in mathematics), to this “wide ocean of beautiful utterance”—and leads beyond all that. ... Further, the close connection between the mathematical orders of the beautiful and the order of the heavens means that the cosmos, the model of all visible harmony, is at the same time the supreme example of beauty in the visible sphere. Harmonious proportion, symmetry, is the decisive condition of all beauty. ...As we can see, this kind of definition of the beautiful is a universal ontological one. Here nature and art are not in antithesis to each other. This means, of course, that in regard to beauty the priority of nature is unquestioned. (Gadamer 1994: 478-79)

It may seem unnecessary to stress that Gadamer’s aim here is not to persuade us in favor of the Greek cosmology. Rather, he is trying to make a point about the shame we experience in the realms of ethics, beauty, and politics in the age of science. The Greeks had no problem making scientific inferences between beauty and ethics because they did not restrict their “legitimate” knowledge to methodical sciences. Since understanding is always and necessarily hermeneutical, we also bridge science to politics, and beauty to science. But, we are ashamed of consciously admitting doing so, and thereby of explicitly accepting the implications. This is because our culture has accepted the norms of scientific practice as the ultimate criterion of truth. We thus have to live with epistemological tensions that constantly force us towards abstract theoretical reinterpretation of our experiences. I will elaborate on this point later, but first we should sum up the Habermas-Gadamer debate.
By now we know why Gadamer, like Foucault, wants to avoid the critique of ideology. However, unlike Foucault, Gadamer finds himself in an either/or situation. According to Gadamer, any attempt to reconcile philosophical hermeneutics and the hermeneutics of suspicion is doomed to failure:

This dichotomy [between philosophical hermeneutics and the hermeneutics of suspicion] is too sharp to allow us to rest content with a mere classification of the two forms of interpretation, either as simply interpreting statements following the intentions of the author or as revealing the meaningfulness of statements in a completely unexpected sense and against the meaning of the author. (Gadamer 1984: 58)

Given the irreconcilability of the ontologically-oriented hermeneutics with the epistemologically-oriented hermeneutics, it seems that Gadamer exposes himself to criticisms raised against him by advocates of certain methodological approaches. For example, Anthony Giddens claims that Gadamer’s hermeneutics cannot provide “any criteria of interpretative accuracy,” and therefore the adoption of one interpretation over another is “an arbitrary matter” (see Giddens 1993: 70).

Giddens’s concern is legitimate within an epistemological framework, but we should bear in mind that Gadamer is not prescribing a method of interpretation. In fact, in this regard we may even say he opposes interpretative analyses, such as the critique of ideology, psychoanalysis, and semiology. Gadamer simply wants to demonstrate how we understand or interpret, not how we should understand. Giddens does not consider Gadamer’s claim relates to the universality of the hermeneutical process. In other words, the so-called methodological understandings are also hermeneutically achieved. Gadamer is aware of the fact that hermeneutics cannot be formulated as a procedure for scientific investigation in order to legitimate science:
We will certainly not accomplish this legitimation by making prescriptions for science and recommending that it toe the line—quite aside from the fact that such pronouncements always have something comical about them. Science will not do us this favor. It will continue along its own path with an inner necessity beyond its control, and it will produce more and more breathtaking knowledge and controlling power. It can be no other way. It is senseless, for instance, to hinder a genetic researcher because such research threatens to breed a superman. (Gadamer 1976a: 10)

This insight makes Gadamer’s ontological hermeneutics most suitable for my thesis that theoretical shifts in the social sciences result from ontological critical activities of social subjects rather than from new formulations of epistemology and methodology. Gadamer helps us understand that scientists have always and will always investigate hermeneutically, even in their most positivistic research. Philosophical hermeneutics is not a rival player in the field of science proper, i.e. it is not an alternative science. Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics should not be confused with what the sociological literature refers to as interpretative methodologies such as Max Weber’s verstehen. Habermas’s critical approach belongs to this second tradition, which is different from Gadamer’s hermeneutical tradition. Once again, Giddens’s concern over the “criteria of interpretative accuracy” is a valid concern within the scientific field. However, he should address this question to Weber and Habermas, not Gadamer. Gadamer is only describing what we do naturally in every sphere of life. At this level, his concern is not whether our understanding is or is not epistemologically correct. At another level, and to those who are worried about the impact of “false consciousness” on our understanding, he recommends being open to other traditions, and to engage in an inter-traditional dialogue with them rather than psychoanalyzing them. This is why Gadamer feels he has to denounce epistemologically oriented hermeneutics for their unwillingness to engage in a
dialogue with other traditions. Thus, he describes Habermas's critical theory as the enthronement of one's own norms and ideas as absolute:

I have raised objections against this basic notion of emancipatory reflection. In my opinion there can be no communication and no reflection at all without a prior basis for common agreement...My objection is that the critique of ideology overestimates the competence of reflection and human reason. In as much as it seeks to penetrate the masked interests which infect public opinion, it implies its own freedom from any ideology; and that means in turn that it enthrones its own norms and ideas as self-evident and absolute. (Gadamer 1975: 314-315)

How does Habermas respond? To the first part, where Gadamer maintains that any communication and reflection require a prior base, Habermas questions the epistemological authority of tradition. Gadamer's reaction to this was discussed above. But with respect to the last part, where Gadamer charges that the critique of ideology "enthrones its own norms and ideas as self-evident and absolute," Habermas concedes that Gadamer has a point, and that we should be more vigilant of the critique of ideology than of philosophical hermeneutics:

Enlightenment, which effects a radical understanding, is always political. To be sure, critique, too, remains bound to the traditional context which it reflects. When it comes to the monological self-certainty which critique merely arrogates to itself, Gadamer's hermeneutical objection is valid.... Perhaps under the present circumstances there is a more pressing need to call attention to the limits of critique's false claim to universality than to those of the claim to universality of hermeneutics. So far as it is a matter of clarifying a dispute about validity, however, the latter, too, stands in need of critical appraisal. (Habermas 1985: 317)

With this concession we should be ready to move to Foucault for he also agrees with Habermas that we should be vigilant in the critique of ideology.
Critique does not Have to be Self-Contradictory

The first impression one gets reading *The Birth of the Clinic, Madness and Civilization, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, The History of Sexuality* and Foucault’s other books, is that Foucault is criticizing clinical medicine, psychiatry, the western penal system, the western notion of sexuality and other specific subjects. However, mature readers of Foucault have no excuse for not reading Foucault’s case studies in light of his more theoretical writings such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

Peter Dews, who seems to have focused mostly on Foucault’s case studies, finds himself in a quandary:

Foucault’s dilemma is evident: his theoretical premises render unavoidable the assumption that modes of experience, systems of meaning and objects of knowledge are entirely determined by ‘rules of formation’ or – later – by operations of power. Yet, in order to function as a political critique of these rules of operations, Foucault’s work must appeal to some form of meaning, experience or knowledge which is not so determined. (Dews 1987: 185; my emphasis)

Dews believes that since Foucault has engaged in political criticism, he is a critic of ideology. On the other hand, Foucault’s commitment to relativism is not consistent with his position as a critic of ideology. Commenting on Foucault’s attempt to avoid the concept of ideology, Dews writes:

Yet the result of this avoidance is that Foucault is simply obliged to draw the same distinction surreptitiously, by means of qualifications and sceptical inverted commas, remarking at the end of *Discipline and Punish*, for example, that ‘the supervision of normality was firmly encased in a medicine or a psychiatry which provide it with a sort of “scientificity”’. (Dews 1987: 190)

According to Dews, Foucault’s thesis of power/knowledge is the main source of his dilemma. Dews also maintains that Foucault must have reached the same conclusion, as his “late abandonment of the concept of power suggests” (Dews 1987: 170). It would be
insightful to discern how and why Foucault abandoned the concept of power. Would it not refute some of his finest studies? First, let us see how Dews reports this transformation in Foucault's mature thought.

Dews informs his readers that "Foucault's fundamental contention is that knowledge and power cannot - even analytically - be separated..." (Dews 1987: 176). This belief in the intrinsic relation of knowledge and power is the root of Foucault's relativism, Dews contends, and it puts the status of Foucault's own discourse in question: "For if, as Foucault claims, 'Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints', it appears that Foucault's own genealogies - as a form of knowledge - must be the expression of a relation of power" (Dews 1987: 191). But Foucault, who is interested in the function of his own discourse as a critique, breaks the link between power and knowledge by "theorizing forms of knowledge which are not forms of power" (Dews 1987: 190). With this Foucault seems to be back to the critique of ideology:

This separating out from the supposedly unbreakable unity of power-knowledge of a false knowledge linked to power and authentic knowledge linked to resistance seems to imply the reinstatement of a form of Ideologiekritik. (Dews 1987:191)

Dews wonders why Foucault does not accept the logical implication of his belief in insurrectionary knowledges. He thinks that the reason is that Foucault naively insists on bracketing any epistemological evaluation of the subjects of his genealogical studies. How can a critique be critique if it is not allowed "to reveal the inadequacy of the representation of the social disseminated by power"? (Dews 1987: 191). In short, Foucault severs the link between power and knowledge but naively continues attempting to bracket epistemological questions:
The *epoche* which Foucault attempts to perform with regard to the epistemological status of the forms of knowledge he analyses cannot be consistently carried out, since without an assessment of the *truth of the discourse* studied, the very object of investigation remains ill-defined, and the possibility of a political critique is undermined. (Dews 1987: 192; my emphasis)

Dews’s criticisms are one of the best formulations by critics of Foucault and so we should take them seriously. There is a temptation to dismiss them altogether as a failure to understand the distinction between discourse and science, because he repeatedly refers to Foucault’s position on knowledge and compares it to issues related to science. I have already argued that the distinction between knowledge (*savoir*) and science (*connaissance*) is crucial for reading Foucault. Discourse and science are not the same. Discourse is a form of knowledge and as such, according to Foucault, cannot be thought of as true or false. It is an event with an ontological status which cannot be reduced to epistemological categories. In light of this observation, Dews’s demand, quoted above, “an assessment of the *truth of the discourse* studied” cannot be fulfilled. Temptations aside, I will address Dews’s points in what follows. As in my discussion of the Habermas-Gadamer debate, my own debate with Dews is a way of clarifying several points: 1- Foucault does not engage in the critique of ideology in the sense of correcting a false consciousness; 2- Instead, he conceptualizes a *discursive* notion of ideology; 3- The knowledge-power thesis may be considered the ontological equivalent of the critique of ideology (and is therefore in this sense consistent with Marx’s own critique of the German ideology discussed in Chapter IV).

First, let me briefly state Dews’s points and then I will address them one by one. It seems to me his argument can be fairly summarized through the following statements:

1- Foucault’s genealogical studies are intended to be critical.
2- It is impossible to engage in a political critique without making epistemological
claims.

3- Foucault believed in the intrinsic relationship of power and knowledge, but he later
abandoned this thesis.

4- As a result of the power-knowledge relation, all forms of knowledge are repressively
constituted, and therefore relative.

5- Foucault's critique of ideology is not justified unless he accepts epistemological
hierarchies of knowledge.

Fortunately other commentators made similar points while Foucault was alive and he
had the opportunity to respond to them. It is thus more useful to see how Foucault
himself addresses these issues.

Dews's first point is that Foucault's genealogical studies are intended to be
critical. First, I personally prefer to characterize Foucault's approach as discourse
analysis rather than archaeology or genealogy, because in all his case studies he is
interested in the discursive aspect of the subject. As early as 1970 he stated that he used
the term archaeology "somewhat arbitrarily" (Foucault 1973: xi). In 1983 he pointed out
that he no longer used this term and described the objective of his studies this way:

I meant this word "archaeology," which I no longer use, to suggest that the
kind of analysis I was using was out-of-phase, not in terms of time but by
virtue of the level at which it was situated. Studying the history of ideas,
as they evolve, is not my problem so much as trying to discern beneath
them how one or another subject could take shape as a possible object of
knowledge. Why, for instance, did madness become, at a given moment,
an object of knowledge corresponding to a certain type of knowledge? By
using the word "archaeology" rather than "history," I tried to designate
this desynchronization between ideas about madness and the constitution
of madness as an object. (Foucault 1997i: 444-45)
Foucault is making a radical claim here, and we should take note of it. He is not proclaiming that madness is constituted as a result of people having some *ideas* about something called madness. Rather, it is constituted as a result of certain discursive practices. Put differently, the object of science does not precede science in existence. They are created simultaneously. This is a difference between the discursive and the epistemological analysis of science. If one is concerned with the constitution of an objective reality through discursive practices of the sciences and their role in governmentalization of the society, it is absurd to critique the ideas people have about things around them. In fact, such a critique itself would be an ideology in the Marxian sense, i.e. correction of false ideas through self-reflection, a task that the Young Hegelians assumed. With regard to the first point, it should be noted that Foucault is not concerned with ideas, even scientific ideas. The last qualification here needs further clarification. Ideas that scientists have regarding the objects of their science, as *ideas*, do not belong to the discursive domain. At the discursive level, these ideas are manifested as *events*. We have already noted that discourse is an event, and, as such, is not an epistemological matter.

This discussion should make it less confusing, on the one hand, to read Foucault as a critique, while on the other hand to hear him stress the following with respect to *The Birth of the Clinic*:

> I should like to make it plain once and for all that this book has not been written in favour of one kind of medicine as against another kind of medicine, or against medicine and in favour of an absence of medicine. It is a structural study that sets out to disentangle the conditions of its history from the density of discourse, *as do others of my works*. (Foucault 1994b: xix; my emphasis)
This reminds me of an early encounter I had with Foucault’s work. His genealogical approach was the subject of class discussion in a graduate seminar. One student, who seemed very familiar with Foucault’s work, offered many interesting remarks and one final observation: “But the reality is that even Foucault died of AIDS!” At that time, it made sense as a first impression, because Foucault was supposed to be anti-medicine, anti-science and anti-psychiatry. We thought that he believed that everything, including disease, was socially constructed. We might have even thought he believed AIDS was also a social construction that he could deconstruct through critical reflection. Such a view could not be more unfair. What was all this nonsense supposed to mean? Arrogance and ignorance on the part of people who had only some superficial familiarity with Foucault’s work? If so, then this constituted ignorance of a highly developed and complex system of thought. Dews’s reading does not seem to be more advanced than those of us in this seminar. Of course, Foucault’s works are intended to be critical, but we need to know what critique means for him.

I have already suggested several times that Foucault’s critique is conducted in the field of discourse and not science per se. I will now establish this point through a close textual reading of Foucault. First, the distinction between discourse and science:

Discursive practice does not coincide with the scientific development that it may give rise to; and knowledge that it forms is neither an unfinished prototype nor the by-product to be found in daily life of a constituted science.... Once constituted, a science does not take up, with all the interconnexions that are proper to it, everything that formed the discursive practice in which it appeared; nor does it dissipate – in order to condemn it to the prehistory of error, prejudice, or imagination – the knowledge that surrounds it... Knowledge is not an epistemological site that disappears in the science that supersedes it. Science (or what is offered as such) is localized in the field of knowledge and plays a role in it. A role that varies according to different discursive formations, and is modified with their mutations. (Foucault 1972a: 184)
At this point, I need to further elaborate on the role of critique in Foucault's work. I have already shown that science and discourse are not the same. Based on this distinction between science and discourse, Foucault argues that they are not reducible to each other. Science does not follow discursive practices, nor does it condemn them as errors, prejudices, or imaginations. Why? Because discourse is not an epistemological site, and so it cannot be in conflict or opposition to science, insofar as it is epistemological. I fully developed this point through my reading of Gadamer in the previous section, where the question of the self-contradiction with regard to the claim of hermeneutics to universality was discussed. In a similar fashion, Foucault also claims that discourse is not an epistemological site. An epistemologically-oriented theorist may wonder: if discourse is not epistemological, then what is it? In fact, it is one of the biases of epistemological thinking that it does not acknowledge any other forms of knowledge other than those manifested as ideas and consciousness. For Foucault, discourse is an event and as such it is ontological.

Given that discourse and science cannot be reduced to each other, should we assume that they have no relation with each other? There is indeed a relationship between the two, and each plays a role relative to the other. Let us read the passage again: "Science (or what is offered as such) is localized in the field of knowledge and plays a role in it. A role that varies according to different discursive formations, and is modified with their mutations" (Foucault 1972a: 184; my emphasis). This role can be modified with the mutations of discursive formations, and a discursive critique seeks to perform such modifications. Foucault does not hesitate, even for a moment, to state his critical intention. He says that he wants to show that the unity of science is a function of
discursive formations, not of traditional epistemological categories. He first situates himself in it to detect the discursive formation of the given science in order to submit it to critique. The question of the unity of science can thus be approached either epistemologically or discursively. Foucault chooses the latter:

But need we dispense forever with the ‘œuvre’, the ‘book’, or even such unities as ‘science’ or ‘literature’? Should we regard them as illusions, illegitimate constructions, or ill-acquired results? Should we never make use of them, even as a temporary support, and never provide them with a definition? What we must do, in fact, is to tear away from them their self-evidence... We must recognize that they may not, in the last resort, be what they seem at first sight. In short, that they require a theory, and that this theory cannot be constructed unless the field of the facts of discourse on the basis of which those facts are built up appears in its non-synthetic purity. (Foucault 1972a: 26)

In other words, an archaeological study, or a discourse analysis of a scientific field should begin with the existing unity of that science. Foucault believes that one should not dismiss this unity as an illusion, illegitimate construction, or ill-acquired result. Indeed, comments like this by Foucault have led some commentators to claim that Foucault is strongly influenced by positivism through Comte and Durkheim (see Dews 1987: 180). Positivist or not, it is not his aim to epistemologically violate the sciences. This does not mean that he cannot be critical. On the contrary, Foucault wishes to tear away the self-evident unity of scientific discourses. This raises the question: how is this “tearing” different from the “unmasking” practices of the critique of ideology? In The Archaeology of Knowledge it is obvious that Foucault does not reject the concept of ideology totally, the way Gadamer did. However, he goes out of his way to make it very clear that he does not hold an epistemological view of ideology. He launches his critiques in the discursive field of science:
And I, in turn, will do no more than this: of course, I shall take as my starting-point whatever unities are already given (such as psychopathology, medicine, or political economy); but I shall not place myself inside these dubious unities in order to study their internal configuration or their secret contradictions. I shall make use of them just long enough to ask myself what unities they form; by what right they can claim a field that specifies them in space and a continuity that individualizes them in time; according to what laws they are formed; against the background of which discursive events they stand out; and whether they are not, in their accepted and quasi-institutional individuality, ultimately the surface effect of a more firmly grounded unities. (Foucault 1972a: 26; my emphasis)

These are all questions pertaining to the discursive aspects of the scientific disciplines. Foucault’s interest in the question of the discursive events which give rise to scientific unities is of especial interest. For Foucault wants to explain the “accepted and quasi-institutional individuality” of the scientific disciplines in terms of these discursive events. Discourse is the ground on which social and institutional individualizations of the sciences are carried out. Given the social and institutional dimension of discourse, any discursive critique is also a socio-political critique.

Foucault’s critical interest is directed towards the discursive field of science with the aim of modifying or replacing it:

I shall accept the groupings that history suggests only to subject them at once to interrogation; to break them up and then to see whether they can be legitimately reformed; whether other groupings should be made; to replace them in a more general space which, while dissipating their apparent familiarity, makes it possible to construct a theory of them. (Foucault 1972a: 26)

In this passage the term “legitimately” catches the eye. We should not read too much epistemological interest in it, because Foucault seems to have in mind the legitimacy of certain power-knowledge relationships. In fact Foucault’s ethico-political critique is essentially directed towards the discursive relations of power (see Foucault 1997d: 59).
Foucault has no problem with the idea that one discourse might be more legitimate than other. In fact, he may even consider one discourse as legitimate and another as illegitimate. Indeed, he wants to theoretically provide for the possibility of making this kind of assessment with regard to prevailing discourses of our time. All his case studies are actual testimonies to this possibility and wish. There is a widespread and popular misconception about Foucault's theoretical and critical views that attempts to turn Foucault against himself. It is exhibited by almost everyone from Habermas to Baudrillard (the modern and the postmodern), by Dews and my classmate who thought death was the only reality that could shatter Foucault's constructivism and relativism. Baudrillard speaks for many of these critics when he questions the status of Foucault's own discourse, ultimately asking us to forget Foucault:

In short, Foucault’s discourse is a mirror of the powers it describes. It is there that its strength and its seduction lie, and not at all in its “truth index,” which is only its leitmotiv: these procedures of truth are of no importance, for Foucault’s discourse is no truer than any other. (Baudrillard 1987: 10)

In almost all criticisms such as this, it is not Foucault who is being turned against himself. Rather, it is the critic, who is turning, with his misreading, against him. Indeed, Foucault is very hard to read.

The initial subject of our investigation here was Foucault’s treatment of ideology. It was noted that Foucault does not relate ideology to science at the level of scientificity, which is an epistemological level. But science does play a role in knowledge, or in discourse. It is the hold of discourse on science which has the appearance of being ideological. Therefore, if there is any question with regard to ideology, it should be addressed to discourse, and not to science:
In any discursive formation, one finds a specific relation between science and knowledge; and instead of defining between them a relation of exclusion or subtraction (by trying to discover what in knowledge still eludes and resists science, what in science is still compromised by its proximity to and the influence of knowledge), archaeological analysis must show positively how a science functions in the element of knowledge. (Foucault 1972a: 185; my emphasis)

It is worth noting again that Foucault’s discourse (or archaeological) analysis has the claim of being positive, which is another expression for being scientific. This is further support for the thesis that Foucault’s discourse analysis is not a self-contradictory approach to science. Discourse analysis, like any science, has an epistemological dimension that cannot be reduced to discourse, because science and discourse are not the same. There is no intrinsic contradiction in scientifically studying discursive practices. Most of those who have made such a criticism of discourse analysis have missed the point that discourse is not synonymous with science. Discourse analysis is a science, and its object of study is discourse. I believe this is what Foucault means when he says, “it must show positively how a science functions in the element of knowledge.” Discourse analysis is striving to establish itself as a science. It is even short of a name: should it be archaeology, genealogy, discourse analysis? With or without a name Foucault has successfully argued for its theoretical justification and has conducted many case studies that serve as examples of how this science may advance. He suspected that he was dealing with a new scientific field of study when he discovered discourse.

Discourse as the Positive Unconscious of Knowledge

Discourse is not ideology or false consciousness, but it constitutes an unconscious dimension to knowledge. It is so elusive that one has to be equipped with archaeological
techniques to search for it. Since it is a unique domain, it can only be studied by a distinct science. Foucault suspected that he was dealing with a new scientific field of study when he discovered *discourse*. It is very hard to find any other scholar who had discovered this discursive domain before Foucault. In a passage reminiscent of Durkheim’s *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Foucault writes:

> And now a suspicion occurs to me. I have behaved as if I were discovering a new domain, as if, in order to chart it, I needed new measurements and guide-lines. But, in fact, was I not all the time in the very space that has long been known as ‘the history of ideas’?...Perhaps I am a historian of ideas after all. But an ashamed, or, if you prefer, a presumptuous historian of ideas...I cannot be satisfied until I have cut myself off from ‘the history of ideas’, until I have shown in what way archaeological analysis differs from the descriptions of ‘the history of ideas’. (Foucault 1972a: 136).

In his introduction to the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault reveals a similar consciousness of the novelty of his approach when he says, “I was motivated, and I seemed to have discovered a certain theoretical advantage in the research that I envisaged” (Foucault 1985: 7). Indeed, Foucault has discovered a new domain, and he has to demonstrate beyond any doubt that “archaeological analysis differs from the descriptions of ‘the history of ideas’”. Durkheim set himself a similar task to legitimize sociology as a science, and felt he had to show how sociology differed from psychology (see Durkheim 1938). Durkheim did not only want to demarcate sociology from psychology. His was an attempt, first, to establish a new domain for scientific investigation, and second to distinguish that investigation from all other fields of inquiry which may have a claim to that domain. His aim was to secure the autonomy of sociology in the face of psychology and other disciplines like philosophy and history which seemed to be credible rivals. Likewise, Foucault’s aim is to distinguish discourse analysis from the history of ideas and also from other investigations which deal with science and
knowledge at the epistemological level. The critique of ideology, the sociology of knowledge, and even epistemology itself must also be excluded from this domain.

Some argue that discourse analysis is not different from the sociology of knowledge. In fact, Habermas makes this claim (see Habermas 1987: 270). Such views assume that the sociology of knowledge is not concerned with the epistemological validity of knowledge. I have two responses to this assumption. First, as I showed in the previous chapter, the sociology of knowledge is not epistemologically indifferent to the object of its investigation. Second and more important, even if it is conceded that the sociology of knowledge does not engage with its object of study epistemologically, I insist that discourse is not its object of study. Discourse is Foucault's discovery. Even noted scholars like Habermas and Lyotard, who use the term discourse frequently, do not use it as a distinct and autonomous moment of knowledge or science. Habermas uses this term in the title of one of his most sophisticated books, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, but never attempts to explain what he exactly means by *discourse*. It seems that he wants to say *Modernity* has a *Discourse*, which is a certain kind of *Philosophy*. We could just as well say that *Modernity* has a *Philosophy*. In a Foucauldean context, this phrase means that modernity has a discourse that takes hold of a certain kind of philosophy. In other words, the philosophy of modernity and the philosophical discourse of modernity would have been two distinct forms of knowledge that are not reducible to each other, Lyotard also uses the term *discourse* very loosely, meaning almost anything that is used for the purpose of communication:

Scientific knowledge is a kind of discourse. And it is fair to say that for the last forty years the "leading" sciences and technologies have had to do with language: phonology and theories of linguistics, problems of communication and cybernetics, modern theories of algebra and
informatics, computers and their languages, problems of translation and
the search for areas of compatibility among computer languages, problems
of information storage and data banks, telematics and the perfection of
intelligent terminals, paradoxology. The facts speak for themselves (and
this list is not exhaustive). (Lyotard 1984: 3-4)

This is not what Foucault has in mind when he speaks of discourse. This is language in
the broadest sense of the word. Discourse is not identical to language.

Foucault was justified in thinking he had discovered a new domain of
investigation. Like Durkheim, who had to demonstrate that his approach to social facts
consisted a new science, Foucault had to show that discourse analysis did not belong to
an existing scientific discipline.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault still reluctantly uses the concept of
ideology, but he goes out of his way to show that his understanding of ideology belongs
to the discursive level of scientific discourse:

It is probably there, in that space of interplay, that the relations of ideology
to the sciences are established. The hold of ideology over scientific
discourse and the ideological functioning of the sciences are not
articulated at the level of their ideal structure (even if they can be
expressed in it in a more or less visible way), nor at the level of their
technical use in a society (although that society may obtain results from
it), nor at the level of the consciousness of the subjects that built it up; they
are articulated where science is articulated upon knowledge. If the
question of ideology may be asked of science, it is in so far as science,
without being identified with knowledge, but without either effacing or
excluding it, is localized in it, structures certain of its objects, systematizes
certain of its enunciations, formalizes certain of its concepts and
strategies... In short, the question of ideology that is asked of science is
not the question of situations or practices that it reflects more or less
consciously; nor is it the question of the possible use or misuse to which it
could be put; it is the question of its existence as a discursive practice and
of its functioning among other practices. (Foucault 1972a: 185)

By the time of the publication of *Madness and Civilization* in 1961, Foucault had
noticed that the constitution of the mad subject could not be accounted for in ideological
terms. This realization led him “to pose the problem of knowledge and power,” which was “not the fundamental problem but an instrument” that made it possible “to analyze the problem of the relationship between the subject and truth” (see Foucault 1997j: 290). In his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault was able to theoretically situate this ideological function in discourse. Foucault became interested in the relations of power and knowledge through the question of the social subject and its constitution. This interest, which guides almost all of Foucault’s studies, is the reason he retained the concept of ideology, though as a discursive phenomenon.

Foucault’s rejection of the critique of ideology was an attempt to establish discourse as a distinct domain of analysis which is not accessible to any form of epistemological investigation. This is why he rejected the history of ideas, the critique of ideology, the interpretative approach, psychoanalysis and semiology. He was not interested in epistemological errors, concealed interests, hidden meanings or intentions (see, for examples, Foucault 1970: 367, 379; 1972: 76, 83, 89-90, 93-95, 100, 110, 118, 120-121, 138-139, 162). In his “Foreword to the English Edition” of *The Order of Things*, Foucault speaks of a *positive unconscious* at the level of discourse:

I did not operate, therefore, at the level that is usually that of the historian of science..., [for] it describes the process and products of the scientific consciousness. But, on the other hand, it tries to restore what eluded that consciousness: the influences that affected it, the implicit philosophies that were subjacent to it, the unformulated thematics, the unseen obstacles; it describes the unconscious of science. This unconscious is always the negative side of science – that resists it, deflects it, or disturbs it. What I would like to do, however, is to reveal a *positive unconscious* of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse, instead of disputing its validity and seeking to diminish its scientific nature (Foucault 1994a: xi).
We have previously noted that: 1- science and discourse are distinct and autonomous; 2- there is a relationship between the two and science plays a role in the discursive field; 3- discourse is related to power and through it constitutes the social subject; 4- thus, science is *unconsciously* used to discursively shape the subject. In light of these observations, Foucault is theoretically justified in critiquing scientific discourses without contradicting his claim to epistemological neutrality with regard to the science whose functioning in the field of discourse he is studying.

I need to further elaborate the above point. In the above passage, we read that Foucault wants to “reveal a positive unconscious of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse.” But does this mean he claims to have access to what has eluded the consciousness of the scientist? From my discussion, it should be obvious that he does make such a claim. After all, this is what a critique of a certain discourse has to do in order to resist its power. The second question is whether or not it is presumptuous for Foucault to claim to know more than scientists about their sciences. The answer is no, because his discourse analysis studies the discursive aspect of their sciences, not the epistemological truthfulness of their findings. It is not very difficult to accept that we can know something about the functioning of science that scientists themselves are not aware of. Disciplines such as the sociology of knowledge, the philosophy of science and epistemology have made similar claims. Unlike these disciplines, Foucault’s analysis of science does not have any epistemological implication with regard to the question of the truthfulness of science. It is a careful examination, description and explanation of four sets of rules of discursive
formations, which he calls the *positivity* of discourse. Foucault says that because of this approach, he has been labeled as a positivist, and he accepts the label:

> If, by substituting the analysis of rarity for the search of totalities, the description of relations of exteriority for the theme of transcendental foundation, the analysis of accumulations for the quest of the origin, one is a positivist, then I am quite happy to be one. Similarly, I am not in the least unhappy about the fact that several times (though still in a rather blind way) I have used the term positivity to designate from afar the tangled mass that I was trying to unravel. (Foucault 1972a: 125).

In short, Foucault believes in the objectivity of discourse analysis, and the positivity of its object and results thus has produced works that can be called empirical.

Analysis of discourse is capable of revealing how science functions in the field of discourse, i.e. how a *scientific* discourse is constructed. It can also show how a discourse may be rearranged, or replaced with another discourse. If there is no intrinsic or essential relationship between a science and its respective scientific discourse, there are many possible discursive formations. Foucault asks why certain kinds of discourses were articulated historically, and others excluded. These questions can be answered according to epistemological criteria. At this level, discourse analysis is an epistemological discipline in itself. In other words, one can judge the soundness, reliability and validity of one study of a particular discourse against another. For example, it is possible to say that Foucault’s account of the western penal system as a discursive system is or is not accurate.

If Foucault’s discourse analysis can epistemologically be scrutinized, what is the *radical Foucauldean shift* that this dissertation seeks to identify? Is it another epistemological field which suffers all the dilemmas and contradictions of the western
epistemological approach to science? Such a question ignores two or perhaps three issues.

First, even if Foucault’s contribution were only opening a new space for investigation into the role of science and knowledge in modern western societies, this would be a remarkable accomplishment. In the history of thought, only a few individuals have been able to establish a new field of scientific inquiry, and Foucault is one. This dissertation is one of the very few readings of Foucault’s work (if not the only one) that reads in it a new scientific discipline.

The second point concerns the problem of suffering from the impasses of the modern western approach to science. I believe that discourse analysis, at least compared to other approaches to science and knowledge, is less exposed to the problems of western epistemology. It delineates an epistemologically neutral dimension in scientific discourse, and seeks to understand its functioning. For example, consider the critique of ideology and the sociology of knowledge. They are necessarily self-contradictory in the very research they conduct. For example, the sociology of knowledge cannot assert that all knowledge is socially determined unless it considers itself as such. This self-contradiction in the very claim one is making is epistemologically speaking worse than some relatively extraneous restriction, like the problem of studying subjective phenomena through empirical methods. Discourse analysis has obvious advantages over all other approaches to science, ideas, and thoughts. Foucault extensively discussed the advantages of his approach over the history of ideas, the philosophy of science, semiology and linguistic analysis, the interpretative approach, the critique of ideology, and the sociology of knowledge. Some of these advantages are discussed in this dissertation and others can be
found in various works and interviews by Foucault. The only disadvantage that discourse analysis may have is that it cannot aid science by advancing more epistemologically accurate scientific studies. However, given its advantages and the valuable field of study it opens up, this shortcoming is justified. In this regard, it is worth noting that no science can legitimate itself merely in terms of the failures of other sciences because it is always possible to overcome those failures by means of more advanced techniques and through more vigorous investigations. As a distinct discipline, a science should have access to a domain that other forms of scientific inquiry cannot approach. Thus, Foucault’s contributions constitutes more than a methodological advantage; he also opens an entirely new field of inquiry.

Third, the radical shift that this dissertation attributes to Foucault has to do with his conception of the ontological critique of scientific discourses and with the ability to explain shifts in scientific thoughts. In other words, while Foucault’s approach is a scientific shift in itself, it can also explain scientific shifts. For example, with regard to his own work, Foucault says, “You see, that’s why I really work like a dog, and I worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation” (Foucault 1997a: 131). By this, Foucault intended to explain why he made his detours in the field of science. Why and how has he been able to bring into light a new way of understanding science? He was able to do so because he was motivated by the politics of the self. He wanted to alter the social forces that constitute him as a social subject:

That is the reason also, when people say, “Well, you thought this a few years ago and now you say something else,” my answer is ...[Laughs] “Well, do you think I have worked like that all those years to say the same thing and not to be changed?” (Foucault 1997a: 131).
This is a good insight as to why Foucault was interested in the question of knowledge and power. Every thinker or scientist may feel that her intellectual and professional endeavor has altered her self. However, Foucault’s case is unique in two ways. First, through his power-knowledge thesis, Foucault has a theoretical understanding of how one’s self is constituted. Second, by understanding this process of the ontologically constituting the self, he is able to provide the self with agency. In other words, for Foucault, critique can become a choice on the part of the social actor, a choice which is ontologically based:

This transformation of one’s self by one’s knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting? (Foucault 1997a: 131).

This idea of the transformation of the self through an aesthetic experience, which is very close to what Gadamer said about how the Greek philosophy moved from the idea of beauty to the right order and to the truth, is what an ontological critique is all about. If discourse is not epistemologically constructed, detecting some flaws or making some corrections in a scientific procedure does not alter the political role of the discourse. Epistemological enhancement does not constitute a critique of discourse which is responsible for our constitution as social subjects.

With this observation, I believe I have sufficiently responded to Dews’ s position concerning the impossibility of engaging in a political critique without making epistemological claims.

The Power-Knowledge Thesis

Nothing Foucault said is more misunderstood than his power-knowledge thesis. To offer a different understanding of this thesis with the discussion above in mind, I will
argue several points: 1- It was because of the problems with the concept of ideology that Foucault formulated this thesis. 2- Foucault’s concept of power is not necessarily a negative one, as others have suggested. 3- Contrary to many critics, Foucault does not consider power and knowledge to be intrinsically linked to each other. Discussing these issues should at least have a corrective value for many critics. It should also be read as a response to Dews’s last two criticisms discussed above.

We noted that Foucault did not find the concept of ideology particularly helpful in relation to science, because the so-called ideological function of science is related to the hold of discourse on science. This created a major problem for Foucault’s research on the constitution of the subject. On the one hand, he wanted to show that certain sciences are used to constitute the social subject, and that this constitution has an ideological, ethical, or political character. On the other hand, he found the concept of ideology epistemologically charged, while discourse, through which the subject is objectified, is epistemologically neutral. Thus, he seeks to refrain from using the concept of ideology for three reasons. Two have to do with its uses in philosophy of consciousness, and one involves its usage in the Marxist literature:

The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth. Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which themselves are neither true nor false. The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant, etc. For these three reasons, I think this is a notion that cannot be used without circumspection. (Foucault 1980:118-119; my emphasis)
Foucault’s problem with concept of ideology is how it is used, but there is something in ideology that he wants to retain, namely, its ethico-political connotation. Searching for an alternative way of explaining this ethico-political moment, Foucault formulates the knowledge-power thesis. A careful reading of the above passage reveals several fundamental aspects of Foucault’s search for an alternative thesis.

First, let us consider the third problem with the notion of ideology, i.e. its being explained in terms some material infrastructure. Since it can be reduced to and explained away in terms of a more fundamental determinant, the concept of ideology cannot capture the autonomous political moment of discourse. While discursive politics is related to non-discursive events, it cannot be reduced to them. It remains “a field of experience in which the subject and object are both constituted only under certain simultaneous conditions, but in which they are constantly modified in relation to each other, and so they modify this field of experience itself” (Foucault 1998f: 462).

Second, Foucault’s second difficulty with the notion of ideology is that it belongs to the philosophy of the subject and consciousness. In other words, it refers mainly to a state of mind, while discursive politics involves “a way of acting and thinking at once” (Foucault 1998f: 463).

Finally, the first problem is an epistemological problem. Ideology implies an opposition with truth while discursive politics is epistemologically neutral. This does not mean that it is not related to truth. In fact, a discourse analysis is interested in effects of truth on the subject. In other words, the power of truth is what constitutes the subject. In

---

4 As the editor of the second volume of Essential Works of Foucault explains, this text was written by Foucault for a new edition of the Dictionnaire des philosophes, but signed pseudonymously “Maurice Florence” (see Faubion, James D. (ed.) 1998: 459n). However, in this dissertation I refer to it as one of Foucault’s works, and not as that of “Maurice Florence.”
the passage under consideration we do not see anything suggesting that science is without validity. Foucault only says that the question of truth, which is an epistemological question, is irrelevant to the problem that he is concerned with. He rather thinks that he must investigate "how effects of truth are produced within discourses which themselves are neither true nor false" (Foucault 1980: 118). The above passage does not suggest that the distinction between true and false is absurd and unnecessary in any context. It renders no judgement about science and its truth-value. Foucault is merely saying that the distinction between scientificity or truth and non-scientificity is not relevant for his research problem. In spite of this clear language, Dews reads in this passage whatever he wishes:

Foucault avoids the concept of ideology because 'like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth', it requires 'drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth and that which comes under some other category'. (Dews 1987: 190)

Here Foucault is trying to delineate his research problem, i.e. the constitution of the subject. It is initially difficult to notice that Dews is quoting Foucault's statement out of context. If there is any meaning for the phrase "out of context," that is it. In addition to not making the distinction between science and discourse, Dews gives his readers the impression that the qualification "in a discourse" has no significance in Foucault's statement. Thus, the reader is led to believe that for Foucault, in general, any distinction between scientificity and falsehood is not acceptable. Above all, by omitting some of the semantically most significant parts of Foucault's statement, Dews makes an honest understanding of Foucault almost impossible. Let us compare Dews's words with those of Foucault:
The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth. Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which themselves are neither true nor false. (Foucault 1980: 118; my emphasis)

I would like to make one more comment about the above passage before following Foucault's move from ideology to his thesis on power-knowledge. I called attention to the adverb of time "Now," because it showed the development of Foucault's thought. At the very beginning of the interview from which that passage was extracted, Foucault situates his thought process in the context of the intellectual climates in the 1950s and explains how the relation of power and knowledge was then posed:

When I was studying during the early 1950s, one of the great problems that arose was that of the political status of science and the ideological function which it could serve...a whole number of interesting questions were provoked. These can all be summed up in two words: power and knowledge. (Foucault 1980: 109)

At that time, Foucault had not formulated his discourse theory and the idea of four different thresholds of science discussed above (see Foucault 1972a: 186-187). Therefore, it was difficult for him to think of theoretical physics as a discourse, and as a result he thought that by asking about the ideological function of a science like theoretical physics, one was posing "an excessively complicated question" (Foucault 1980: 109). However, he did not have any problem asking this type of question about a form of knowledge (savoir) like psychiatry. As we can see, he is struggling with the epistemological implications of such questions for science. He felt more comfortable in writing about discourses which had not passed the threshold of scientificity.
Apparently it took him a while to formulate the power-knowledge thesis in the context of scientific discourse. On the question of power and knowledge he says:

I don’t think I was the first to pose the question. On the contrary, I’m struck by the difficulty I had in formulating it. When I think back now, I asked myself what else it was that I was talking about, in *Madness and Civilisation* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, but power? Yet I’m perfectly aware that I scarcely ever used the word and never had such a field of analyses at my disposal. (Foucault 1980: 115)

It is through the question of the subject and its constitution that he explicitly directs his research towards the relation of power and truth (see Foucault 1980: 116). It is in the context of the constitution of the subject, in light of his theory of discourse and through the power-relation thesis, that he is now able to theorize about the political status of science without the fear of epistemologically undermining science. The question of the subject plays a crucial role in the development of this thesis and Foucault’s critical project.

Habermas rightly observes that Foucault’s research concerns the socialization of the modern subject. Of course, Foucault prefers to refer to this as the problem of the constitution of the subject, rather than its socialization. But, this seems to be the same sociological question that sociology has been preoccupied with since its inception. Habermas thinks that a major problem with Foucault’s work is his “unsociological” conception of the social. In other words, while Foucault’s research problem is socialization, his understanding of the social is not sociological:

Legal judgments, police measures, pedagogical instructions, internment, discipline, checks and controls, forms of corporal and intellectual drill are examples of the intrusion of socializing, organizing forces into the quasi-natural substrate of bodily creatures. Foucault allows himself an altogether unsociological concept of the social. From the outset, he is interested in the human sciences as media that in modernity strengthen and promote the
mysterious process of this socialization, that is, the investment with power of concrete, bodily mediated interactions. (Habermas 1987: 242-243)

Given Foucault's research problem, we should ask: what does it take for Foucault to be sociological? How could he be sociological? In spite of its great significance, Habermas does not systematically clarify this point, but he seems to mean that relating practices to discourses is unsociological. Habermas argues that Foucault "builds into the concept of 'practice' the moment of coercive, asymmetric influence over the freedom of the movement of other participants in interaction" (Habermas 1987: 242). Here Habermas must have a particular theory of social interaction and socialization in mind. It must be a theory which is accurate, and emphasizes the agency of the actor, such as George Herbert Mead's theory of social interaction.

We do not need to engage in a debate with Habermas over which theory of socialization is more sociological or more accurate. But we should note that it is not the accuracy of a view or a theory which makes it sociological. Sociological should be defined in a way that false theories of the social, too, could be considered as sociological if they meet certain criteria. In a word, wrong sociology is still sociology. In addition, at least from the perspective of sociological discourse, the criterion of correctness or accuracy cannot realistically be applied to the present state of sociology without unjustifiable discriminations and arbitrary exclusions.

For the sake of argument let us assume that being wrong disqualifies a theory of the social from being sociological. Now we should see where, according to Habermas, Foucault has erred in his theory of socialization. Habermas clearly is of the opinion that since Foucault's theory of power-knowledge establishes an intrinsic link between discourse and power, and since it is discourse that shapes the subject, Foucault must
believe that the subject has no agency in the face of the discursive powers that constitute her as a social subject. This is what makes Foucault's theory of socialization unsociological, according to Habermas. In a word, Habermas's critique of Foucault is a critique of the power-knowledge thesis.

It is very hard to disagree with Habermas's understanding of a theoretical issue, for he is the most noted theorist alive. We are, indeed, fortunate to have his contributions to the human sciences. He is one of few scholars who has rightly identified the problem of socialization as the most significant theoretical theme in Foucault's project. The discursive constitution of the social subject is undoubtedly the central theme of Foucault's works. But like many other critics of Foucault, Habermas fails to understand the role of the knowledge-power thesis in Foucault's critical project. The very fact that Foucault speaks of the possibility of an ontological critique of the modern discursive constitution of the subject should have been read by Habermas as an indication that Foucault is open to the idea of the agency of the subject. Foucault himself raises the intricate point that when someone seeks to establish a relation between two things, that in itself means that there is no identity between the two. In other words, Foucault does not want to suggest that knowledge is the same as power or vice versa. Here is his response to a question regarding power and knowledge:

No. You must understand that is part of the destiny common to all problems once they are posed: they degenerate into slogans. Nobody has said, "Reason is power." I do not think anyone has said knowledge is power...but you have to understand when I read—and I know it was being attributed to me—the thesis "knowledge is power" or "power is knowledge," I begin to laugh, since studying their relation is precisely my problem. If they were identical, I would not have to study them and I would be spared a lot of fatigue as a result. The very fact that I pose the question of their relation proves clearly that I do not identify them. (Foucault 1998d: 455).
However, Habermas may argue that we need more evidence than some hint in an interview to accept that Foucault theoretically allows agency on the part of the subject. While a valid point, a careful reading of Foucault reveals that Foucault's critical project is a theoretical attempt to provide a practical possibility for the freedom of the social subject from discursive powers.

To offer a more systematic analysis of Foucault's power-knowledge thesis, in the next two chapters I will explain two other closely related theses that Foucault has formulated, *genealogy* and *governmentality*.
What is Genealogy?

"Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" is the essay where Foucault deals with the notion of genealogy most systematically. As Foucault tells us, he studied and was familiar with the current philosophical trends of his time, and what motivated him to do "personal work was reading Nietzsche" (Foucault 1997a: 125). While it is true that he is selective in using Nietzsche, we can still consider his genealogical approach as largely Nietzschean. Thus, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" should be a good place to look for an explanation of Foucault's genealogy. But it should also be borne in mind that in this piece he is reading Nietzsche, and that his own position might be different in some aspects. This is particularly true given that Foucault’s genealogy is explicitly linked with his archaeological approach, though he does not spell out such a relationship between the two in his discussion of Nietzsche’s work.

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" Foucault wants to specify what genealogy is and what kind of relation Nietzsche envisions between genealogy and history. First, he explains why genealogy is not an investigation into the "origins" of things. Three postulates of the origin are discussed with regard to the reasons why they are not compatible with genealogy. Upon a careful examination of this discussion, one reaches the conclusion that genealogy is not a study of the "origins" in their *metaphysical* sense, but nonetheless is concerned with beginnings, or origins if you will, in a historical sense.
Foucault explicates three metaphysical meanings for the notion of “origin,” and contends that the genealogist cannot grant any of them an explanatory value. First, the notion of the origin “is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, their carefully protected identities....” (Foucault 1977b: 142). By rejecting this notion of the origin, genealogy seeks to abandon all forms of metaphysical essentialism in favor of historical beginnings. It tries to show that what is taken as the essence of things is a historical construction. For example, what is called “reason” does not have a timeless essence. On the contrary, the genealogist shows that:

[Reason] was born in an altogether “reasonable” fashion—from chance; devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussions, their spirit of competition—the personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reason. (Foucault 1977b: 142)

As we see, the position of genealogy is that the historical beginnings of things point to a completely different process from that of their origin as essence. In other words, their historical emergence is linked to a field of social activity.

A second perception associated with the concept of the origin is that in their original state of being things are most precious, and then comes the Fall which is believed to result in imperfections. In contrast to this “lofty origin,” “the historical beginnings are lowly”:

Not in the sense of modest or discreet like the steps of a dove, but derisive and ironic, capable of undoing every infatuation. “We wished to awaken the feeling of man’s sovereignty by showing his divine birth: this path is now forbidden, since a monkey stands at the entrance.” (Foucault 1977b: 143, quoting Nietzsche)

The third postulate of the notion of origin that makes it unpromising in the eyes of genealogy is its being considered as “the site of truth” (Foucault 1977b: 143). For the
genealogist this truth belongs to a truthful discourse, and “is the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it was hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking of history” (Foucault 1977b: 144). Given these three positions on the metaphysics of the origin and the corresponding genealogical counter-positions, the genealogist favors history to the metaphysics of the origin. But before discussing the relationship between genealogy and history, I need to make a remark with regard to the previous quotation. The reference to the discursive truth as “the sort of error that cannot be refuted” does not mean that Foucault is abandoning his epistemological neutrality. As I mentioned in the beginning of this discussion, in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” Foucault is giving an account of Nietzsche’s genealogical position. While he is very much Nietzschean in his genealogical approach, he has also made his own contributions to this field, particularly through the epistemological neutrality of archaeology.

Now, let us consider the relation of genealogy to history. Foucault succinctly defines Nietzsche’s genealogy as “the examination of Herkunft and Entstehung” (Foucault 1977b: 152). Herkunft and Entstehung, usually translated as “origin”, according to Foucault, can best capture the spirit of genealogy if they are understood in their more accurate sense as descent and emergence (see Foucault 1977b: 145-152). The genealogist is interested in the historical beginning as an invention, an accident, or a chance rather than a metaphysical origin. With these terms and others like them, he intends to stay away from the notion of essence, to argue that things have a history and emerge through a historical process. But the genealogist’s history is an “effective” history (wirkliche Historie) without any constants, as opposed to traditional history which assumes “the certainty of absolutes” (Foucault 1977b: 153). It is the effective history that
functions as “a privileged instrument of genealogy” in the analysis of *Herkunft* (descent) and *Entstehung* (emergence) (see Foucault 1977b: 152-153).

Given its relation to effective history, genealogical analysis of descent cannot move in the direction of the study of the common traits or the gene pool of an ancestry:

The analysis of *Herkunft* often involves a consideration of race or social type. But the traits it attempts to identify are not the exclusive generic characteristics of an individual, a sentiment, or an idea, which permit us to qualify them as “Greek” or “English”; rather, it seeks the subtle, singular, and subindividual marks that might possibly intersect in them to form a network that is difficult to unravel. ... Where the soul pretends unification or the self fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the beginning—numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by an historical eye. The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events. (Foucault 1977b: 145-146).

In other words, the aim of this analysis of descent is not to establish an identity between the individual self and a distanced origin. It asks why certain things came into being in place of others. Why were some identities invented? Why are some ideas and values upheld? It can ask these questions because it does not rely on the timeless and necessary essence of things because it knows that the roots of things lie in inventions, accidents, errors, deviations, false appraisals, and faulty calculations (Foucault 1977b: 146). In a word, it is chance, not essence, that is responsible for historical beings. But chance in its genealogical sense “is not simply the drawing of lots, but raising the stakes in every attempt to master chance through the will to power, and giving rise to the risk of an even greater chance” (Foucault 1977b: 155). It is by analyzing this process of chance that genealogy is able to show that there is no uninterrupted continuity in the lineage of the self, and to demonstrate “the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself” (Foucault 1977b: 145).
Effective history also provides genealogy with the ability to examine *Entstehung* (emergence). Just as the analysis of *Herkunft* (descent) traces back the present identities to numberless and heterogeneous beginnings instead of an original essence, the study of *Entstehung* (emergence) reveals that the present state is never finalized. Foucault notes that:

Emergence is always produced through a particular stage of forces. The analysis of the *Entstehung* must delineate this interaction, the struggle these forces wage against each other or against adverse circumstances, and the attempt to avoid degeneration and regain strength by dividing these forces against themselves. (Foucault 1977b: 148-149)

As the studious reader may have already noted, through effective history genealogy assumes a critical edge through its postulates of non-essentialism and non-finalization. These two postulates together make it plausible for historical subjects to strive towards a different status from what they are. One could not argue for the possibility of change solely on that basis that we are created by chance, for it could be assumed that even though there is no original essence, once created by chance, that creation becomes a final essence. But, with the principle of emergence, each state of being is considered as a stage of struggling forces. From a genealogical perspective history has no end; it moves from one relationship of domination to another; there is no stability of life and nature, and no millennial ending (see Foucault 1977b: 152-154). This view of history provides a basis for Foucault's notion of ontological critique, which will be discussed below.

Effective history represents history as the relationships between forces that "respond to haphazard conflicts" (Foucault 1977b: 154). As such, it distinguishes itself from traditional history, which "aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity" (Foucault 1977b: 154). Effective history attempts to capture events in their
singularity and uniqueness as "the reversal of a relationship of forces," not as a linear progression (Foucault 1977b: 154). It is in this context of a continuous struggle of forces that effective history affirms knowledge as perspective (Foucault 1977b: 156). In other words, the subject of knowledge, including the historian, is located within a particular history. The history of the historian reveals that in the nineteenth-century Europe a new historical sense rose in opposition to metaphysical history, which was represented by three Platonic models of history.

Foucault refers to three genealogical uses of history that "oppose and correspond to the three Platonic modalities of history" in the following terms:

The first is parodic, directed against reality, and opposes the theme of history as reminiscence or recognition; the second is dissociative, directed against identity, and opposes history given as continuity or representative of a tradition; the third is sacrificial, directed against truth, and opposes history as knowledge. (Foucault 1977b: 160)

We have already briefly addressed these distinctions of effective history from traditional history. This dissertation is concerned with the question of knowledge, so it is necessary to discuss the sacrificial use of history in greater detail.

A Critical Sociological Project

In his work, Foucault describes how modern medicine, psychiatry, and the human sciences together with some corresponding institutional relations entered the domain of the individual and fabricated a new individuality. Of course, this does not mean that these disciplines can not or should not be studied from other perspectives. Foucault notes in his genealogical studies that he intends only to call attention to their role in the mechanisms that constitute the subject without rejecting the value of other forms of analysis:
While the history of science is without doubt an important testing ground for the theory of knowledge, as well as for the analysis of meaningful systems, it is also a fertile ground for studying the genealogy of the subject. There are two reasons for this. All the practices by which the subject is defined and transformed are accompanied by the formation of certain types of knowledge, and in the West, for a variety of reasons, knowledge tends to be organized around forms and norms that are more or less scientific. There is also another reason, maybe more fundamental and more specific to our societies. I mean the fact that one of the main moral obligations for any subject is to know oneself, to tell the truth about oneself, and constitute oneself as an object of knowledge both for other people and for oneself. The truth obligation for individuals and a scientific organization of knowledge[:] those are the two reasons why the history of knowledge constitutes a privileged point of view for the genealogy of the subject. (Foucault 1997g: 177)

In short, since in the West the subject is expected to constitute itself as an object of knowledge, and since this knowledge has assumed a scientific organization, Foucault thinks we must also approach the history of science from a genealogical perspective. In this respect, all sciences do not have the same significance. Only those sciences that formulate a scientific knowledge of the individual are relevant. It is in this context that I have insisted that theoretical shifts in the human sciences should be studied as the dynamics of critique and governmentality. In other words, as individuals are objectified through the sciences, they turn on these sciences with a critical attitude to find the discursive points that must be attacked. In this process, the possibility and the necessity of theoretical re-formulations of these sciences emerge.

Foucault tries to capture the dynamics of critique and governmentality by means of archaeology and genealogy. Genealogy reveals how governmentality is manifested in the process where individual is objectified discursively in a field of power and truth. Archaeology, on the other hand, shows how discourse is formed in response to some needs, and how it is modified, or displaced. Archaeological analysis has a critical
potential insofar as it reveals systems of exclusion in the process of discursive formations (see Foucault 1972b: 231-2). It is mainly through different systems of exclusion that the discursive control over science is exercised, and thereby certain specific scientific discourses emerge instead of many other possibilities that could also be realized. While the critical aspect of Foucault's analysis is intended to reveal the "instance of discursive control," "the genealogical aspect concerns the effective formation of discourse, whether within the limits of control, or outside of them" (Foucault 1972b: 233). In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France on December 2, 1970, Foucault commented on the relation of genealogy and critique:

It is thus that critical and genealogical descriptions are to alternate, support and complete each other. The critical side of the analysis deals with the systems enveloping discourse; attempting to mark out and distinguish the principles of ordering, exclusion and rarity in discourse. We might, to play with our words, say it practices a kind of studied casualness (dogged detachment). The genealogical side of discourse, by way of contrast, deals with series of effective formation of discourse: it attempts to grasp it in its power of affirmation, by which I do not mean a power opposed to that of negation, but the power of constituting domains of objects, in relation to which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions. Let us call these domains of objects positivist (positivities) and, to play on words yet again, let us say that, if the critical style is one of studied casualness, then the genealogical mood is one of felicitous (lighthearted) positivism. (Foucault 1972b: 234; alternative translations in parentheses from Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 105)

I will shortly examine this passage in greater detail; however at the moment, I wish to briefly discuss the confusion that this analytical distinction between archaeology and genealogy has created for some commentators of Foucault's works.

Dreyfus and Rabinow rightly note that by the critical enterprise Foucault means archaeological analysis (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 105). However, they try to show that genealogy and archaeology cannot be complementary, as Foucault suggests:
This combination of archaeology and genealogy, which alternate, support, and complement each other is, it must be said, rather strange. On the one side, we have something, by definition meaningless, which is taken quite seriously by the archaeologist. On the other side, we have something which is meaningful and serious which is taken with lightheartedness by the genealogist. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 105)

Dreyfus and Rabinow believe this conflict is present in Foucault’s early works. Sometimes archaeology takes precedence over genealogy (as in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) and sometimes the relationship is reversed (as in *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*). They believe that in archaeological analyses Foucault favors theory over practice, because by bracketing the question of truth he implies that “[U]nlike the theories he studies, his theory slips free of institutional, theoretical, and even epistemic bonds” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 102). This is the same objection of “self-contradiction” which other critics have also raised against Foucault. But unlike other critics, they want to argue that by adopting a more genealogical orientation towards end of his life, Foucault’s position “undergoes a radical transformation” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 103). Through this “radical transformation” practice takes precedence over theory and Foucault is no longer a “detached spectator of mute-discourse monuments” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 103).

Dreyfus and Rabinow, who are more sympathetic toward Foucault than other critics, free him from the trap of “self-contradiction” by dismissing some of Foucault’s finest theoretical works as a kind of structuralism that he in fact leaves behind in his later works. As already mentioned, they changed the title of their book from *Michel Foucault: From Structuralism to Hermeneutics* to *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* as a result of Foucault and others’ insistence that he had never been a structuralist or a hermeneutist. But I suspect they did not change anything substantial as
far as the contents of their book were concerned. The easiest ways of reconciling "contradictory opposites" are to remove one side in favor of the other, or assign a subordinate position to one with regard to the other. This is exactly what Dreyfus and Rabinow do with Foucault's position on theory and practice. The young Foucault under the influence of structuralism favors pure theory, while the maturer Foucault, perhaps under a version of hermeneutics similar to the critique of ideology, no longer seeks to detach himself from practice.

Like most other critics of Foucault, Dreyfus and Rabinow fail to note that Foucault seeks to remain epistemologically (not ontologically) neutral with respect to the content of what he studies, but not so with regard to the epistemological status of his own archaeology. In fact, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* can hardly be read as anything but an epistemological defense of his archaeological approach to discourse. Perhaps, we should take Foucault's description of archaeology as "dogged detachment" more seriously than a play on words. It is detached from the epistemological value of the sciences it studies while it is dogged and serious about its own analysis. The description of genealogy as lighthearted positivism is also to the point. Since genealogy deals with propositions that are viewed as true or false, it is a positive analysis, and since it considers their truth or falsehood in a discursive field it is lighthearted with regard to them.

Foucault made his detour from the consciousness model of analysis to the discursive model through *genealogy*. His project can broadly be defined as the genealogy of modern society and the genealogy of the modern subject (see Foucault 1977a: 223; 1997g: 174). As Habermas noted, this is basically a *sociological* project, but I think while
Foucault sought to address the same problem, his approach was radically different from conventional sociological viewpoints. We discussed Foucault’s genealogical approach in order to understand both his sociological significance and his distance from other sociologists.

Through a genealogy of the modern society Foucault showed that modern discourses are related to non-discursive social phenomena, and are responses to certain social problems (see Foucault 1998g: 284). While all through history knowledge and society have been interlinked, organizing society by appealing to scientific discourses is unique to modern western societies. The ancient Greeks, for example, preferred to resolve social tensions more aesthetically rather than discursively in scientific terms. In a somewhat sad commentary on the state of the modern western society, Foucault regrets that “We are much less Greeks than we believe” (Foucault 1977a: 217). Questions about why and how different responses are provoked in the face of changing social conditions have always incited the sociological imagination. Similarly, Foucault asked why and how the modern society and the modern subject were constituted. His genealogical studies assume the task of providing some responses to these questions. In short, they assumed a sociological task but not in a “sociological” way. What could be more sociological than providing an accurate knowledge of the social? Can genealogy provide such knowledge?

Individuals: Docile Bodies and Souls for Empirical Interventions

Foucault accepts this fundamental sociological insight that historically real human beings cannot be understood without any reference to their social milieus. But, he wants to go further than this basic assertion to show that in respect to modern western
societies, it is not only a question of understanding the individual in various social contexts. We should also take the totalitarian power of knowledge into account. Modern western societies have become totalitarian in the true sense of the word. They have become capable of submitting the individual in her very individuality to power. This “achievement” could not have happened without the development of modern scientific discourses.

Since Aristotle it has been accepted as an unquestionable epistemological principle that true knowledge is concerned with the laws of nature, and that such laws are related to what is “purely universal, immutable, and necessary” (see Habermas 1992a: 13, 127). Descriptions of individualities were not considered scientific laws, because they included the accidental characteristics of a form of being, not its essential features which science was supposed to be concerned with. The essentials were common and recurring characteristics of the species. But the individuality of each being and therefore its very existence were perceived to be due to its accidental marks, for existence was the same as uniqueness and irreducibility.¹ In other words, the actual existence belonged to the unique, not to a nonspecific commonality. Since being was uniqueness, any general formulation of the unique in terms of scientific laws was viewed as a contradiction.

The belief that the individual human being is unknowable has been a widely held view in many non-western and pre-modern western epistemologies. It was argued that

¹ It should be noted that the term “accidental” is a philosophical concept referring to those aspects of beings that vary from one individual to another. They need a substance to host them and in turn they provide the substance with its uniqueness. Habermas alleges that the notion of the accidental has a negative connotation and means that individuation is a form of deviation which is inferred from aspects of the object’s nonbeing. He also suggests that Durkheim understood individualization as deviation from the general (see Habermas 1992a: 118-123; 150). I cannot totally accept Habermas’s assertion that accidental aspects are understood as inferences that one makes from the limits of the object. This might be the case in some metaphysical philosophies, but not in all. However, this is beside the point. What Foucault is addressing is the fact that
objectification of the consciousness in the form of self-reflection could never capture the knowing subject, because the objectified consciousness was always a third person. In other words, reflecting on "I" is impossible for it is always a reflection on a third person (see Habermas 1992a: 44).

Even if the self as an objectified consciousness was to be known, the knower could not be a second party let alone a scientific discipline:

[A] living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process. In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition. (Bakhtin 1984: 58)

The self was a privileged domain of the individual himself and if any knowledge of the self was possible, it was a personal knowledge of a self that defied all forms of reification and generalization.

In addition to the private nature of the knowledge of the self, in some cultures this knowledge was understood to be either impossible to acquire, or tantamount to knowing God:

‘He who knows himself, knows his Lord’ (...). From this one may deduce, either that the self cannot be known for its truth may not be reached because God is in it—which is perfectly valid—or it may be known. It is necessary that thou knowest, first that thou dost not know thyself, and then thou knowest thyself and that, in consequence, thou knowest thy Lord. (Ibn Arabi2 1975: 117; translation modified)

For the pre-modern philosophy, the truth of the self was in being a subject and as such it was spontaneous and unfinalized. It would defy any form of delineation, because there was something God-like in it which had no limit.

---

the individual was out of the reach of the sciences in pre-modern societies, but with the advent of modern science, she became a legitimate domain of investigations and interventions for science.
According to Foucault, in the West, however, "the old Aristotelian prohibition" was lifted, and "one could at last hold a scientifically structured discourse about an individual" (Foucault 1973: xiv). Finally, the unknowable individual was surrendered to scientific discourses, and through them new forms of constituting the subject became possible.

Thus, Foucault was eventually compelled to examine the scientific organization of knowledge in the West through the genealogy of the modern subject (see Foucault 1997g: 177). In light of our analysis of descent and emergence, we concluded that the present is the stage of struggling forces. Genealogical analysis shows that in this struggle knowledge has itself become a force that must be preserved by all means, for as Foucault puts it, "knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting" (Foucault 1977b: 154). In other words, knowledge must be sought at any cost because in the struggle of the forces that attempt to shape the emerging historical stage of the present it is a powerful means of cutting. That is, knowledge is a constantly emerging and shifting entity because it is a political tool for settling the dispute between the conflicting forces of the present. And this means that even the subject of knowledge must be sacrificed, for knowledge has gained an intrinsic political value which supersede him. Therefore, the constant multiplication of risks introduced into society by different sciences is no ground for slowing down our scientific "progress." This is how Foucault describes the sacrificial notion of history in genealogy:

Knowledge [savoir] does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather, it creates a

2 Muhyi-D-Din (born in 1165 A.D.), known as Ibn Arabi (Son of the Arab) is the most influential mystic among the Muslims.
progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence. Where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge [connaissance]. Knowledge [connaissance] has been transformed among us into a passion which fears no sacrifice, which fears nothing but its own extinction. It may be that mankind will eventually perish from this passion for knowledge. If not through passion, then through weakness. We must be prepared to state our choice: do we wish humanity to end in fire and light or to end on the sands? (1977b: 162-163; French equivalents in brackets from Foucault 1998h: 387-388)

In short, from a genealogical perspective, the relation of the subject to knowledge can be described as progressive enslavement, experimentation on ourselves, self-destruction, and self-sacrifice. Of course, as it has already been mentioned, this is true if we only look at this relationship from a purely genealogical perspective, which is the case in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” But by introducing a critical element into this relationship through archaeological analysis, Foucault retains the fundamental insights of Nietzschean genealogy on the one hand, and moves beyond Nietzsche on the other. As I have already noted several times, this critical element, which is Foucault’s own contribution to the genealogical approach, has often been overlooked by his critics. But for the moment, we need not be concerned with this critical element, so let us address the question of “experimentation on ourselves.”

In his inaugural lecture, Foucault explains that genealogy “deals with series of effective formation of discourse: it attempts to grasp it in its power of affirmation, by which I do not mean a power opposed to that of negation, but the power of constituting domains of objects, in relation to which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions” (Foucault 1972: 234). In other words, genealogy seeks to understand how some ideas are
discursively constructed as true or false, and what kind of relationship exists between these ideas and social subjects.

In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, Foucault indicates that the genealogical side of discourse is the site of the power of affirmation. By that he meant "the power of constituting domains of objects, in relation to which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions" (Foucault 1972: 234). We should bear in mind that the relation of power and truth belongs to the field of discourse. After certain objects are created through a particular discourse, those constructed objects become the points of reference for accepting or denying the propositions made about them. As we know, Foucault argues that the constitution of the object of discourse is a function of discourse itself. For example, "mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it..." (Foucault 1972a: 32).

At first it seems circular to construct a domain of objects through discourse, and then to judge the truth or falsehood of discursive propositions with reference to those objects. But if we take the power-knowledge relation into account, we will realize that it is not a vicious circle. Let us consider a hypothetical case. The power relations $B$ make the discourse $B'$ possible and then through this discourse the object $B''$, which will regulate future discursive statements, is created. But this field is not fixed once and for all: as the power relation $B$ might have been rooted in previous institutional and discursive forces, the discourse $B'$ together with different institutional settings may give rise to the power relations $C$, which in turn create the discourse $C'$ and the object $C''$.

Foucault is particularly interested in the constitution of human beings as the object of the human sciences. Applying a genealogical approach to the study of modern
institutions, he is able to show that through the play of power-knowledge the human being is first constituted and then the human sciences are born. One of the modern institutions that together with empirical discourses gave rise to the human sciences is the prison. Foucault notes:

If, after the age of 'inquisitorial' justice, we have entered the age of 'examinatory' justice, if, in an even more general way, the method of examination has been able to spread so widely throughout society, and give rise in part to the science of man, one of the great instruments of this has been the multiplicity and close overlapping of various mechanisms of incarceration....This policy required the involvement of definite relations of knowledge in relations of power;...The carceral network constituted one of the armatures of this power-knowledge that has made the human historically possible. Knowable man (soul, individuality, consciousness, conduct, whatever it is called) is the object-effect of this analytical investment, of domination-observation. (Foucault 1977a: 305)

A genealogical study of modern human beings reveals their historical beginnings and shows that they have no essence. Foucault’s critical project is motivated by this objective. He wants to show that the man of the human sciences has no reality beyond the social relations—in the form of power or knowledge—that have constituted him.

The general procedure that made it possible to constitute human beings as objects of knowledge was the invention of techniques that directed the investigative gaze of the modern sciences into the invisible secrets of the individual. Be it the clinical observation or the panopticism of the disciplinary society, the outcome was the same: the individual in its singularity had become available for scientific scrutiny. This is one of the most important distinctions between the pre-modern sciences and the modern ones. Foucault marks the beginning of this transformation in the fourteenth century when the “inquisitorial” model was “displaced and gradually transformed” into experimental
inquiry. With regard to significance of this transformation for western civilization Foucault writes:

The inquiry, connected with experimentation and voyage or not, but strongly opposed to the authority of tradition and to the decision of the symbolic text, will be utilized in scientific practices (magnetism, for example, or natural history), theorized in methodological reflection (Bacon, that administrator), transposed into discursive types (the inquiry as opposed to the essay, the meditation, the treatise). We belong to an inquisitorial civilization that, for centuries now, practices, according to forms of varying complexity but all derived from the same model, the extraction, displacement, and accumulation of knowledge. The inquisition: a form of power-knowledge essential to our society. The truth of experience is a daughter of the inquisition.... A day came, quite early, when empiricism forgot and covered over its beginning. (Foucault 1997: 19)

Empiricism may have forgotten its history but the genealogical study of the modern subject has taken it upon itself to remind us of the link between empiricism and the epistemological dispersion of the self. It persists in inquiring why power-knowledge takes an inquisitorial form in a particular society. Foucault's research led him to believe that this had something to do with the success of this form in the objectification and subjugation of the individual (For examples, see Foucault 1973: 34-36, 170; 1977a: 29-30, 166, 203, 305).

We already know the degree to which the old question of the individual versus society stirs up passion amongst sociologists. In light of the above argument, one may suspect that sociologists' preoccupation with this question must have something to do with the belief that sociology is less suitable than psychology for direct inquiry into the individual. The crux of the matter is which of these sciences is more successful in forming ethical subjects. Psychology has a claim to the individual and therefore presents itself as the most viable option. But sociology tries to pull the carpet from underneath
psychology by arguing that the individual is social by nature and should be studied in the context of social relations.

This is not the place to go further into the debate between sociology and psychology. I only wish to emphasize here the point that the objectification of the individual was a crucial step by the modern sciences, and that we need to examine its implications as far as the formation of the subject is concerned.

Ethics: Thou Shalt Pay for Thy Freedom

To advance my thesis that modern subjects respond to scientific forms of governmentality through epistemologically-oriented critical practices, I need to discuss the question of ethics. In the next chapter, I will explain governmentality as an attempt to contain the freedom of the subject through ethics and domination. Thus, here I seek to provide a genealogy of ethics and its transformations in the West. I will argue that there are loopholes in any system of domination that ethics is designed to deal with. There are other related issues that will be explained in my discussion of governmentality.

Now we should examine what Foucault means by ethics. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault first defines morality as:

[A] set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches, and so forth. (Foucault 1985: 25)

Then he finds it necessary to distinguish moral codes and moral acts because “morality” is sometimes used to designate a “morality of behaviors,” while other times it refers to a “prescriptive ensemble”. The distinction between these two is between “the code that
determines which acts are permitted or forbidden and the code that determines the positive or negative value of the different possible behaviors” (Foucault 1997o: 263).

Foucault defines moral codes or the prescriptive ensemble in terms of their diffuseness, “so that, far from constituting a systematic ensemble, they form a complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another, and cancel each other out on certain points, thus providing for compromises or loopholes” (Foucault 1985: 25). In other words, diffuseness of this prescriptive ensemble allows one to comply with this code in a wide range of actual behaviors.

The term morality is also used to refer to “the real behavior of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them” (Foucault 1985: 25). Foucault calls this usage of “morality” “the morality of behaviors” (Foucault 1985: 26). Morality in this sense “designates the manner in which [individuals] comply more or less fully with a standard of conduct, the manner in which they obey or resist an interdiction or a prescription; the manner in which they respect or disregard a set of values” (Foucault 1985: 25).

The diffuseness of morality in the first sense of the word, i.e., a prescriptive ensemble, allows for a wide range of real moral behaviors, which are designated by the second sense of the term morality. While Foucault gives the example of the codes regarding marital fidelity, my example is the moral code that demands one’s service to his country in the time of war. In this example, the first thing that comes to mind is that one ought to go to the battlefront in compliance with the code of morality that demands service during war. But one may also feel that he is fulfilling his moral duty if he works hard as the CEO of a large company and keep the wheel of the economy running under
difficult war-time conditions. A third moral response might be working hard to acquire some badly-needed skill for the reconstruction projects of the post-war era. Yet a fourth moral behavior under such conditions can be caring for one’s ill wife and thereby boosting public morale and encouraging social solidarity in critical times. One can imagine an infinite numbers of behaviors that more or less meet the standards of moral conduct in a particular culture.

Let us examine, more closely, what we have said so far about morality. We said that morality does not consist of merely a set of codes or rules of conduct. It also involves individuals’ real behaviors for there is no sense in prescribing codes that are not observed in actual human practices. But we also know that under any set of moral codes there are still unlimited possibilities or loopholes, if you will, available to the individual. The question is: what if, in spite of all these moral codes that are supposed to guarantee social order in the face of the individual’s freedom, she decides not to observe these codes or to violate their spirit by taking the advantage of the loopholes available to her? This would be a serious social dilemma if morality consisted of only the two aspects discussed so far, i.e., moral codes and moral behaviors. But morality has yet a third component which is meant to take care of this problem. This third side of morality, which “most of the time is not isolated as such,” is what Foucault calls ethics (Foucault 1997: 263).

The third side of morality designates “the manner in which one ought to ‘conduct oneself’—that is, the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code” (Foucault 1985: 26). In other words, once the individual, through certain technologies of the self, constitutes himself as an ethical subject, there is a guarantee as to which types of
responses she will produce to moral demands. A subject may form himself in different ways, and depending on the way he forms himself, he may behave differently.

Our discussion so far can be summarized by stating that the problem of order in the face of the individual's freedom has been dealt with in terms of ethics, and by ethics we mean one's relation to oneself. We now should examine this relationship with oneself. Foucault distinguishes four major aspects in the relationship with oneself. He refers to these aspects as the ethical substance, the mode of subjectivation, the self-forming activity (asceticism; the forms of elaboration, of ethical work), and the telos of the ethical subject (see Foucault 1985: 26-27; 1997o: 263-265).

For an ethical formation of the self, the individual must decide which part of his totality is a concern of morality. In other words, he has to determine the ethical substance of his moral conduct. Is the ethical substance his act, his feeling, his intention, his desire, or something else that he ought to work on? Let us turn back to my example of the person who ought to be in the service of his country during war. Depending on what part of him is identified as the ethical substance of his moral conduct, the real moral behaviors may vary. If the act is the ethical substance, he must strictly observe his moral obligations in his action. He must see if he in fact does defend his country by his actions or not. But if the ethical substance is intention, then he can be considered an ethical subject even when his actions actually harm the cause of his nation in war. For example, let us assume that he decides to work hard in his company to further the economic growth of his country, but in reality as a result of his actions the nation suffers from more economic hardships. He is still an ethical person. If he was supposed to work on his desires as the ethical substance of his moral conduct, he might have gone to the battlefront. He probably would
have desired to stay alive by not going to war, but as a subject who is supposed to work on his desires he is expected to control and discard the desire to live. So, after some soul-searching, he may find out that “the advance of the economy” is just a cover up for his deep desire of survival. Thus, he concludes that he must tear up this shield of self-deception and go to the battlefront.

Ethical responses change when different parts of social subjects are designated as the ethical substances that they should work on. A genealogy of the ethical subject must study why and under which exigencies ethical substances are changed in a society. This says a lot about the nature of the socio-political forces that struggle for the control of the individual.

The second aspect of ethics is concerned with “the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice” (Foucault 1985: 27). Foucault calls this aspect the mode of subjectivation [mode d’assujettissement] (Foucault 1997a: 264). To put it simply, the mode of subjectivation has to do with who or what gets to call the shots with regard to one’s moral obligations. It is “the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations” (Foucault 1997a: 264). Foucault mentions some possible modes of subjectivation: a divine law, a natural law, a rational rule, a cosmological order, and a beautiful form of existence (Foucault 1997a: 264). Let us reconsider the person who is expected to serve his country in war with respect to the mode of subjectivation. The moral authority that invites him to war may be the civil law of his country. He may want to conform to this law, but at the same time he feels that as a devoted religious person he cannot engage in

3 The French phrase, mode d’assujettissement is also translated as the mode of subjection (see Foucault 1985: 27).
the act of combat. He then goes to the battlefront, but as a minister who lifts up the morale of the combat force with his spiritual sermons. Or he may go in the capacity of a medical personnel to save lives. There are many other scenarios possible under which he may meet his moral obligations. But in order for one scenario to be more plausible, one mode of subjectivation must take precedence over the others. For example, if this person is going to war under a civil law as a member of an ethnic minority against people of his own ethnicity in another country, this is an indication that he has established a relation with the civil law in his mode of subjectivation. We are all familiar with the ethical authority of the expert, the specialist, and the counselor in modern western cultures. The fact that we readily dismiss the voice of common sense, religion, or tradition in favor of the voice of the expert is evidence of a certain mode of subjectivation in relation to the expert.

The third aspect of one’s relation to oneself has to do with the “forms of elaboration, of ethical work (travail éthique) that one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one’s conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behavior” (Foucault 1985: 27). Foucault calls this aspect “the self-forming activity” or “asceticism in a very broad sense” (Foucault 1997o: 265). This aspect involves the means by which one works on the ethical substance and thereby changes himself. For example, in our example of war the person may check on his intention of engaging in economic activities by donating all the profits he makes during war to the government. And if the ethical substance is desire instead of intention he may vow to himself that for the rest of his life he will not enjoy any fruit of life beyond bare necessity for not going to war and taking care of other important matters.
He may even go to a scared place such as the war memorial and the gravesides of the martyrs of the war and radically denounce all the hedonistic pleasures of material life and join the army. Once again, with regard to this work on the ethical substance, certain manners of conduct might be suggested more in a particular culture.

Finally, the fourth aspect is the telos of the ethical subject: “Which is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way? For instance, shall we become pure, immortal, or free, or master of ourselves, and so on?” (Foucault 1997a: 265). This aspect is an integral component of ethics because an act is not merely moral in itself. It is part of a whole and a stage in the process of one’s life (see Foucault 1985: 27-28). The ethical subject has to take into account the mode of being towards which he is transforming himself in his moral responses. In the case of war, the person has to decide what he wants to achieve in himself. If he wishes to develop a virtuous personality, he must see how going to war furthers this objective. He may see it as a kind of self-sacrifice for a higher cause, in that case he should not have much difficulty in complying with the moral code that demands his service in war. But if his conception of virtuousness does not see any higher cause in the brutality of war, he may have to find other way than going to the battlefront. Another telos might be the aim of becoming a brave man. Thus one may go to war because he is not happy with the cowardly man that he is. By going to the battlefront he seeks to transform himself into a brave man.

While these four aspects of ethics are independent from one another, they also have relationship among themselves. A change in one part may involve some corresponding changes in the others. Changes in ethics will subsequently result in a new system of morality because morality consists of both the ethics and codes. Of course,
there might be changes in moral codes too. But variations that are found in the moralities of different cultures are mainly due to differences in their ethics. As Foucault observes, moral codes "ultimately revolve around a rather small number of rather simple principles..." (Foucault 1985: 32). For example, with regard to the differences between Greek morality and Christian morality, Foucault notes:

So I think that the great changes that occurred between Greek society, Greek ethics, Greek morality, and how the Christians viewed themselves are not in the code but in what I call the "ethics," which is the relation to oneself. (Foucault 1997o: 266)

As to why changes in ethics are introduced in the first place, we have already mentioned that ethical systems are the price that individuals pay in their freedom for the freedom they enjoy under certain social conditions. When a changing social setting is perceived in need of a new form of ethical response, we should expect some interventions in one or more aspects of the ethics. In other words, shifts in moralities are related to changes in the society. For example, with regard to the changes between Greek ethics and that of the Romans, Foucault says that:

The reason for the shift is the changes of the role of men within society, both in their homes toward their wives and also in the political field, since the city disappears. So, for those reasons, the way they can recognize themselves as subjects of political, economic behavior changes. We can say roughly that along with these sociological changes something is changing in classical ethics—that is, the elaboration of the relationship to oneself. (Foucault 1997o: 267)

Since moral codes are strikingly limited, in response to the demands of their changing social conditions different cultures have to compensate the poverty of moral codes with the richness of ethics. In other words, shifts of moralities imply more a change in ethics than a transformation of codes. This is why governmentality and self-formation practices are so crucial for every society.
From what we have discussed so far, it follows that one has to study the ethical formation of the social subject for the purpose of explanation as well as for the sake of critique. Since the study of the ethical formation of the subject cannot be conducted in terms of the relations of power alone, Foucault has to commit himself to the other component of the field of governmentality, i.e., the technology of the self. We will note later that he found technologies of the self present in all societies. Instead of dismissing them as irrelevant in the process of socialization he therefore puts them at the center of this process. We all know how conventional theories of socialization explain this process: socializing agencies communicate and force social norms and values on the individual, and once she internalizes them she becomes a social subject. The key word here is internalization. But, there is little explanation as to how it takes place within the individual. By studying technologies of the self in this respect, we may be able to fill some of the gaps in the study of socialization.

Foucault begins his studies into technologies of the self from ancient Greek culture to Roman society and from there into Christianity and the modern era. Based on a definition of morality as being composed of moral codes and ethics, he distinguishes between moralities that emphasize the code and those that accent the ethical element. Thus, while the code and ethics "can never be entirely dissociated", there can be two types of morality in general: "code-oriented" moralities and "ethics-oriented" moralities (Foucault 1985: 29-30).

In his various studies Foucault seeks to show which technologies of the self gave rise to ethics-oriented moralities, and which produced code-oriented moralities. There is a critical moment to this undertaking, which I would like to call to the reader's attention
while summarizing Foucault’s studies of technologies of the self. This is that Foucault sees a greater possibility of freedom in the ethics-oriented moralities than the code-oriented moralities. With regard to the code-oriented moralities he notes:

The main emphasis is placed on the code, on its systematicity, its richness, its capacity to adjust to every possible case and to embrace every area of behavior. With moralities of this type, the important thing is to focus on the instances of authority that enforce the code, that require it to be learned and observed, that penalize infractions; in these conditions, the subjectivation occurs basically in a quasi-juridical form, where the ethical subject refers his conduct to a law, or set of laws, to which he must submit at the risk of committing offenses that make him liable to punishment. (Foucault 1985: 29-30)

Of course, it should be borne in mind that the greater possibility of freedom in the ethics-oriented morality is only a relative freedom. Put differently, ethics in general is a constraint on freedom and the technologies that give rise to it are designed to limit freedom, but some impose more limitations than others do.

The Greeks approached the problem of order in the city by formulating an ethics-oriented morality. That is, they emphasized and attended to the forms of the relations with the self. By problematizing the act in relation to pleasure, an ethical substance was delimited and individuals were expected to work on it aesthetically in order to achieve self-mastery so that they might be actively free. In this sentence I have mentioned all four aspects of ethics as it applied to the case of the Greeks. In what follows I will briefly discuss each of these aspects separately.

In the Greek technologies of the self, we find a moral problematization of pleasures with respect to the body, the wife, the boy, and the truth (see Foucault 1985: 36, 229). They were constituted as moral problems insofar as they were related to aphrodisia, “the acts, gestures, and contacts that produce a certain form of pleasure” (Foucault 1985: 349).
This means that the *act* was the Greek ethical substance, not intention or deficiency and desire. In turn, this is why:

For the Greeks, when a philosopher was in love with a boy, but did not touch the boy, his behavior was valued. The problem was: Does he touch the boy or not? (Foucault 1997o: 264)

There are two questions here: First, why did they have to engage in moral problematization in the first place? Second, why did they problematize acts of pleasure?

The answer to the first question should be clear by now. The Greek thinkers, moralists, philosophers, and doctors, like all the others who come after them in western civilization, were convinced that:

[W]hat the laws of the city prescribed or prohibited, what the general customs tolerated or rejected, could not suffice to regulate properly the sexual conduct of a man who cared about himself. (Foucault 185: 36)

In other words, moral codes by themselves were not enough and the individual had to establish a relationship with himself. That is to say that he had to constitute himself as an ethical subject. For example, the preeminence of the wife in the institution of marriage, where there were also other women as servants, could not be “guaranteed by any moral pledge on the part of the husband” (Foucault 1985: 164). Therefore it was necessary for the husband to engage in an “art of governing—governing in general, governing oneself, and governing a wife...” (Foucault 1985: 164). To perform their social roles and obligations, men had to be in control of themselves as skillful politicians, and this was not possible except through mastery over their passions. In other words, individuals were called upon to constitute themselves as ethical subjects.

As to the second question, acts of pleasure were designated as the ethical substance of moral conduct by the Greeks because these acts, especially in relation to
women, foods, and boys, “brought forces into play that were natural, but that always tended to be excessive...” (Foucault 1985: 51). The excessive energy, the violence, and the force that were associated with the *aphrodisia* (the act of pleasure) made it the privileged domain of moral problematization.

The mode of subjectivation in Greek ethics was “a politico-aesthetic choice” (Foucault 1997a: 267). They did not have universal rules on how to conduct themselves within the morally problematized field. It was a matter of good judgement, a *techne*, and a practical art. This *techne* was the *use* of pleasure with regard to one’s needs, one’s status, and the “right time.”

For the Greeks, the self-forming activity was defined as *enkratia*, the mastery over the self. They thought the relation to self was an antagonistic relation. One had to always be in a combative mood toward his pleasure (Foucault 185: 66). The self was perceived as consisting of a good part and an evil part. One’s worst enemy was oneself and the victory over one’s self was “the first and best” (Foucault 1985: 69). The individual had to dominate and structure himself, his desires and pleasures according to the principle of moderation and after the model of the city (Foucault 1985: 70-72). One had to care for oneself and this involved training, exercise and transformation of the self. Care of the self was necessary before one “was qualified to attend to the affairs of others and lead them” (Foucault 1985: 73). According to Foucault, “all this was a means of educating the man who would be of service to his city...” (Foucault 1985: 76).

Finally the teleology of Greek ethics was that the individual access a new mode of being through self-mastery. This freedom was from the self, and its opposite was “enslavement of the self by the self” (Foucault 1985: 79). It was an active freedom which
could only be achieved by exercising power over one’s self through the principle of moderation.

Foucault tells us that the “freedom-power combination that characterized the mode of being of the moderate man could not be conceived without a relation to truth” (Foucault 1985: 86). An ethical subject is always a subject of knowledge too. Knowledge or logos had three types of relationship with the self. First, it was structural: it was in the position of authority with respect to pleasure and desires. They had to be obedient to this authority. The second was instrumental: it was a means of determining what an acceptable use was in relation to needs, time and status. The third was ontological: one needs “to know oneself in order to practice virtue and subdue desires…” (Foucault 1985: 88).

The four aspects of ethics in Greek morality show that their moral reflection was a form of stylization. But the relationship of the logos and the self could leave the impression that there is a relation to truth in Greek morality that puts it into the category of the code-oriented moralities. With regard to the relation of the self to truth in Greek morality, Foucault assures his readers that:

It was a factor constituting the mode of being of the moderate subject; it was not equivalent to an obligation for the subject to speak truthfully concerning himself.... It was not an epistemological condition enabling the individual to recognize himself ... [It] did not lead to a hermeneutics of desire, it did on the other hand open onto an aesthetics of existence. And what I mean by this is a way of life whose moral value did not depend either on one’s being in conformity with a code of behavior, or on an effort of purification, but on a certain formal principle in the use of pleasures, in the way one distributed them, in the limits one observed, in the hierarchy one respected. Through the logos, through reason and the relation to truth that governed it, such a life was committed to the maintenance and reproduction of an ontological order; moreover, it took on the brilliance of a beauty that was revealed to those able to behold it or to keep its memory present in mind. (Foucault 1985: 89)
The phrase that Foucault usually uses to describe Greek ethics is “an aesthetic of existence”. This means that the ethics-oriented moralities have an ontological characteristic. In other words, the knowledge and the truth that are involved here are ontological rather than epistemological. Ontological knowledge is rooted in the mode of the being of the subject of knowledge. Its truth and its beauty are part of one’s experience. To this extent, in the Greek world they are personal and cannot be established as common, intersubjective, and universal norms without losing their ontological character and entering an epistemological domain. The relatively greater degree of freedom that one finds in the ethics-oriented moralities of antiquity is due exactly to their ontological character and the fact that as such they are personal.

It should be noted that my objective in this chapter was showing the social formation of the ethical subject. Thus, when I say an ontologically oriented ethics is personal, I do not want to imply that it is an individualistic ethics. Based on my discussion of ontology above (see pages 17-20), it is clear that the notion of ontology with which this dissertation works is a social ontology. That is to say, one’s mode of being is socio-historically formed and his ethico-political practices are informed by that mode of being as shaped by his social experiences. In short, the personal character of an ontological ethics distinguishes it from a code oriented ethics without making it individualistic.

Foucault’s study in Greek and Roman ethics is not intended to provide modern subjects with a similar ethical system. He is rather interested in writing a ‘history of the present’. His genealogical project is concerned with the conditions that gave rise to modern subjectivity. The comparisons between the Greek ethics and that of modern
culture should help us to understand the present better and formulate our own alternative, and not merely to imitate the past.
Chapter X
Governmentality: A Point of Contact

Technologies of the Self and their Sociological Significance

The rise of the modern sciences, made possible in part by the ethical concerns of the disciplinary society in the West, gave rise to a whole series of new practices of self-formation. For the past two hundred years, we have witnessed self-constituting practices that are guided by a scientific ethics. Foucault uses the concept of "governmentality" to designate these practices, which involve "the relationship of the self to itself and the relationship to other" (Foucault 1997m: 300). Foucault formulated the theory of governmentality more systematically in his later writings. Through his theory of governmentality Foucault modified and further developed some of his earlier positions, and tried to clarify some widely held misconceptions about his views. As we will see however, the theory of governmentality has itself become a source of misreading Foucault rather than a correction of earlier misconceptions. In order to let the reader fully appreciate its corrective potentials and to avoid such misreadings, I will now offer a systematic explanation of the theory of governmentality.

First, it should be pointed out that the theory of governmentality is an extension of the genealogy of the subject. This means that even though the move toward the idea of governmentality was partly a corrective step, it was not a "radical" revision of the earlier work. In what he calls "a kind of autocritique," Foucault offers the following explanation of this move:
Up to the present, I have proceeded with this general project in two ways. I have dealt with the modern theoretical constitutions that were concerned with the subject in general.... I have also dealt with the more practical understanding produced in those institutions like hospitals, asylums, and prisons, where certain subjects became objects of knowledge and at the same time objects of domination.... And now, I wish to study those forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself. (Foucault 1997g: 179-180)

We should take notice of the fact that here Foucault is distinguishing this third way of dealing with the question of the subject from the first two ways. Foucault is compelled to make this distinction because in the course of his research he came to the realization that there is a distinct technique in all human societies that is widely underrepresented in the sociological literature. As Foucault notes, Habermas, for example, identifies:

[T]hree major techniques in human societies: the techniques which allow one to produce, to transform, to manipulate things; the techniques which allow one to use sign systems; and the techniques which allow one to determine the behavior of individuals, to impose certain wills on them and to submit them to certain ends or objectives. That is to say, there are techniques of production, techniques of signification, and techniques of domination. (Foucault 1997g: 180)

For example, in the study of the asylum, the clinic, and the prison, Foucault initially dealt with the question of the subject more in ways which could be categorized in terms of what Habermas called techniques of domination. Foucault paid more attention to how individuals were dominated and objectified by others through discursive practices and institutional constraints. In his analysis of the experience of sexuality Foucault realized that there is a fourth kind of technique found "in all societies whatever they are" (Foucault 1997g: 181). He called this fourth type of technique "a technique or technology of the self" (Foucault 1997g: 181). According to Foucault, these technologies "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to
transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault 1997h: 225).

With the discovery of technologies of the self, Foucault added a new element to his genealogy of the subject. He came to believe that the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization must take into account both techniques of domination and technologies of the self, because they interact and may overlap or be integrated into each other. Foucault defines governmentality as the “encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self” (Foucault 1997h: 225). As we will see, with this notion of governmentality Foucault is able to incorporate freedom of the subject and the question of ethics into his genealogical approach.

As I mentioned earlier, Foucault’s notion of governmentality does not imply a totally different approach to the question of the subject; it should be understood more as a shift of emphasis with significant implications. He readily concedes he had overlooked an important aspect of self-formation practices:

Perhaps I’ve insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others, and in the technologies of individual domination, in the mode of the action that an individual exercises upon himself by means of the technologies of the self. (Foucault 1997h: 225)

As we can see, this new interest in the technologies of the self is not based on the conceptualization of the self as an isolated entity. The very idea of governmentality as the encounter between the technologies of the self and those of domination is meant to prevent such a conception.

Before any further discussion of the technologies of the self, it is helpful to have a theoretical understanding of governmentality. It was mentioned that Foucault first took
notice of the technologies of the self in his empirical research on sexuality. In order to
grasp this universal moment of the human society, he formulated the notion of
governmentality. In his later work and interviews, Foucault was able to lay out a sound
theoretical foundation for this notion. We know that the idea of governmentality is meant
to capture both the role of power and domination and the role of free agents in the
formation of the social subject. Now, let us see how it can be explained in abstract
theoretical terms. Foucault himself does an excellent job in this respect.

The interconnection of morality and ethics with the process of socialization is the
main theme of Foucault’s work. This theme is present from his earliest writings to the
very last ones, but is more developed in the later work as a result of Foucault’s studies of
the technologies of the self. In his earlier work, Foucault explains the constitution of the
ethical subject largely in terms of institutional and discursive powers. In *Madness and
Civilization*, published in French in 1961, one can find many remarks similar to the
following, which is made in reference to the operation of the asylum:

> The operation as practiced by Pinel was relatively complex: to effect
> moral syntheses, assuring an ethical continuity between the world of
> madness and the world of reason, but by practicing a social segregation
> that would guarantee bourgeois morality a universality of fact and permit
> it to be imposed as a law upon all forms of insanity. (Foucault 1965: 259)

But in the very same book, we can also sense that Foucault is cognizant of the relation
between power and freedom. In other words, the prototype of the idea of governmentality
is present in this early work in a crude form. Under the subtitle of *Madness and Liberty*,
for example, Foucault explains how melancholia and its manifestation as suicide were
gradually transformed to a moral and political problem born out of individual freedom.
This is how he describes a common discourse on this matter at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

Spurzheim made a synthesis of all these analyses in one of the last texts devoted to them. Madness, "more frequent in England than anywhere else," is merely the penalty of the liberty that reigns there, and of the wealth universally enjoyed. Freedom of conscience entails more dangers than authority and despotism. (Foucault 1965: 213)

This sounds like a Durkheimean description of anomie. By now, it should not surprise us that nineteenth century sociology also sought to formulate a discursive response to the problem of excessive freedom that did not lead to an abusive form of governmentality. In any event, the point being made here is that Foucault, even in his early writings, is aware that the interest of discursive and institutional powers in ethics has something to do with the problem of freedom. But at that time, he did not have a theoretical explanation that could enable him to integrate the critical moment of the subject into his research project.

Foucault needed more research into the nature of power under different social circumstances before he could declare that "if there are relations of power in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere" (Foucault 1997n: 292). Of course, immediately after this statement he cautions that this does not mean that the social subjects actually enjoy a high degree of freedom in every social setting. On the contrary, there are many cases in which their freedom has been pushed to its limits. This statement means that if power is present somewhere, it is there to seize upon a freedom which could be exercised contrary to its will. Thus, we may say that the very possibility of the relations of power implies the possibility of resistance and critique. It means that the subjects are potentially capable of deviating from the norms of conduct imposed upon them. Power relations would not have emerged in the first place if our conducts had been
predetermined. Neither would there have been any need for their continuous presence on the social scene if after their introduction, the subject’s conduct was encoded in her individuality once and for all.

In light of the above discussion, let us attempt a subversive reading of the statement, “if there are relations of power in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere.” Foucault is accused of leaving no room for agency and resistance in his theory by emphasizing the presence of the relations of power in all social layers. But if anything, sociologists who underestimate or overlook the significance of power in the social order leave no room for resistance on the part of the subject. They mostly explain social order in terms of institutionalized social norms that are internalized by the individual in the process of socialization. There is little reference, if any, to the role of power in the process of institutionalization. Even if we assume power may play a part in this process, its significance is minimized once norms are internalized and become a part of the personality structure.

The internalization of values and norms makes them “second nature” for the individual. In a metaphysical manner, such a view implies the emergence of the socialized individual as a substantive self. Thus, the social subject as a microcosmic embodiment of the society “naturally” contributes to the endurance of the social order. In their reinterpretation of the tasks of sociology, Peter L. Berger and Hansfried Kellner admit that there is an “antilibertarian” aspect in sociological theories of socialization. They note that:

The perspective of sociology discloses man’s “boundedness” in a twofold way. First, from the moment of birth man is always in a social context that “binds him”—that is, he finds himself at the center point of circles of social control extending from those “significant others” with whom he is
in face-to-face interaction to megastructures that affect him in abstract and barely comprehensive ways. This elementary fact makes possible a statement of deceptive simplicity: man is in society. This society is experienced by him as a hard reality.... The English word *bonds* express very eloquently what is at issue here: one cannot have the solidarity of other human beings, the bonds that tie one together with them, without the bondage of social controls over one’s life. Put differently, there is no bonding between human beings without the effect of boundedness.

There is a second, equally important, aspect to this. It is the subjective experience of society, which is the result of socialization in every individual consciousness. Socialization can be seen as an enormously powerful process whereby the “objective” structures of the society “out there” are internalized within consciousness. The “out there” becomes an “in here.” ... As a result of socialization, every individual may be seen as a product of his society, allowing another deceptively simple statement: society is in man. (Berger and Kellner 1981: 91-92)

Berger and Kellner, who wish to offer a resolution to “the inordinate amount of confusion now reigning in the field [of sociology]” (Berger and Kellner1981: viii), attribute this “deterministic” quality of sociology to a “misapplication of sociological perspective” by positivist sociologists (Berger and Kellner1981: 94). But, as non-positivist sociologists, they offer no sociological argument for how we can sociologically account for freedom and resistance. Instead, they present a philosophical case in support of the existence of free will in human beings, and finally conclude that:

Any proposition about human freedom entails a passage from science to another realm of discourse, be it via subjective experience, faith or reason. For sociology specifically there is no way of dealing with human reality except within the framework of systems of *social* determinism (as against, say, systems of psychological or biological determination)—but the framework is indeed one of social determination. At same time, the sociologist who is cognizant of the limitations of his method will be careful to state to others as well as to himself that this method cannot be used to deny ontological validity to the category of freedom. (Berger and Kellner1981: 98).

While in previous pages Berger and Kellner blamed positivistic sociology for the antilibertarian aspect of sociology, here they seem to suggest that sociology is inherently
incapable of taking into account human freedom. From reading Foucault's work as a critical project, I am not inclined to go this far. However, I can at least show that theories of socialization have been deterministic until now. But we will shortly see that Foucault not only does not deny ontological validity to the category of freedom but that he also offers a theoretical affirmation of freedom that can be considered both sociological and empirical.

It is surprising that in the name of various sociological theories so many writers accuse Foucault of denying human freedom, yet so far sociology does not seem to have successfully formulated a theory of freedom. A case in point is Richard Swedberg. He puts Foucault alongside the structuralists such as Lévi-Strauss and Althusser, and then says, “The main thrust of structuralism was the depiction of society as an unconsciously evolving formation in which human beings cannot interfere” (Swedberg 1982: 119).

Foucault formulated his theory of governmentality to account for both power and freedom in the process of socialization. As already noted, the idea that the continuous presence of power is related to a constant threat of freedom can be found in Foucault’s work as early as Madness and Civilization. In his later works, he gave this a more theoretical elaboration. One more point must be underscored. Foucault did not abandon the notion of domination in his later work. His emphasis on freedom in his later work and interviews was only a call to the fact that the other side of domination is freedom and resistance.

Habermas suggests that since Nietzsche does not accept any rational criterion for critique, he “abandons the world to the irreconcilable struggle between powers, as if it were the mythic world” (Habermas 1987: 127). He goes on to claim, “Foucault, too, in
his later work, replaces the model of domination based on repression (developed in the
tradition of enlightenment by Marx and Freud) by a plurality of power strategies”
(Habermas 1987: 127). In response to this, we may make two points. First, Habermas is
correct that we need at least one rational criterion for the purpose of critique, but only if
by critique we mean an epistemological assessment. And he is correct that Foucault’s
genealogy does not provide such a criterion. But we should note that genealogy does not
deny the possibility of such a criterion. Furthermore, Foucault is interested in the
ontological form of critique, and Habermas is not justified in demanding an ontological
critique to meet the criteria of an epistemological critique. This demand amounts to the
unjustifiable expectation that an epistemological critique meet the criteria of an
ontological critique.

There is also a second point, which is even more relevant to our present
discussion of governmentality. Habermas claims that Foucault moves from a theory of
domination to “a plurality of power strategies” for the sake of consistency. Thus, he
suggests that Foucault neither provides for the possibility of critique nor has a theory of
freedom. I briefly responded to the first allegation above. Now, let us consider the second
one. I believe that the idea of governmentality, as an “encounter between the technologies
of domination of others and those of the self” (Foucault 1997h: 225), is where power and
freedom intersect in Foucault’s work. Foucault never replaces the idea of domination
with something else. Of course, there is a shift of emphasis, but he needs the notion of
domination to not fall into the deterministic trap of other theories of socialization.
Nothing else can attest to the existence of freedom and resistance like the presence of
domination.
Since there is no sense in power maintaining a costly presence where there is no freedom, Foucault only needs to show that power is being exercised in a situation in order to claim that freedom and resistance are also present there. Thus, we can claim that Foucault's empirical studies of the operation of power in modern society are empirical validations of the possibility of freedom. He offers an empirical validation of freedom where others, like Berger and Kellner, see no recourse except through faith or philosophical corroboration. As I have mentioned several times, this empirical evidence of the possibility of freedom can be detected in all of Foucault's early studies. With the study of the technologies of the self, he seeks to show that freedom is not merely a possibility that remains unrealized because of the continuous presence of power. In other words, the social subject, at least as far as the constitution of the self is concerned, has the freedom to yield to power or resist it. This is why Foucault reminds his reader that he does not wish to identify power with repression (see Foucault 1980: 118-122). Power is also capable of inducing pleasure in its object. Therefore, in cases where power is welcome and not resisted, we may even say that the subject, in her freedom, chooses to comply with it because of its positive effects on her.

I have argued several points so far. Foucault's theory of governmentality is an extension of his critical project which began with his earliest writings. The notion of domination is necessary if one seeks to avoid the determinism of the idea of the socialized self as the individual's second nature. As components of governmentality, technologies of the self manifest freedom of the subject in this field. As we noted, by emphasizing the notion of emergence, genealogy opposes finalization of the present
stage. It shows the fragility and the precariousness of historical constructions. Foucault explains this characteristic of genealogy in the following words:

It is a matter of making things more fragile through this historical analysis ... Our relationship to madness is historically established, and from the second that it is historically constituted, it can be politically destroyed. I say politically in the very wide sense of the term, in any case, there are possibilities for action.... I wanted to reintegrate a lot of obvious facts our practices in the historicity of some of these practices and thereby rob them of their evidentiary status.... (Foucault 1997c: 161-162)

Genealogy demonstrates the possibility of political destruction of historical constructions, and also shows how the subject’s freedom may be exercised in this political struggle. Let us see how freedom of the subject is actually (not merely as a possibility) taken into account by genealogy through the notion of governmentality.

Many readers of Foucault have a very narrow conception of his theory of governmentality, as if it is solely a theory of the pervasiveness of relations of power. They seem unaware of the fact that Foucault defines governmentality as the encounter between technologies of domination and technologies of the self. For instance, Colin Gordon, who is the coeditor of The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, in his own essay in this collection, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,” focuses solely on the technology of domination and makes no reference to the technology of the self (cf. Gordon 1991). Kevin Haggerty’s conception of governmentality, which seems to be influenced by Gordon’s reading of Foucault, exemplifies this trend in reading Foucault. Haggerty notes that:

Foucault’s (1991) later works offered a distinctive approach to the topic of ‘government.’ In these writings, government is not confined to the formal trappings of the state. Instead his account of ‘government rationality,’ or ‘governmentality,’ amounts to an interrogation of how the practical art of government is envisioned. Here the concepts of ‘rationalities’ and ‘technologies’ stand out. A ‘rationality’ of government refers to ‘a way or
system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government' (Gordon 1991: 3). Thus, rationalities are the changing ways in which the exercise of political power is conceived. Particularly important to Foucault was how contemporary governmental rationalities seek to combine processes of individualization with processes of totalization. ‘Technologies’ consist of those diverse sets of programs and techniques which are the basis for how governments exercise power over populations. (Haggerty 1998: 32)

As we can see, governmentality is equated with a pervasive operation of power. At first the use of quotation marks around government gives the impression that there is a special significance that we should take notice of, but with the very last sentence that significance gets lost. In the last sentence we read about “how governments exercise power over populations,” and there are no quotation marks around governments. We are left with the impression that the only significant information the author wishes to share with us is that Foucault does not use the term government to designate the formal state apparatus. The technologies of domination are still presented as the singular essence of governmentality.

What is Governmentality?

Now, let us see how Foucault defines “government.” Let there be no misunderstanding: coercive domination is an integral part of governmentality and government in its widest sense. My point is that Foucault defines government in the context of his theory of governmentality as the contact point of the technology of domination and the technology of the self. Let us read him in this regard:

I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self. Let’s say: he has to take into account the interaction between those two techniques—techniques of domination and techniques of the self....The contact point, where the
individuals are driven [and known] by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves [and know themselves]. It is what we can call, I think, government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word [as they spoke of it in the 16th century, of governing children, or governing family, or governing souls] is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which impose coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself. (Foucault 1997g: 181-182)

My aim here is to highlight the significance of technologies of the self in Foucault's critical project. Therefore, before discussing these technologies, let me summarize some points about the above quotation. First, Foucault's research is concerned with the genealogy of the subject, or if you will, with the question of socialization. His primary interests are not the state or institutions in themselves, but only insofar as they are relevant to the formation of the social subject, i.e., to the process of socialization.

Second, Foucault never abandoned the notions of domination and coercion. The above quotation is from a lecture delivered on November 17, 1980, which is very late in his intellectual life. At this stage he is explicitly speaking of "techniques which impose coercion." The empirical proof of coercion is the only way that the genealogist can empirically show that the self historically emerges in a field where freedom is also present.

Third, the theory of governmentality is formulated in order to capture the formation of the social subject in a process consisting of both the technology of domination and the technology of the self. The relationship between these two components may be complementary, or conflictual. In this context government is a field of interaction between these two types of technologies, and not simply a mixture of formal or informal relations of power.
In light of the above discussion, it is important to direct our attention to the technology of the self with respect to the formation of the social subject. Through his genealogical studies Foucault comes to the conclusion that three domains can be distinguished with regard to constitution of the subject:

Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. So, three axes are possible for genealogy. All three were present, albeit in a somewhat confused fashion, in *Madness and Civilization*. The truth axis was studied in *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things*. The power axis was studied in *Discipline and Punish*, and the ethical axis in *The History of Sexuality*. (Foucault 1997o: 262-263)

These three domains together constitute the two sides of governmentality, i.e., the technology of domination and the technology of the self. The domain of truth may be integrated in both technologies of domination and those of the self. Thus, the distinction between these three domains is more of an analytical nature. Since the ethical domain, which is studied in *The History of Sexuality*, is related to the technologies of the self, we need to understand the significance of this domain in the formation of the social subject in order to understand the role of the technologies of the self in governmentality.

In his introduction to the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes with regard to the question of ethics:

It seemed that by starting from the modern era, and proceeding back through Christianity to antiquity, one would not be able to avoid raising a question that was at the same time very simple and very general: why is sexual conduct, why are activities and pleasures that attach to it, an object of moral solicitude? Why this ethical concern.... It seemed to me, therefore, that the question that ought to guide my inquiry was the following: how, why, and in what forms was sexuality constituted as a moral domain? Why this ethical concern that was so persistent despite its
why this "problematization"? (Foucault 1985: 9-10)

In other words, Foucault thinks that this universal ethical *problematization* of sexual conduct throughout history in the West has a broader significance than as a merely individual concern. Foucault has always reminded his reader of the relationship between discursive and non-discursive events. Social, political, economic and other non-discursive events are viewed as interconnected (see Foucault 1965: 229-236; 1978: 5-7, 25-26, 120-125). But gradually Foucault begins to see the formation of the subject in relation to the problem of the social order. This relationship is first fully explored in *The History of Sexuality*. In this book the ethical moment of the society and the social subject assume a central position in Foucault's work.

According to Foucault, the reason for ethical problematization in general must be sought in the deeply-rooted Western conviction that society cannot be changed unless the individual is changed. In other words, the macro management of the society is linked to the micro governing of the individual. In the West this link has always been established through ethics:

For centuries we have been convinced that between our ethics, our personal ethics, our everyday life, and the great political and social and economic structures, there were analytical relations, and that we couldn't change anything, for instance, in our sex life or our family life, without ruining our economy, our democracy, and so on. (Foucault 1997o: 261)

Depending on the nature and the scope of the societal management, a corresponding governance of the individual must be invented. For example, the Greeks, who were mainly concerned with the city as a community of free men, targeted free men in their teachings so that they could be competent citizens. Foucault notes that for them, "Governing oneself, managing one's estate, and participating in the administration of the
city were three practices of the same type" (Foucault 1985: 76). Put differently, it means that for the individual to dwell in the society as a free citizen, who participates in the public affairs, he must let the society dwell in him and teach him how to govern himself in the first place.

We noted that one can see the basis of the whole theory of governmentality in Foucault’s statement that “if there are relations of power in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere” (Foucault 1997n: 292). That is to say, freedom is the precondition of governmentality. With regard to ethical problematization, Foucault, in a similar fashion, also states that “freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection” (Foucault 1997n: 292). In other words, there can be no ethics without freedom, the very same freedom that power seeks to seize; and if it is not seized, the outcome is chaos and disorder. Order is best established and maintained once freedom takes the form of ethics. According to Foucault, this has been the universal guiding principle of socialization in the West. It is in this context that he is interested in the question of the subject and technologies of the self. With this observation I can now say that whenever Foucault speaks of the constitution of the subject in western societies, he means an ethical subject. This being the case, we already know what he means by ethics. Now I wish to note a few points on the relation between freedom and ethics.

Ethics is the price of freedom the individual has to pay in some societies. Most sociologists are tempted to say that this is the case in all societies. While such a generalization is tempting, most of the observations of these sociologists have been within western societies, and so they do not yet produce a sound argument in favor of this
generalization. Thus, let us sidestep the question of ethics in other societies and limit our
discussion to Foucault's studies of western societies. It was noted that ethics is the price
of freedom, not simply an expression of freedom. This is why among the ancient Greeks
ethics "was a male ethics, made by and for men" (Foucault 1985: 47). Women and slaves
did not enjoy enough liberty to endanger the order of the city. Of course, women and
slaves were also subjected to these ethics to the extent they interacted with free men. One
can see a sign of the oppression of women and slaves in this male ethics, but this ethics
was primarily the price that men had to pay for the freedom they enjoyed.

The emergence of the negative relation between ethics and freedom is related to
the conviction that freedom is the source of social evils, and therefore it should be
limited, if not replaced, with social bonds that are ethical in nature. Thus, those groups of
individuals that are free from direct forms of domination must be subjected to
technologies of the self in order to become ethical social subjects. Foucault sees the
central position of women and girls in Christian and modern ethics as an indication that
their conduct became problematic in these cultures as a result of gaining more freedom
(see Foucault 1985: 82-83, 229). In short, Foucault seems to have found a genealogical,
or, if you will, an empirical correlation between freedom and the ethical formation of the
subject in western societies.

The Epistemological Turn in Governmentality

Foucault argues that since morality among the Greeks involved "an aesthetic of
existence," they did not attempt to formulate strict codes of conduct. Instead, they
developed a dietetics which was "a whole art of living" concerned with body (Foucault
1985: 102); an economics which was an art of governing concerned with marriage; an erotics that was concerned with the boy and "how to make the object of pleasure into a subject who was in control of his pleasures" (Foucault 1985: 225); and a philosophy that was concerned with truth and structured "the love relation as a relation to truth" (Foucault 1985: 242). These were four forms of the problematization of aphrodisia by the ancient Greeks. They did not constitute any major form of interdiction, but they were rather different forms of stylization of freedom according to which "a free man in classical societies was able to develop and display his activity..." (Foucault 1985: 24). In short, the point is that freedom cannot be left on the loose and unaccounted for. This is why the Greeks intensely problematized the four fields in which they thought an unrestrained exercise of freedom might lead to undesirable social consequences, but they did so in an ontological manner.

According to Foucault, the ontological mode of moral problematization continued through the first two centuries A.D. up to the early Roman Empire, after which, in the fourth and fifth centuries, a new form of moral problematization was developed in light of Christian spirituality and monastic principles (Foucault 1997h: 226). For different reasons, this latter Greco-Roman morality was in some aspects different from that of the ancient Greeks but it was still ontological and ethics-oriented. In order to highlight the contrast with modern societies, in what follows I will briefly summarize some of the differences and similarities between these two moralities.

In the Greco-Roman morality sexual pleasure was more intense (Foucault 1986: 39), but "the accent was placed more and more readily on the weakness of the individual, on his frailty, on his need to flee, to escape, to protect and shelter himself" (Foucault
The goal of this new ethics was to gain control of this weakness. Foucault argues that this new form of relation with the self was more an “original response” to the social changes in the family and politics than “their expression in the sphere of ideology” (Foucault 1986: 71). For the Greeks, marriage was “a private transaction,” but for the Romans, it became a public matter that had to be sanctioned by the entire city (Foucault 1986: 72-73). The Romans described marriage more and more as a voluntary agreement by partners, a form of living, and a shared existence (Foucault 1986:75-76). Thus, in one’s relation to the self, the wife was introduced as the other and the man had to “form himself as an ethical subject within the relation of conjugalità” (Foucault 1986: 80).

In the political domain, too, a multiplicity of centers of power emerged that demanded a new response. In addition to their wives, men had to take other individuals into account as their others. Since politics was inherently precarious and there was always the possibility that one’s status changed, they were expected to be ready to rule or to be ruled by others. With this kind of problematization of politics, the formation of the ethical subject had two objectives: First, one had to be virtuous in order to be a just ruler. Second, one should learn to restrain one’s ambitions so that one could survive the loss of power and status, if that were to happen. Foucault thinks that we can detect a crisis of the subject in this social context (Foucault 1986: 95). This crisis required a new ethical response. He notes that in comparison to the Greek ethics, this new ethics is different in three respects:

We can say roughly that along with these sociological changes something is changing also in the classical ethics—that is, in the elaboration of the relationship to oneself. But I think that the change doesn’t affect the ethical substance: it is still aphrodisia. There are some changes in the mode d’assujettissement, for instance, when the Stoics recognize themselves as universal beings. And there are also very important changes
in the asceticism, the kind of techniques you use in order to recognize, to constitute yourself as a subject of ethics. And also a change in goal. (Foucault 1997o: 267).

With the introduction of the other into one’s relationship to the self, the goal of the new ethics was no longer an active freedom but, rather, an active control, so that one could survive under unfavorable conditions. Its asceticism is self-mastery but a self-mastery that takes into account other people, “who are also masters of themselves” (Foucault 1997o: 267). In this less asymmetrical relationship between the self and the other, the individual was expected to be master of himself as a universal and rational being. This universal rationality is a new element in the mode of subjectivation of the Greco-Roman ethics. A model of dialogue or conversation with oneself was adopted in order to facilitate a necessary practice of examination by a free subject who should make rational choices (see Foucault 1986: 60-67).

Given the freedom of the subject and the fact that he has to make rational choices, he should “be equipped with, have ready to hand, a ‘helpful discourse,’ which one has learned very early, rehearse often, and reflects on regularly” (Foucault 1986: 101). Thus, like the Greeks, the Romans developed their own discourses around the body, the wife, and the boy. Learning these discourses was necessary if the individuals were not to lose their freedom and autonomy to the authorities of experts such as physicians or philosophers (See Foucault 1986: 100). In these discourses, “a whole art of self-knowledge developed, with precise recipes, specific forms of examination, and codified exercises” (Foucault 1986: 58). In other words, care of the self was not only a reflective matter; it had a practical aspect too. This association of thought and action was reflected in the close affinity of medicine and philosophy. They were concerned with “a single
field” (Foucault 1986: 54). The body and the soul interacted with each other and therefore any attempt at taking care of one should take into account the care of the other.

With regard to the Greco-Roman philosophy and medicine, Foucault reminds us once again that these discourses did not give rise to a morality of universal prescriptive and regulative codes that drew “a division between permitted and forbidden acts” (Foucault 1986: 184). Of course, the Greco-Roman ethics had a claim to “universally valid principles and rules for those who wish to give their existence an honorable and noble form” (Foucault 1986: 184-185). At the same time, it was “a mode of being, a style of relations...the lawless universality of an aesthetics of existence...” (Foucault 1986: 184-185). In other words, from Greece to Rome we are still dealing with an ontological morality.

Even though Foucault deals with the Christian ethics in the fourth volume of The History of Sexuality: Les Aveux de la chair ["Confessions of the Flesh"], which has not been published yet, one can find enough references to this ethics in his various works to have an idea about how it is distinguished from the other ethics. At the end of the third volume Foucault, describes the Christian ethics with respect to the four aspects of ethics in the following manner:

[A] Characterization of the ethical substance based on finitude, the Fall, and evil; a mode of subjection [subjectivation] in the form of obedience to a general law that is at the same time the will of a personal god; a type of work on oneself that implies a decipherment of the soul and a purificatory hermeneutics of the desires; and a mode of ethical fulfillment that tends toward self-renunciation. (Foucault 1986: 239-240)

---

1 Not counting the Introduction, which has been published as the first volume, this would actually be the third volume of The History of Sexuality.
Since with these changes we find a shift from the ontological moralities to a more epistemologically oriented morality, here I would like to focus on this aspect of the Christian morality.

In the Greek ethics, the aim of knowing the self was the transformation of the individual to a better being. There was no obligation to tell the truth of the self to other people. There were very limited practices of conversation between the master and the student. But these practices were mainly a form of training that enabled the individual to conduct himself morally in a wide variety of unpredictable circumstances. Talking was primarily done by the master, not the disciple. In other words, the ultimate goal was the autonomy of the trainee, and there was no confession to others (see Foucault 1997g: 184-185).

The element of confession is also missing in the Greco-Roman ethics. Foucault says that the self-examination practices that we find in this ethics are of a judicial nature. Here the language is more an administrative language, as the individual “is a permanent administrator of himself, more than a judge of his past” (Foucault 1997g: 188). That is to say that “the faults are mistakes in that they are bad adjustment between aims and means” (Foucault 1997g: 189).

In the Christian ethics, one is obligated to know himself and publicize it. The confession is about sins, shames, and secrets of the soul. Foucault argues that in “the Christian technologies of the self, the self is like a text or like a book that had to be deciphered, and not something which has to be constructed by the superposition, the superimposition of the will and the truth” (Foucault 1997g: 198). Foucault calls this interpretative approach to the self “the hermeneutics of the self” (Foucault 1997b: 200).
after the terminology of the medieval scholars. Foucault describes the self in the Greek ethics as "a gnomic self," and says that in this self, "the force of truth is one with the form of will" (Foucault 1997g: 196). I believe that this conception of the self as a field, where truth and will unite, means that the self is understood as an ontological entity. For the force of truth to be the same as the form of will, it means that the truth does not assume an epistemological significance. One’s knowledge of oneself in this tradition means the discovery of "a forgotten sparkle of primitive light" (Foucault 1997b: 203).

According to Foucault, the Christian teachings on the self had their own historical evolution. In the first centuries of Christianity, knowledge of the self was acquired in two different institutional practices: penitential rites and monastic traditions. For the early Christians, penance was more a status than an act (Foucault 1997b: 205). It was through this status which was "a general status in the existence" that the sinner was reintegrated (Foucault 1997b: 205). To acquire this status, the individual had to manifest the truth about himself. The term that was used to designate the manifestation of the truth was the word *exomologesis*. It was a "dramatic self-revelation at the moment of reconciliation" on the part of the penitent (Foucault 1997b: 207). It also includes everything that the penitent does after the final reconciliation in order to maintain his status as penitent. Foucault gives an example of such self-revealing practices in the 5th century as described by an eyewitness:

Fabiola was a woman, well-known Roman noblewoman, who had married a second time before the death of her first husband, which was something quite bad; she then was obliged to do penance. And Jerome describes thus this penance: "During the days which preceded Easter," which was the moment of the reconciliation, "during the days which preceded Easter, Fabiola was to be found among the ranks of the penitents. The bishop, the priests, and the people wept with her. Her hair disheveled, her face pale, her hands dirty, her head covered in ashes, she chastened her naked breast
and the face with which she had seduced her second husband. She revealed to all her wound, and Rome, in tears, contemplated the scars on her emaciated body.” (Foucault 1997b: 207)

This is why exomologesis was translated by some as “to publish oneself” (Foucault 1997b: 209). Exomologesis was the renunciation of the self, an act that was necessary if one was to be reborn as a new individual. Self-revelation was “at the same time, self-destruction” (Foucault 1997b: 211). A model which was frequently used to describe this practice was the model of martyrdom, for the martyr would rather die than abandon his faith (Foucault 1997b: 210).

The monastic practices of the self, on the other hand, used the model of the moneychanger to describe how one should know oneself (Foucault 1997b: 217). In this tradition, “the supreme good is not the mastership of oneself,” but rather, it is “the contemplation of God” (Foucault 1997b: 214). This contemplative concern with God gave rise to a concern about thought. Foucault thinks that this is “the first time in history that thoughts are considered as possible objects of an analysis” (Foucault 1997b: 220). The monk was supposed to examine his thoughts like a moneychanger who examined coins. He had to find out if his thoughts, the movements of his souls, were coming from God or the demon. Thus, an interpretive analysis of thoughts was born which Foucault calls the hermeneutics of the self. The term that the Greek fathers used to describe this hermeneutics was the word exagoreusis (Foucault 1997b: 225). Verbalization of thoughts plays a crucial part in this form of self-knowledge. It is through “an analytical and continuous verbalization of thoughts” that the individual renounces himself and achieves a “complete obedience to the will of the spiritual father” (Foucault 1997b: 225-226).
Early Christian teachings offered two models of self-knowledge: the *exomologesis* and the *exagoreusis*. While the *exomologesis* was more ontologically oriented, the *exagoreusis* was epistemological. One was more public while the other was more intended for the elite. But as Foucault notes, this coexistence did not last long:

You may notice in early Christianity an oscillation between the truth-technology of the self oriented toward manifestation of the sinner, the manifestation of being—what we would call the ontological temptation of Christianity, and that is the *exomologesis*—and another truth-technology oriented toward the discursive and permanent analysis of thought—that is, the *exagoreusis*, and we could see there the epistemological temptation of Christianity. And, as you know, after a lot of conflicts and fluctuations, the second form of technology of the self, or this epistemological technology of the self,.became victorious after centuries and centuries, and it is nowadays dominating. (Foucault 1997b: 228-229)

With this turn toward an epistemological ethics of self-sacrifice, the subject is told: “you will become the subject of the manifestation of truth when and only when you disappear or destroy yourself as a real body or as a real existence” (Foucault 1997b: 227). We should take notice of the disappearance of the self’s *real existence* as an indication of the shift from ontology to epistemology as the basis for governmentality. But as we noted earlier, this shift is only a matter of emphasis, and it does not mean that from now on the relation with the self becomes totally a matter of “self-awareness.” Both types of ethics are also processes of “self-formation.” In this particular sense, all forms of ethics are ontological; that is to say, they lead to transformations and creations in the realm of being. The formation of the social subject is what ethics is all about.

Here, two points should be clarified with respect to this theory of the formation of the subject through ethics. First, from this theory it does not follow that the social order can be explained only in terms of the ethical formation of the subject. We already know that Foucault formulated the theory of governmentality as an explanation of how social
order is established everywhere that freedom is present. And we know that
governmentality consists of both the technologies of domination and the technologies of
the self. In several of his earlier works, Foucault has extensively discussed the role of the
technologies of domination in this regard. But for the purpose of a theory of an
ontological critique, I am compelled to bring the role of the technologies of the self to the
fore.

Second, the recognition of the ethical subject as a factor in establishing and
maintaining social order does not imply a return to the philosophy of the subject or the
paradigm of consciousness. Our interest in the self is not an epistemological interest as
the subject of knowledge, but rather, we are concerned with the subject as a self. In other
words, we want to show how the self is constituted ontologically, and why under some
socio-historical conditions certain types of formation of the self are found more suitable.
For example, how and why did it happen that in modern western civilization certain
epistemological technologies of the self came to be favored over the more ontologically
oriented technologies of the Greeks?

Foucault believes that there was a deep contradiction in the epistemological
technologies of the self in Christianity. The contradiction was the idea that no truth about
the self was possible without a sacrifice of the self (Foucault 1997b: 229). According to
Foucault, finding an alternative hermeneutics of the self not based on the sacrifice of the
self has become “one of the great problems of Western culture” (Foucault 1997b: 229).
Foucault says: “During the last two centuries, the problem has been: what could be the
positive foundation for the technologies of the self that we have been developing for
centuries and centuries?” (Foucault 1997b: 230).
The search for a positive foundation of the technology of the self led to what Foucault calls “the permanent anthropologism of Western thought” (Foucault 1997b: 229). According to him, this trend is responsible for the emergence of the modern human sciences and the modern subject. Foucault’s genealogical studies of the modern subject together with his archaeological studies of the modern human sciences seek to investigate what has been produced as a result of this search for a positive foundation of the self.

The Rise of the Positive Ethics

According to Foucault, there is an explosion of the art of government in the sixteenth century (Foucault 1991c: 87). This is when Europe is experiencing two major historical events: the collapse of feudalism and the Reformation and Counter-Reformation movements. Both of these events gave rise to a problematic of government in general, not only at the level of the state but also at the level of the individual. The old forms of domination were no longer in place, and the new political and religious freedom invited some new ethical responses. One was supposed to know both how to lead an earthly life and how to attain eternal salvation.

Foucault finds that Machiavelli’s *Prince* is at the center of all discourses on the art of government between the sixteenth century and the nineteenth century. These discourses had one thing in common: they all rejected Machiavelli’s notion of the art of government that “took the sole interest of the prince as its object and principle of rationality” (Foucault 1991c: 89). The relation that Machiavelli established between the prince and his principality was fragile because there was no organic link between them. He acquired “his principality by inheritance or conquest” (Foucault 1991c: 90). Thus, the
authority of the prince was always in danger and therefore the prince had to be in
command of an “art of manipulating relations of force that [would] allow [him] to ensure
the protection of his principality…” (Foucault 1991c: 90).

With the collapse of the feudal socio-political system and the diminishing of the
influence of religious authorities, the Machiavellian art of government was judged
incapable of establishing social order in the emerging territorial states. The anti-
Machiavellian literature talked about ‘governing’ “a household, souls, children, a
province, a convent, a religious order, a family” (Foucault 1991c: 90). But it was also
recognized that they were all internal to the state or society (Foucault 1991c: 91). There
was a continuity among all the forms of government which stretched both upwards and
downwards:

Upwards continuity means that a person who wishes to govern the state
well must first learn how to govern himself, his goods, and his
patrimony... On the other hand, we have a downwards continuity in the
sense that, when a state is well run, the head of family will know how to
look after his family, his goods and his patrimony, which means that
individuals will, in turn, behave as they should. (Foucault 1991c: 92)

Foucault discusses this new conception of the art of government in light of the
following definition: “government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead
to a convenient end” (Foucault 1991c: 93). Foucault believes that the notion of the things
in this definition is not “a matter of opposing things to men, but rather of showing that
what government has to do with is not territory but rather a sort of complex composed of
men and things” (Foucault 1991c: 93). With this emphasis on the right disposition of
things the problem of government is no longer merely a question of who the legitimate
sovereign is. In other words, the juridical model of government began to lose ground.
This is because now the ruler is supposed to know not only the laws that are legal codes
but also the laws of things themselves. Now we are talking about a relationship between
government and the scientific knowledge of things. Foucault explains:

The things with which in this sense government is concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in their relation to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things, accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc. (Foucault 1991c: 93)

Foucault’s emphasis on the modern conception of human relations as ‘things’ is worth noting, for it is through the same conception of the social as a “thing” that Durkheim also tries to find the scientific (read “the right”) laws (read “disposition”) of social phenomena. Based on such observations, I have argued that sociology has been both a form of critique and a form of governmentality.

In the new art of government “the state, like nature, has its own rationality, albeit of a different sort” (Foucault 1991c: 97). Therefore, it must also be conducted in a rational and scientific manner. According to Foucault this did not fully happen until the eighteenth century with its rapid demographic growth, “connected with an increasing abundance of money, which in turn was linked to the expansion of agricultural products” (Foucault 1991c: 98). It was then that the new scientific notion of government fully developed. Political economy was born with the problem of population and the art of government became “a political science” (Foucault 1991c: 101). The population and its welfare became the end or goal of government. With this turn of events in the eighteenth century we enter into a new form of governmentality and a new kind of ethics which is increasingly epistemologically oriented.
The *exagoreusis* as practiced by the Christians required the renunciation of the self. Now a new ethics is emerging that seeks to replace self-sacrifice by a *positive* form of self-realization. The collapse of feudalism, religious freedom, and the problem of population made it no longer possible to govern through the law, be it divine or secular. The individual was to be subjected to a new category of laws, i.e. to scientific laws. This was deemed necessary if he was to be an ethical subject. Here is a final remark by Foucault on the question of the population with regard to this new form of governmentality:

The population now represents more the end of government than the power of the sovereign; the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is the object in the hands of the government, aware, vis-à-vis the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it. Interest at the level of the consciousness of each individual who goes to make up the population, and interest considered as the interest of the population regardless of what the particular interests and aspirations may be of the individuals who compose it, this is the new target and the fundamental instrument of the government of population: the birth of a new art, or at any rate of a range of absolutely new tactics and techniques. (Foucault 1991c: 100).

According to Foucault, the aim of modern sciences such as medicine, psychiatry, the humanities, and statistics was to constitute a positive self (see Foucault 1997b: 229). We noted that one aspect of the constitution of the subject involves one’s relation to oneself. This relation to the self, among other things, is also related to certain forms of knowledge, but before the invention of the modern sciences this knowledge was never a knowledge of the individual in its singularity. However, eventually the scientific gaze found its way into the individual (Foucault 1973: 170). This achievement was made possible through the asylum, the clinic, the prison, the school, and other modern institutions where science and morality could work in complicity (see Foucault 1965:
The claim to neutrality did not mean the end of interest in the problem of morality. Modern society pursued a pure morality that did not possess the alienating power of religion; it was a search for "a religious domain without religion" (Foucault 1965: 257). In fact, emergence of a new ethics means that a new social subject is in the process of being made.

For the purpose of the new scientific ethics the traditional distinctions between man and animal disappear. Thanks to modern psychology, now children in the school are trained the same way that Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov conditioned his dog (cf. Foucault 1977a: 166-167). The man of the modern human sciences is a fabricated man by modern scientific methods (Foucault 1977a: 29-30). This man is not an illusory figure, an empty social construction that is real in its consequences as long as we consider them real. He is real but he is not a substance; he is constituted by relations, relations to the self and to social institutions, which are also networks of relations. It is as a relation that the subject can always be critical.

In order to be critical, it should be possible for the subject to transform herself. It is in this context that we can understand why Foucault decides to focus more on the idea of governmentality as an integral part of his critical project. Even though critique is a form of reaction against governmentality, it also involves establishing a new form of relation with oneself as long as one is not entertaining the idea of anarchy. That is to say, critique always involves new technologies of the self, and thereby new forms of governmentality. Therefore, on the one hand, sociological knowledge is a form of critique insofar as it reveals the relational character of the self and its social and institutional bases. On the other hand, it gives rise to new forms of governmentality to the
extent that it help the subject to establish a different type of relation with herself. That is why I have argued that theoretical shifts in sociology must be understood in terms of the tension between critique and governmentality.
Chapter XI
Ontological Critique: A Theoretical Revolution

The Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.

(Marx, Thesis XI on Feuerbach)

I know very well, and I think I knew it from the moment when I was a child, that knowledge can do nothing for transforming the world. Maybe I am wrong. And I am sure I am wrong from a theoretical point of view, for I know very well that knowledge has transformed the world.

But if I refer to my own personal experience, I have the feeling knowledge can't do anything for us, and that political power may destroy us. All the knowledge in the world can't do anything against it. All this is related not to what I think theoretically (I know that's wrong), but I speak from my experience. I know that knowledge can transform us, that truth is not only a way of deciphering the world (and maybe what we call truth doesn't decipher anything), but that if I know the truth I will be changed. And maybe I will be saved. Or maybe I'll die, but I think that is the same anyway for me.

You see, that's why I really work like a dog, and I worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation...

(Foucault 1997a: 130-131)

Foucault’s Politics

By beginning this chapter with the above passage from Foucault, I want to say that its spirit can be attributed to many other classical and contemporary social scholars who, at one point, have found that there can be much more at stake in what they do than an academic position or a scholarly identity. Though very brief, these words demonstrate the significance of political questions for many social scholars.

Why do some individuals engage in never-ending intellectual quests? And how may these quests explain the detours they make through the sciences? Traditionally, scientific practices, breakthroughs, ruptures, and shifts have been explained from points of view within the philosophy of science, the history of science or ideas, the sociology of knowledge, and the critique of ideology. As we noted, such analyses are inherently
epistemological. They are conducted either in the same general epistemological framework of the sciences they study, or in a different one. In the first instance, they share the biases of those sciences. This happens when, for example, one conducts a sociology of sociology, or an epistemological analysis of sciences. However, when a science is approached from outside by fields like the sociology of knowledge and the critique of ideology, there is always a tendency to violate the epistemological integrity and the autonomy of the sciences studied.

I have argued that Foucault’s discourse analysis is more suitable for investigating discontinuities within the social sciences because it is able to understand them in relation to certain political events without violating their epistemological integrity. This advantage is due to the fact that Foucault’s approach understands political critique and ethical questions in ontological terms and leaves the scientificity of the sciences for epistemology to study. Through Gadamer, I showed why an ethico-political position ontologically reached could not be contradicted by an epistemologically formulated proposition. The political relevance of science belongs to the discursive hold of scientific findings. Put differently, it is as an event, i.e. as a discourse, that science is capable of proposing itself as a political force. Nevertheless, various scholars studied here (except Marx and Gadamer) have failed adequately to notice the ontological character of ethics and politics. Even Marx and Gadamer did not provide a theory explaining the specifics of discursive politics. This task was left for Foucault to take on.

So far, I have argued that epistemologically-oriented approaches to ethics and politics must be abandoned in favor of the epistemologically neutral approach of discourse analysis. Foucault’s discourse analysis can avoid all the dilemmas that these
other approaches have created. In the previous chapter I also argued that if one is still
interested in discursive politics and a scientific approach to it, discourse analysis (or
archaeology) can serve that purpose better than the epistemologically-oriented
disciplines. Now I wish to explain a more radical implication of Foucault’s work.

Foucault’s work can serve not just as a diagnosis of, but also as an excellent
example of a discontinuity in the human sciences. He is unique in this respect. First, he
has made possible a profound shift in our understanding of knowledge. Second, he is
acutely aware of his departure from the epistemological frame of analysis. At every
opportunity, he explains why he has adopted a different approach to science and
knowledge. His interviews are valuable sources of insight into his shift.

Foucault adopted an ontological approach to ethics and politics. He chose to do a
critical history of thought which was ontologically oriented. For the history of thought,
thinking is a critical act intended to solve a problem and alter a reality. With this
conception of thought, we should understand a thinker as a being experiencing
discomfort, as a person who feels the pain of Being in its present condition. Foucault’s
history of thought understands our intellectual detours and scientific shifts as strategic
decisions to liberate ourselves from the power of a knowledge that has become a source
of domination and suffering. In other words, social subjects experiencing discomfort
under the domination of a scientific discourse are interested in bringing about some
scientific shift. This is because these subjects understand the power of knowledge and
know its effects on their lives. With this understanding science becomes a politics for
some and not merely a means of “making a living”. Commenting on the contributions of
his mentor George Canguilhem to critical thinking in France, Foucault reminds us that a
reason "has a liberating effect only provided it manages to liberate itself" (Foucault 1998a: 469). But, how can a reason be liberated?

Foucault believed that the genealogy of reason could show how discursive practices had historically taken hold of reason to the extent that many other voices of reason were excluded as unreason. The main objective of Foucault's genealogical and archaeological studies was to show how certain discourses established themselves as the authoritative voice of reason through their exclusionary rules of formation. This genealogical task is only a negative one intended to politically destroy what is historically established. Genealogy and archaeology are sciences, and cannot give rise to a system of ethics by themselves. They can only help the critical actor to identify the elements involved in a particular discourse. A rearrangement of these elements involves a discursive practice to which many other factors also contribute. Such rearrangements substitute one discourse with another. This is what, for example, a feminist or postcolonial critique of the modern social sciences has achieved.

We can argue that a discursive critique based on genealogical and archaeological studies is more advanced than epistemologically oriented critiques to the extent that the former is more informed about the discursive character of modern politics. This is what Foucault had originally hoped for, but gradually his views became more radical when he claimed that ethics and politics do not have to be discursively established. They may rather be reached ontologically. In this chapter, I will elaborate on this observation as the most radical position on the question of science and ethics since Comte's attempt to establish religion on a positive ground. In other words, Foucault reached the conclusion that we should give up all attempts to found our ethics and politics on science. The
attempts to form social subjects on the basis of the positive sciences have already caused
too much suffering. I think this must clarify what I meant when I said that Foucault both
explained the theoretical shifts in the social sciences and introduced one of the most
radical discontinuities in these sciences. It all happened as a result of a political quest.

In his numerous interviews and writings he makes it clear that what motivates him
is his interest in the politics of the self. He is perhaps one of the most successful among
contemporary thinkers in establishing ontological critique as a form of freedom from the
power of discourse. I first came across Foucault commenting on his personal politics in
relation to his intellectual work in his introduction to the second volume of *The History of
Sexuality* (Foucault 1985: 9). I immediately took note of it and then continued
highlighting similar comments as I read him. After a while, I noticed that these kinds of
remarks are strikingly present in all of Foucault’s writing. One only needs a sustained
reading of Foucault in order to find that he makes countless references to his political
objectives. Foucault’s politics is concerned with the formation of the self as an ethical
subject. He insists that this is also a major political problem of our time: “...One of the
main political problems nowadays would be, in the strict sense of the word, the politics of
ourselves” (Foucault 1997b: 231).

The interest in the politics of the self is an interest in solving or dealing with a
personal problem, namely the problem of our selves. When we become uncomfortable in
our selves, when we are in contempt with the forces that govern and shape us, and when
we do not like the ways we are governed, we have a problem with ourselves. In the early
years of his childhood, around the time when the French resistance movement against
German Nazism was taking shape, Foucault sought refuge in knowledge as a means of dealing with a political problem:

You see, I don’t think I ever had the project of becoming a philosopher. I had not known what to do with my life. And I think that is also something rather typical for the people of my generation. We did not know when I was ten or eleven years old whether we would become German or remain French. We did not know whether we would die or not in the bombing and so on. When I was sixteen or seventeen, I knew only one thing: school life was an environment protected from exterior menaces, from politics. And I have always been fascinated by living protected in a scholarly environment, in an intellectual milieu. Knowledge is for me that which must function as a protection of individual existence and as a comprehension of the exterior world. I think that’s it. Knowledge as a means of surviving by understanding (Foucault 1997b: 124-125).

Surviving, being protected, being transformed, and being saved under the sacred canopy of knowledge: this is what Foucault sought to the last moment of his life, even in his final days when he was struggling with AIDS. However, his conception of knowledge gradually moved from epistemology to discourse and ontology.

In his last two unfinished research projects Foucault was to advance the same objective that guided his other works, namely, analyzing the discursive practices that constitute the self in order to explain the power that discourse enjoys in Western culture. Here is Foucault referring to one of these projects:

And if God grants me life, after madness, illness, crime, sexuality, the last thing that I would like to study would be the problem of war and the institution of war in what one could call the military dimension of society... the question of military justice: what makes a Nation entitled to ask someone to die for it. (Foucault 1997c: 167-68).

On the other hand, in search of an alternative politics of the self, he also proposed two other research projects. Paul Rabinow writes of these projects that Foucault became interested in as a result of observing and reporting on the Iranian Revolution:
Foucault was fascinated, perhaps above all, by what he saw as a demand for a new subjectivity. He felt he discerned an imperative that went beyond overthrowing yet another corrupt, Western-supported authoritarian regime, an imperative he formulated thus: 'above all we have to change ourselves. Our way of being, our relationships with others, with things, with eternity, with God.' He grappled with this intuition, repeating a similar hypothesis on several occasions. 'What is the meaning for these people, to seek out, at the price of their lives, that thing whose very possibility we Europeans have forgotten at least since the Renaissance and the period of the great crises of Christianity — a spirituality. I can hear the French laughing at these words, but they are making a mistake...' In the early eighties, he proposed a two-pronged research project with colleagues and students at Berkeley — on political spirituality and self-fashioning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and [on] the arts of socialist governmentality in the twenties. (Rabinow 1997a: xxiii)

There should be no mistake about Foucault’s project, and one can hardly conduct a more consistent research project. He is so serious about his project that he finds it absolutely necessary to move beyond the dominant scientific research practices of the day. As I noted above, Foucault’s discontent with discursive politics is mainly due to its privileged choices and the selectivity of discourse. For him, these exclusionary practices fulfill significant functions in a discourse and have substantial consequences. Therefore, early on he formulated an alternative method of analysis, which he chose to call "archaeology," in order to find out, for example, why madmen were excluded from the domain of the reason, and why criminals and others with "experiences on the edge" were rejected from mainstream social life (see Foucault 1977c: 151-153).

Foucault claimed that he wanted to hear all the voices of reason, not only those that certain discourses allow to speak. This is another reason why he was not comfortable with the conventional methodological practices of positivistic research which dictate that one choose the "relevant" data from the available universe of information by criteria which were usually based solely on one’s theoretical framework. This requirement is also
justified among other reasons for practical reasons. It is with this question in mind that an interviewer asks Foucault how he deals with the problem of choice and receives the following response: “I will say that, in fact, there should not be any privileged choice. One should be able to read everything, to know all the institutions and all the practices…” (Foucault 1998b: 262). One may question the possibility of reading “everything,” but we should know that this anti-exclusionary approach is an attempt on Foucault’s part to understand what has been considered unintelligible and to read what has been considered unreadable by certain discourses. Foucault relates this desire to a nightmare:

A nightmare has haunted me since my childhood: I am looking at a text that I can’t read, or only a tiny part of it decipherable. I pretend to read it, aware that I am inventing; then suddenly the text is completely scrambled, I can no longer read anything or even invent it, my throat tightens and I wake up. (Foucault 1998c: 290)

My intention is not to write a biography or a psychoanalysis of Foucault, for which I do not have any qualifications or interest. Rather, I want to show that behind one of the most profound shifts in the human sciences there is a real human being of flesh and blood: A human being who seeks to change himself, his way of being, his relationships with others, with things, with eternity, with God; someone whose throat tightens when he cannot read a text because he suspects that there might be something in it relevant to his politics of the self; a person who wants to hear the marginal voices that are excluded from the dominant discourses, for he does not trust the powers that have excluded them; a noted scholar who hopes God grants him more life to be able to advance his project one step further. This is the ontological aspect of critique, and I want to argue that this is why
Foucault sought to revive this aspect of politics. It is in this context that I speak of the Foucault shift.

A Discontinuity

Foucault's project is clearly a critique. However, as has already been mentioned, he understands critique as an ontological practice of the self rather than an epistemological examination of knowledge. Appreciating the novelty of Foucault's conception of critique is pivotal for understanding the shift he introduces into the human sciences. We will shortly see that Hoy and McCarthy (1994) engage in a debate over whether or not Foucault is a critical theorist like Habermas while they fail to understand the ontological nature of critique for Foucault, and thereby overlook one of the most interesting elements in Foucault's project. To avoid similar confusions, it is necessary to focus on Foucault's notion of critique, for he claims that even Kant's notion of critique should be understood ontologically in order to sense of Kant's own understanding of enlightenment. Put differently, here we are dealing with two discontinuities. One is that which Kant introduced between his notion of critique and his conception of enlightenment. The other is that of Foucault, which can be described as a double discontinuity in order to bring critique back in line with the Kantian notion of enlightenment.

Foucault's conception of critique is the bedrock of the shift that he introduces into the contemporary human sciences. Yet, there is no consensus among students of Foucault, first, as to whether he is a critical thinker to begin with, and second, as to how Foucault understands critique. Those who consider him a critical thinker usually call to
our attention Foucault’s writings on the Enlightenment, governmentality, and self-descriptions such as the following:

And when I was a student, I can assure you that I never once heard the name of the Frankfurt School mentioned by any of my professors...Now, obviously, if I had been familiar with the Frankfurt School, if I had been aware of it at the time, I would not have said a number of stupid things that I did say, and I would have avoided many of the detours I made while trying my own humble path...(Foucault 1998d: 440).

David C. Hoy, for example, refers to this admission by Foucault to show that Foucault followed a critical path of thinking, though independently from the Frankfurt School (Hoy & McCarthy 1994: 145). Thomas McCarthy, on the other hand, insists that Foucault’s project has been mainly anti-Enlightenment and different from the critical tradition of the Frankfurt School. McCarthy maintains that Foucault’s notion of the subject as “nothing but an effect of power” is irreconcilable with the critical mode of thinking. According to McCarthy, critical thinking is directed toward self-liberation through self-consciousness, and it requires “some notion of accountable subjects who can achieve gains in self-consciousness with a liberating effect on their lives” (Hoy & McCarthy 1994: 34). In short, the accountability of the subject and the notion of the subject as an effect of power are two irreconcilable ideas. McCarthy thinks that Foucault himself realized this point and this “is no doubt one reason why, in the last years of his life, Foucault stopped insisting that he wanted to bring the Enlightenment to an end and begin exploring ways in which to continue by transforming it” (Hoy & McCarthy 1994: 34).

However, I intend to argue: 1) that Foucault’s main works should be understood as intellectual endeavors within the critical tradition of enlightenment as a form of critique; in other words it is not only towards the last years of his life that Foucault
becomes interested in critical thinking; 2) that Foucault's understanding of critique radically differs from that of McCarthy and Hoy's, and that it is even different from Kant's notion of critique even though he associates himself with Kant's conception of the enlightenment; 3) that Foucault does not consider critique a method of epistemological scrutiny, but rather he insists that critique is an ontological reaction on the part of social subjects against some forms of governmentality; 4) that this shift from epistemology to ontology is closely related to Foucault's analysis of the discursive moment of science.

Aufklärung: An Ontological Critique

Since Thomas McCarthy is a distinguished contemporary English-speaking critical scholar of Continental social theory, one should seriously consider his views on Foucault. He alleges that Foucault not only is not a critical thinker but also has attempted to destroy the very foundations of the critical school of thought:

The *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant noted in his preface, arose in response to a "call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely that of self-knowledge, and to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims and dismiss all groundless pretensions"... Two centuries later Foucault noted the continuity of his post-Nietzschean genealogy with the classical critique of reason: "I think that the central issue of philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has been, still is, and will, I hope, remain the question: What is this reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers?" But he stressed the discontinuity as well: "If the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today...[is]: In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligating, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?" Thus Foucault's "practical critique" of reason looked not for "formal structures with universal value" but for "transformable singularities"; it was interested not in "necessary limitations" but in "the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking, what we are, do, or think. (Hoy & McCarthy 1994: 7)
In this passage McCarthy tries to highlight two claims by Foucault that he considers to be contradictory: Foucault’s assertion that he is Kantian, and the fact that he says he is interested in “transformable singularities” at the expense of “formal structures with universal value.” McCarthy sees these positions as irreconcilable: how could one, as a critical thinker, be more interested in possible transformations of the social subject without considering the formal structures of mind and its limits? He implies that this did not trouble Foucault because “he stressed the discontinuity as well.”

First of all, it seems to me that McCarthy here abuses the concept of “discontinuity”, which has a very important theoretical significance for Foucault, who uses this term quite differently from McCarthy. For Foucault, discontinuity is not simply a change of ideas. Rather, it reflects transformations that take place in the rules of discursive formations. Secondly, as we will see, Foucault believes that his understanding of critique is in agreement with Kant’s idea of enlightenment, though not so with his conception of critique. In other words, there is a continuity between Foucault and Kant and also a discontinuity, one that is so radical that it breaks away from all epistemological discursive notions of critique. Foucault clearly distinguishes between the notion of critique in his work and what Kant has in mind in his Critiques. Therefore, it would not be very smart to show that he is not loyal to Kant’s notion of critique. On the contrary, he criticizes Kant for creating a gap between Aufklärung and critique. He wants to remain loyal both to the pre-Kantian notion of critique and to the Kantian notion of Aufklärung as a way out of intellectual bondage.

Thirdly, and most significantly, McCarthy fails to appreciate the significance of the shift from epistemology to ontology, and thus from the theory of consciousness to
that of ontology in Foucault's work. In light of his shift, all epistemological questions including those raised by McCarthy are irrelevant. We need to highlight and understand the significance of this shift and the importance of critique with regard to the shifts taking place in human knowledge if we are to understand some of the detours that Foucault and many other scholars have made in the history of thought. This last point must be elaborated on in more detail, and I now devote myself to this task.

What makes McCarthy's criticisms of Foucault somewhat surprising is the fact that he reminds us of the significance of the shift from epistemology to language in Habermas's theory but fails to recognize that Foucault, from the very beginning, did not write from an epistemological point of view. Commenting on Habermas's shift to the paradigm of language, McCarthy writes that:

[Habermas] has altered his position in a number of important respects. The idea of founding social-scientific inquiry in a theory of language, which already existed in germ in Knowledge and Human Interests, came to dominate his work on universal pragmatics and rational reconstruction in the later sixties and early seventies. Toward the end of the 1970s he started the turn that culminated in The Theory of Communicative Action, a turn marked by the warning that methodology and epistemology are no royal road to social theory. (McCarthy 1991: ix)

The contention that "methodology and epistemology are no royal road to social theory" can be attributed, to different degrees, to all linguistically-oriented social theories. However, it can easily be shown that Foucault's works are among the least epistemologically-oriented contemporary social theories.

This point has been neglected by most of the students of Foucault, including McCarthy and Hoy. McCarthy is not entirely unaware of Foucault's inclination towards ontology. Indeed, he must have read the lines immediately before the passage he quoted, where Foucault speaks of a "historical ontology of ourselves" (Foucault, 1984: 45). One
may easily overlook numerous references to critical ontology in Foucault's writings if one does not know their theoretical significance for Foucault.

In a few short essays, Foucault commits himself to the task of elaborating on the concept of critique as he understands it. He begins these series of essays with a reading of Kant's "Was ist Aufklärung?" This is how he describes this essay:

A minor text, perhaps. But it seems to me that it marks the discreet entrance into the history of thought of a question that modern philosophy has not been capable of answering, but that it has never managed to get rid of, either. And one that has been repeated in various forms for two centuries now. (Foucault 1984: 32)

In response to the question "Was ist Aufklärung?", Kant declares that:

Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. (Kant 1997: 7)

For Kant, freedom to reason for oneself is the only necessary condition for the realization of enlightenment (see Kant 1997: 9). Foucault finds Kant's response unique because:

[The way Kant poses the question of Aufklärung is entirely different: it is neither a world era to which one belongs, nor an event whose signs are perceived, nor the dawning of an accomplishment. Kant defines Aufklärung in an almost entirely negative way, as an Ausgang, an 'exit,' a 'way out'. (Foucault 1984: 34)

Having noted that Kant understands enlightenment as a "way out", it is imperative to see what enlightenment is a "way out" of. The answer to this question is of crucial significance for Foucault. He shows that Kant sees enlightenment as a way out of an "immaturity" which makes us submit to someone else's authority (Foucault 1984: 34). It is here that Foucault makes a bridge between enlightenment and the critical project that is
uniquely his. He closely follows Kant's project of enlightenment but distances himself from him in his own critical project.

First, let us consider in more detail Kant's views on enlightenment and Foucault's sympathetic reading of him on this issue. On the question of obedience and freedom, Kant distinguishes between the public and private uses of reason. The public use of reason is "the use which a person makes of it as a scholar before the reading public," and the private use is "that which one may make of it in a particular civil post or office which is entrusted to him" (Kant 1997: 10). Kant links enlightenment to the freedom of the public use of reason but the private use of reason may be restricted. In fact, one must be obedient in that domain (see Kant 1997: 10-12). Foucault cautions that exactly because of this distinction, we should not read Kant's essay on enlightenment as a mere reiteration of what had already been said about freedom of conscience since the sixteenth century. Kant offers an unconventional definition of the public use of reason as reasoning for the sake of reasoning. Foucault rephrases Kant's position in the following fashion:

[W]hen one is reasoning only in order to use one's reason, when one is reasoning as a reasonable being (and not as a cog in a machine), when one is reasoning as a member of reasonable humanity, then the use of reason must be free and public. (Foucault 1984: 36-37)

According to Foucault's reading of Kant, enlightenment as a way out of submission to authority in the public use of reason is not "a general process affecting all humanity; it must not be conceived only as an obligation prescribed to individuals: it now appears as a political problem" (Foucault 1984: 37). This recognition of the political moment of enlightenment distinguishes Foucault from other critical thinkers. It is here that he crosses from enlightenment to critique. At this crossroad of enlightenment and critique he even distances himself from Kant, whose views on enlightenment he faithfully embraces.
To the question, “Do we live in an enlightenment age?,” Kant responds, “‘No,’ but we do live in an age of enlightenment” (Kant 1997: 16). Reflecting back on Kant’s text, Foucault suggests that we do not conceptualize enlightenment as a period of history but rather as an attitude (see Foucault 1984: 39, 42). Enlightenment as an attitude coincides with critique. By “attitude,” Foucault means:

[A] mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task. A bit, no doubt, like what Greeks called an ethos. (Foucault 1984: 39)

Hence we can infer that to have an attitude is to be critical, and to be critical is to have attitude, and thus since enlightenment is an attitude, it is also a form of critique. This is perhaps why critique is generally considered to be a virtue (Foucault 1984: 25). We may safely say that Kant and Foucault are in agreement with respect to enlightenment as an attitude closely connected to critique, but Foucault distinguishes himself from Kant by understanding critique too as an attitude, something that Kant does not embrace.

Having shown that Foucault’s point of departure is this Kantian notion of enlightenment, something which has preoccupied modern western philosophy in various ways for the past two centuries (Foucault 1984: 32), we should see how and through which detours his approach becomes fundamentally different from those of the others. He begins by emphasizing that Kant’s three Critiques are closely connected with the essay on enlightenment. However, he wants to show that the Critiques fail to remain faithful to Kant’s views on enlightenment as an attitude. Foucault argues that for Kant, critique is a fundamental prerequisite of enlightenment because enlightenment is:

the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority; now it is precisely at this moment that
the critique is necessary, since its role is that of defining the conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate in order to determine what can be known, what must be done, and what may be hoped (Foucault 1984: 38)

Let us reconsider this reading of Kant by Foucault. Kant praises the ideal of enlightenment as freedom for the public use of reason from any authority, but at the same time he seems to be concerned about the consequences of such an exercise of reason, and therefore assigns reason the task of reflecting on itself. Critique, for Kant, reveals to reason its own limitations and potentials. A free agent should know his legitimate boundaries, boundaries which are set by no other authority than reason itself. Legitimacy of the use of reason leads to the legitimacy of subsequent knowledge. In other words, the heart of the matter is the question of the legitimation of knowledge. It is to determine "what can legitimately be known," and based on that legitimate knowledge, to determine "what must be done, and what may be hoped" (Foucault 1984: 38). Autonomy, as opposed to subjugation to authority, is a fruit of the legitimate uses of reason while dogmatism, heteronomy, and illusion are consequences of reason's illegitimate uses. In short, "in his attempt to desubjugate the subject in the context of power and truth, as prolegomena to the whole present and future Aufklärung, Kant set forth critique’s primordial responsibility, to know knowledge" (Foucault, 1997d: 36). Foucault, on the other hand, maintains that critique is essentially an attempt to escape power or diminish its hold on one’s life. This is exactly what Aufklärung was all about, namely, freedom from authority.

The question of legitimacy, which is at the heart of the Kantian critique, is fundamentally an epistemological problem while the question of enlightenment, according to Foucault, is ontological. Critique in its pre-Kantian form in the modern
Western world, according to Foucault, was also not an epistemological endeavor; it was “a certain way of thinking, speaking and acting, a certain relationship to what exists, to what one knows, to what one does, a relationship to society, to culture and also a relationship to others that we could call, let’s say, the critical attitude” (Foucault 1997d: 24).

In Foucault’s judgement, this critical attitude was a general virtue. However, for Kant, critique becomes nothing but an enquiry into the nature and conditions of valid or legitimate knowledge. This line of enquiry leads to the question of methodology and the methodical search for truth. In other words, the main concern of this kind of critique is the assessment of the truth-value of a certain body of knowledge and the procedural mechanisms for arriving at such knowledge.

Foucault believes that “the gap between critique and Aufklärung engineered by Kant” led to “an analytical procedure which could be called an investigation into the legitimacy of historical modes of knowing (connaître)” (Foucault 1997d: 48-49). During the 19 th and 20 th centuries, the Western world followed the new Kantian critical project rather than Aufklärung and its critical attitude which was generally viewed as a virtue (see Foucault 1997d: 36-37). This adoption of Kant’s notion of critique had three basic features, as Foucault observes:

[F]irst, positivist science, that is to say, it basically had confidence in itself, even when it remained carefully critical of each one of its results; second, the development of State or a state system which justified itself as the reason and deep rationality of history and which, moreover, selected as its instruments procedures to rationalize the economy and society; and hence, the third feature, this stitching together of scientific positivism and the development of States, a science of the State, or a statism, if you like. (Foucault 1997d: 37)
These developments invited, or perhaps demanded, some extraordinary attention and reactions from various intellectual, social and political circles. In sociology, classical sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber dealt, in different ways, with the question of positivist science and its application to the economy and society and their rationalization. That critical attitude which was closely associated with *Aufklärung* gradually began organizing its responses to the trend that was set in motion by Kantian critique. This critical attitude became aware of its ontological character mostly in the work of Marx and Foucault. Foucault explained that critique is essentially a reaction against governmentality even when one is more interested in raising epistemological questions. This is especially true of the human sciences that have great discursive potential which gives them a strong ethico-political moment.

**The Poverty of the Modern Self**

*The Order of Things* is an archaeology of the human sciences. In this work, Foucault analyzes three *epistemes* of Western thought corresponding to the three historical periods of the Renaissance, the Classical Age, and Modernity. Foucault explains at length major discontinuities that exist among these three epistemes. With regard to the modern episteme, he argues that after the Classical Age and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the field of knowledge became fragmented. The era of exhaustive taxonomical ordering of beings was over. A new unifying figure was needed for the emerging fragmented fields of knowledge, and “man” as the sovereign subject of all possible knowledge assumed this unifying function in the modern episteme. But first, he had to be created, for such a discursive creature did not exist until that time. Foucault
explains that the human sciences were responsible for the discursive creation of finite living, speaking and laboring man. For man to be created and to be the subject of knowledge, he had to be the object of knowledge first. We have already seen how discourse creates its own object.

After a long discussion of the conditions of the emergence and development of the human sciences and man since the nineteenth century, Foucault ends his book with a paragraph whose very last clause reads: “one can certainly wager that man [will] be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” (Foucault 1970: 387). Richard Swedberg refers to this statement as a prophecy which is rooted in structuralism and its inability to theorize “man’s conscious activities” (see Swedberg 1982: 119-20). It seems to me that Swedberg has not paid enough attention to the paragraph in which this statement is found, let alone the totality of Foucault’s project. Let us first consider this paragraph as a whole:

If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility — without knowing either what its form will be or what its promises — were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did, at the end of the eighteenth century, then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in a sand at the edge of the sea. (Foucault 1970: 387)

First of all, this conditional prediction—after almost four hundred pages of analysis of research findings accumulated over a long period of time—does not resemble a prophecy. Prophecies are generally not conditional and are not formulated on the basis of some factual findings. Secondly, Foucault is here concluding that since the fourteenth century Western science has conducted itself within three completely different epistemes. Therefore, we can expect that under some conditions the epistemic arrangements of our
time would also disappear. And since the Modern episteme is based on "man" as the subject of its sciences, with the collapse of this episteme the man that was fabricated by the human sciences will also vanish. This man is not a natural man; he is a historical and discursive figure with a beginning and an end. Thirdly, as to the conditions that may cause the fall of the Modern episteme, Foucault certainly considers the role of human beings to be the most critical of all, and his intellectual project has tried to dethrone this episteme. That is what critique is all about. Finally, the critique that Foucault undertakes is not a theorization of "man's conscious activities" in the manner that Swedberg and other modern theorists have in mind.

Traditionally, metaphysics has understood the subject in terms of the soul conceived as a substance. However, in the modern human sciences the question of the subject is formulated in terms of the self as a relation. This modern conception of the subject corresponds with the historical emergence of the self as "the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relation gives rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power" (Foucault 1977: 39).

In our discussion of the genealogy of the modern subject we noted that the modern subject is formed in an epistemological process of governmentality. Modern technologies of the self and of domination are both epistemological (see Foucault 1977: 224). Epistemological technologies (as opposed to ontological ones) are primarily based on one's relation to others rather than to oneself. A specific kind of relation of domination with something other than one's self is what characterizes the modern subject and the modern world. One has to be in relation with an other in order to have a self. The
ensemble of external relations both exercises power over the individual and produces him with a self. The relational character of our modern epistemological world is the source of its impoverishment. However, at the same time, it is what makes this world inherently fragile and transient. The poverty of this world, especially of the self, is the reason we should engage in critique. At the same time, its fragility is what makes such a critique possible.

I need to elaborate on the above points. For the sake of clarification let us compare a subject which is a substance, whether it exists or not, with a subject that is nothing but an ensemble of relations. The subject that is a substance has a more or less established identity which is carried over to every social condition in which she participates. This type of the subject exhibits a very high degree of resistance toward transformation. On the other hand, if a subject forms a self through relations with other individuals or social settings, then she is transformed to a large degree when she changes her relations. It was the recognition of this type of subject in modern society that compelled Foucault to reject the philosophy of subject. Here is how he describes this relational subject:

It [the subject] is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself. You do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfill your desires in a relationship. Undoubtedly there are relationships and interferences between these different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject. In each case one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself. And it is precisely the historical constitution of various forms of the subject in relation to the games of truth which interests me. (Foucault 1997j: 290-1)

Now, again for the sake of argument, let us extend our comparison between the substantive and relational subjects to their corresponding worlds. Management of the
world of substantive subjects is very easy. It is somewhat like a natural caste society in which every individual has a pre-established stable personality and conducts herself according to some predictable patterns of behavior. But the relational world is much more difficult to manage especially if the relations are numerous. Relationality by nature is fragile and transient, and all the parties involved must work hard or stay in line for it to endure through time. This is why, according to Foucault, our world has been “considerably impoverished” by institutions (Foucault 1997p: 158). Critique in modern society is nothing but a fight against relational impoverishment. Again, since this poverty is a relational one rather than substantive it is easier to fight it. In short, the relational character of our world makes critique both necessary and possible.

As I noted in the discussion of governmentality and the genealogy of the subject, the modern subject is formed in relations of truth that are also relations of power. We should also note that power can also be understood either as a substance or a certain kind of relation. Foucault admits that he did not make himself clear when he first used the term power (see Foucault 1997j: 299). Later on, he argued that:

We must distinguish between power relations understood as strategic games between liberties—in which some try to control the conduct of others, who in turn try to avoid allowing their conduct to be controlled or try to control the conducts of others—and the states of domination that people ordinarily call “powers.” (Foucault 1997j: 299)

While the second type of power presents itself as a state of domination in institutional forms and political structures, the first type manifests itself in the games of truth. The games of truth are very unstable and their relations can be reversed with less difficulty than the states of domination. In other words, the relations of power are already intertwined with critique. Power as a relation, unlike power as domination, already
implies the *resistance* or *power* of the party that is to be controlled. Power relations present in the games of truth are precarious and need to be constantly maintained. Governmentality is the third element between these two types of power through which power relations are managed in such a way that “states of domination are established and maintained” (Foucault 1997j: 299).

We know that in modern society governmentality has assumed an epistemological character, which means that the stress is on code-oriented moralities. The individual is supposed to actively form herself as an ethical subject through practices of the self. As Foucault notes, these practices are not necessarily the invention of the individual. There are always some models in every culture that are proposed, suggested, or imposed on the individual (see Foucault 1997j: 291). In modern western cultures these models are mainly epistemologically formulated by a wide range of sciences. Even religious and philosophical models are epistemological. As we noted, Christianity introduced the idea that the subject must *know* himself and *tell* the truth of his self to others. Now, the question is: Given the epistemological nature of the relations of power in modern western societies, how is critique practiced in these societies? Or, how should it be practiced? In what follows, I will seek to answer these questions.

**Governmentality and Critique**

Before considering Foucault’s critical response to the modern form of governmentality, I would like to sketch briefly its historical background through Foucault. We have already noted that according to Auguste Comte, the introduction of the *spiritual government* into Western society was the most significant contribution of the
early Christianity. Foucault also takes notice of this change as a shift toward epistemology. Early Christianity preached:

\[
\text{[T]hat each individual, whatever his age or status, from the beginning to the end of his life and in his every action, had to be governed and had to let himself be governed, that is to say directed towards his salvation, by someone to whom he was bound by a total, meticulous, detailed relationship of obedience. (Foucault 1997d: 25-27)}
\]

This practice, which Foucault refers to as the art of governing men, was at first limited to the seclusion of monastic life. However, “from the 15th century on and before the Reformation there was a vertical explosion of the art of governing men” (Foucault 1997d: 27). According to Foucault, this explosion happened in two ways: first, by what one may call the secularization of the art of governing men by expanding it into civil society; and second, by the “proliferation of this art of governing into a variety of areas — how to govern children, how to govern the poor and beggars, how to govern a family, a house, how to govern armies, different groups, cities, States and how to govern one's own body and mind” (Foucault 1997d: 27). He notes:

\[
\text{How to govern was, I believe, one of the fundamental questions about what was happening in the 15th or 16th centuries. It is a fundamental question which was answered by the multiplication of all the arts of governing — the art of pedagogy, the art of politics, the art of economics, if you will — and of all the institutions of government, in the wider sense the term government had at time. (Foucault 1997d: 28)}
\]

As we noted earlier, this overwhelming concern with the problem of governmentality is concurrent with the collapse of feudalism in Europe (Foucault 1997e: 68). With the disintegration of the feudal order and the subsequent social and individual uncertainties, people became acutely concerned with the problem of governing themselves and others. Foucault relates the critical attitude of the 15th and 16th centuries to the emergence of an intense spirit of governmentality.
Given the fact that the governmentalization of both society and individuals and the critical attitude coincide historically, Foucault tries to explain how the two are linked. He argues that critique was biblical, legal, and political because the Scriptures, the Law, and the Sovereign were the three main elements through which governmentalization was realized. On the other hand, in the face of the forces of governmentality, the critical movement was searching for ways not to be governed. Thus, critique raised the question of the authenticity of the Scriptures, the truth of what they told, and the mechanisms of accessing their truth. With respect to the laws which were perceived fundamentally unjust and illegitimate, critique meant “putting forth universal and indefeasible rights to which every government, whatever it may be,...[would] have to submit” (Foucault 1997d: 30). This critical function was assigned to natural law, a function that “it still maintains to this day” (Foucault 1997d: 31). As to the Sovereign, the critical attitude recognized no authority and the truth of what an authority said no longer seemed self-evident. In light of these historical observations, Foucault defines critique as “the art of not being governed or better, the art of not being governed like that and at that cost” (Foucault 1997d: 29).

Foucault defines critique as the art of not being governed. According to Foucault, this questioning with regard to modern forms of governmentality preliminarily consists of an analysis of the relation of truth and power:

[T]he core of critique is basically made of the bundle of relationships that are tied to one another, or one to the two others, power, truth, and the subject. And if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. (Foucault 1997d: 32)
Foucault’s project is critical in the sense that it explores regimes of practices through which the subject is formed in relation to truth and power, and in the sense that it attempts to show that there is nothing in these regimes of practices prevalent in a particular society that makes them “self-evident, universal and necessary” (Foucault 1991a: 76). The main theme of Foucault’s critical project is to question the discourses of truth involved in the process of governmentalization. However, this questioning is not done in a Kantian manner, that is, by examining their epistemological legitimacy, or by indicating where they might have erred. In other words, he is not interested in eradicating errors in an epistemological fashion.

Foucault’s critical project is a response to the forces of governmentalization which were set in motion by the gap that Kant introduced between critique and enlightenment. The Kantian gap resulted in three trends in the West during the 19th and 20th centuries: positivism, rationalization of the economy and society, and statism (that is, a science of the State) (Foucault 1997d: 37). These three developments are aspects of a new form of governmentalization, which invites new forms of critical response. A number of different critical responses have been launched from within various disciplines.

According to Foucault, reactions in Germany and France to the Kantian trend were formulated differently, but they reached the same conclusion: the need for an investigation into the legitimate modes of knowing. In Germany, the critical response was mainly formulated by the German Left: “[F]rom the Hegelian Left to the Frankfurt School, there had been a complete critique of positivism, objectivism, rationalization…” (Foucault 1997d: 38). In France, the critique flourished in the fields of the history of
science and in phenomenology. On the one hand, the problematization of the history of the sciences led to the belief in the historicity of the sciences. On the other hand, Foucault notes that analysis of the question of meaning led to the idea that “meaning is being solely constituted by systems of constraints characteristic of the signifying machinery” (Foucault 1997d: 41). In short, in both cases it was suspected that rationality might be a result of power, and responsible for excesses of power. As a result of this suspicion critical responses were formulated as investigations into “the conditions of the constitution and legitimacy of all possible knowledge” (Foucault 1997d: 48). But, these epistemological investigations created more confusion than clarification. They did not seem to be helpful in the critique of the new positivist form of governmentalization. This is why Foucault decided to engage in a unique form of critique, which did not raise the question of legitimacy, or any other epistemological question for that matter. By being ontological rather than epistemological, this critique becomes distinct from the Kantian notion of critique, but instead is associated with his conception of enlightenment and revolution (see Foucault 1984: 45-47, 48-50).

Enlightenment as a way out of immaturity is a “permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy” (Foucault 1984: 44) and thus is intimately linked to the critical ontology of ourselves. In this respect, Foucault (1997f: 90-91) notes that writing on the question of revolution, Kant remains faithful to his notion of enlightenment, the principle of which is the “permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy” (Foucault 1997f: 90-91) This self-creation is the responsibility that an enlightened individual should accept, and Kant is interested in knowing if there is any actual evidence of progress in this regard. Now the question has become: “Is there around us an event which would be
rememorative, demonstrative and prognostic of permanent progress which carries along human-kind in its totality?” (Foucault 1997f: 91). Approximately fourteen years after writing on the question of Aufklärung, in 1798 Kant “introduced the Revolution as an event having the value of a sign” (Foucault 1997f: 91). For Kant, the significance of the French Revolution should not be assessed in terms of its success or failure to remove a tyrannical power. Rather, as he puts it, the Revolution as the sign of progress is important because it points to “a sympathy of aspiration that borders on enthusiasm” (Foucault 1997f: 94). Foucault tells us that this enthusiasm for the Revolution “is the sign, according to Kant, of humanity’s moral predisposition.” In contrast to the epistemological orientation of the Critiques, here we are witnessing the emergence of an ontological approach. Kant believes that this moral predisposition rooted in human nature is “a faculty of progressing” (Foucault 1997f: 96). Foucault argues that the Revolution, for Kant, is what “effectively completes and continues the process of the Aufklärung…” (Foucault 1997f: 95)

In short, revolution, as the sign of humanity’s moral predisposition, is closely associated with Aufklärung. As a process of self-creation, Aufklärung is a way out of bondage toward the realization of autonomy, and in this sense it is a critical process. This critical attitude is very different from that critique which is mainly concerned with the conditions of legitimate knowledge. In the spirit of critique and revolution, subjects seek to know what their mode of being is in order to transform themselves. As Foucault puts it, “it is not an issue of analyzing the truth, it will be a question rather of what we could call an ontology of ourselves, an ontology of the present” (Foucault 1997f: 100).
Having explained that critique is basically resistance against the power that is exercised in the form of governmentality, we need to know to what extent it can go in resisting power. In other words, before considering how critique is carried out in western societies, we need to consider the question of the scope of resistance. How far can power be pushed out of our lives? Foucault has contemplated these questions on several occasions. Only in one instance, in a question and answer session after a lecture on critique to the French Society of Philosophy, did he seem unwilling to exclude the possibility of a total rejection of power. In this lecture he first defines critique as “the art of not being governed or better, the art of not being governed like that and at that cost” (Foucault 1997d: 29). But later in the course of this lecture, he rephrased the definition of critique as “the decision-making will not to be governed” (Foucault 1997d: 61). When pushed by a questioner, he replies that while he made a mistake there, he did not wish to exclude the possibility of anarchism either. Here is his response:

And when at the end I was saying “decision-making will not to be governed,” then there, an error on my part, it was not to be governed thusly, like that, in this way. I was not referring to something that would be a fundamental anarchism, that would be like an originary freedom, absolutely and wholeheartedly resistant to any governmentalization. I did not say it, this does not mean that I absolutely exclude it. I think that my presentation stops at this point, because it was already too long, but also because I am wondering... if one wants to explore this dimension of critique that seems to me to be so important because it is both part of, and not a part of, philosophy. (Foucault 1997d: 73).

However, in other instances he rejects the possibility of a power-free society. From an analytical point of view, he argues, “there is no question that a society without restrictions is inconceivable,” while from an ethical position, and in a very similar fashion to Habermas, he suggests that “these restrictions have to be within reach of those affected by them so that they at least have the possibility of altering them” (Foucault
Thus, as far as the extent or the scope of the resistance to power is concerned, we should understand critique as a rejection of the way one is being governed. This is not to say that a total rejection of power or anarchy is not an option theoretically speaking. But realistically and perhaps morally, it is not a viable option under our current historical conditions.

We now should turn our attention to the question of how critique has been practiced in modern western societies. First, we should note that critique is basically ontological and is practiced as such although all forms of governmentality involve some forms of knowledge. However, critique assumes different forms, depending on the nature of the governmentality that is being resisted. For example, when people are being governed in the name of God and they think they are being excessively exploited, they may chose a different knowledge of the words of God or they may reject the whole idea of divine laws. Protestantism is an example of a religious critique of religious form of governmentality. There have also been secular critiques of religious governmentality such as positivism. Foucault considers the Renaissance invention of natural law to be a critique of a traditional legal form of governmentality (see Foucault 1997d: 30-31).

Critique is always a reaction against some form of authority. Christianity made the formation of the subject an epistemological task, a permanent analysis of thought and its verbalization to religious authorities (see Foucault 1997b: 228). In the nineteenth century, the positivist movement emerged as a critique of Christian governmentality. But it gave rise to a new form of governmentality which was also epistemological. According to Foucault, "During the last two centuries, the problem has been: what could be the positive foundation for the technologies of the self that we have been developing for
centuries and centuries?” (Foucault 1997b:230). In the past two centuries, authorities emerged who spoke only in the name of the positive sciences. Science became the criterion both for the macro reorganization of society and for the micro management of the individual’s life. In every imaginable field, people are now supposed to ask the opinion of an expert who tells them in the name of some science how they should conduct themselves. Western culture has become an expert culture, and given the intrusions of the sciences into the public and private spheres of life, it is “natural” for critique to be an epistemological critique of science.

Perhaps it comes as a surprise that since the nineteenth century, scientifically-advanced societies have yet to experience a bloody revolutionary overthrow of the state apparatus. Let there be no mistake about it, the bloodless management of society has little to do with a strong metaphysical or religious morality or a peaceful passivist attitude. The colonial practices of these countries, the two worldwide imperialistic wars they initiated, the Holocaust, and the Vietnam War can all attest to the contrary. Science did not raise the moral consciousness of the modern man in an ontological or metaphysical sense. Politically speaking, it became only an effective tool of governmentality and social control in advanced industrial societies where it was omnipresent.

Comte’s dream of the scientific organization of society turned into a nightmare of the “iron cage” for many people. They decided not to wait, any longer, for the daybreak after the night of science. After the Second World War, advanced industrial societies witnessed a series of new social movements: Feminism, Environmentalism, the Peace and Anti-nuclear movements, and other so-called soft counter-cultural movements. Counter-cultural movements, by definition, could not participate fully in the scientific
culture of the society. Perhaps they should be understood as a form of ontological cultural critique. But they all seem to be relatively short-lived.

The most successful movements, like feminism and environmentalism, have participated in the scientific culture of the society. They have been able to present themselves as legitimate or even inevitable parts of academic institutions. One can say that the relative success of these movements within the political and scientific establishment is due to the fact that they have formulated their critiques in epistemological terms while, as we will shortly note, their critiques, like all other critiques, are in fact basically ontological. So far, these movements have raised consciousness and created certain epistemological crises. But they have not succeeded in replacing dominant scientific practices. There is a good possibility they are becoming normalized members of the family of science, and as such, would expand the role of scientific discourse in the governmentalization of the society. Even if they do replace the existing scientific discourses, since they are epistemologically based, we should not expect them to continue to play the role of critique.

I have to elaborate on this last point. As Foucault insists, critique is an attitude, an ontological practice (see Foucault 1984: 43). Critique is directed against science to the extent that science has been integrated within a discourse. The role of science in discourse is not a function of its epistemological legitimacy. Therefore, critique should be understood as a reaction against the power of discourse rather than against epistemological errors of science. For a long time, we have been formulating theory after theory in order to find another way of being governed. Since its inception, sociology has had a claim to “better” governance, and so obviously it has been one of the most
theoretically invaded fields. This dissertation should be read both as a plea to theoretical invaders and a suggestion to all of us who care about politics that epistemological theorization is not the solution. Perhaps theorizing in general is not a solution to any political problem. The kinship between politics and science is an historical kinship, not an intrinsic one. Scientific progress can continue after positivism, as it did before the emergence of positivism as an ethico-political critique. Critique, too, shall continue without positivism. Theories should be tools of advancing sciences. Theoretical politics is a contradiction in terms.

I know that even Foucault has spoken of the critical potential of theories in a political sense. In a conversation with Gilles Deleuze, Foucault refers to a “theory” as “the regional system of struggle” against power (Foucault 1977c: 208). First of all, as his next comments suggest, Foucault is talking about theoretical practices as a form of counter-discourse. In other words, he is referring to fighting the enemy with his own weapon. If the dominant group exercises its power through discursive practices, the subjugated group may seize power in a discursive manner too.

Furthermore, we have already seen that Foucault is so suspicious of power and discourse that he is not willing to exclude the possibility of anarchism. However, realistically speaking, he prefers to emphasize the practices of freedom over liberation and emancipation, which imply a total freedom from power (see Foucault 1997n: 283). In short, Foucault’s theory does not in principle favor a theoretical political struggle; however, he may suggest counter-discourses for practical reasons. This is why in another interview, when faced with the suggestion that there is a need for “a theoretical elaboration that goes beyond the sphere of partial and repressed experiences,” he replies:
"Why not the opposite? Reject theory and all forms of general discourse. This need for theory is still part of the system we reject" (Foucault 1977d: 231).

A Critical History of Thought

So far, I have been arguing that there has been a widespread misconception that theories are effective political tools of critique. As a result, a discipline such as sociology has become a field of theoretical struggle. This is a misguided struggle because theoretical formulations have a tendency for being epistemological, while what makes people seek discursive changes are not epistemological matters. Foucault insists that the history of ideas should be studied as a history of thought. In fact, he defines his project as a "Critical History of Thought" (Foucault 1998f: 459).

The most important element in the history of thought is the emergence of some experiences as problems. Things that have been taken for granted or normal must first become problematized and demand reflection. The history of thought is the history of problematization, and the study of thought is a genealogy of problems (see Foucault 1997c: 164-6).

Foucault describes thought in the following manner:

Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem...Actually, for a domain of action, a behavior, to enter the field of thought, it is necessary for a certain number of factors to have made it uncertain, to have made it lose its familiarity, or to have provoked a certain number of difficulties around it. These elements result from social, economic, or political processes. (Foucault 1997k: 117)
In spite of its apparent similarity with the sociology of knowledge, the history of thought is different from the conventional sociology of knowledge in the sense that it understands thought as an event which cannot be reduced to or explained in terms of other types of events. Foucault calls this characteristic of thought its "principle of irreducibility" (Foucault 1997r: 201). It is quite possible for the same social conditions to "exist and perform their action for a very long time, before there is effective problematization of thought" (Foucault 1997k: 118). They may also remain long after those conditions have disappeared. According to Foucault, social conditions are only instigators. Of course, this does not mean that thought has no relationship with socio-historical events. They leave their marks on thought, but we cannot understand thought merely as the effect of socio-historical determination (see Foucault 1997r: 201). Thus, thought is:

what establishes, in a variety of possible forms, the play of true and false, and consequently constitutes the human being as a knowing subject..., in other words, it is the basis for accepting or refusing rules, and constitutes human beings as social and juridical subjects; it is what establishes the relation with oneself and with others, and constitutes the human being as ethical subject. (Foucault 1997r: 200).

Once we understand thought as a event and an experience rather than a logical, mental, and psychological process, it will be easier to see why Foucault considers theoretical changes to be ontological critiques. For example, let us consider the very activity of writing this dissertation as an attempt at a theoretical shift in sociology.

This dissertation has a particular history. It began when certain socio-political relationships became problems. For example, I could no longer convince myself, or others for that matter, that, based on the truth presented to me in sociology, certain interventions and changes in my life or the lives of others were justified. In other words,
some parts of my world became problematized. This problem invoked thought. Then, I was experiencing this problem as it related to me as a subject of my actions. Once thoughts puts a subject in a relation to oneself, they establish an ontological relationship. We consider the transformation of thoughts as an ontological critique because it is determined by the relation of one to oneself, and therefore in the case of this dissertation, for instance, the moment that I became satisfied that I could live as an ethical subject if I rearranged my relation to sociology in a certain new way, my relation to sociological truth-games changed such that this relation was no longer a major problem. Now, I could try to write this whole complex process, which was simultaneously personal, social, political, as well as academic and other things as a theoretical dissertation.

The Foucault Shift: An Ontological Rupture

We have already discussed the notion of critique at length. Briefly, critique is an attempt to alter an uncomfortable situation in which one finds oneself. Unlike political revolutionary uprisings against states of domination that mainly involve physical force, critique is directed against discursive powers in form of an activity of thought. In this sense, critique is not concerned with the epistemological validity of a truth, but rather with the power of that truth insofar as it shapes the relation of the subject to herself. Critique is always a "care for oneself," and, in this sense, is ontological. With Christianity, a long process began in the West which sought to epistemologize critique in the form of "care for others". But all the epistemological dilemmas of the social sciences suggest that this process has failed, and still theories are formulated in a process of thought and according to the relations the one can establish with oneself.
Foucault’s project can be described as an attempt to reverse the process and to direct our attention to the ontological character of critique as a care of the self. He argues that we should not consider the care of the self as negative or bad because care for others is not possible without the care of the self. Thus, the care of the self is both morally and analytically prior to the care for others. He develops this point in the following manner:

Starting at a certain point, being concerned with oneself was readily denounced as a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or self interest in contradiction with the interest to be shown in others or the self sacrifice required. All this happened during Christianity; however, I am not simply saying that Christianity is responsible for it. The question is much more complex... (Foucault 1997j: 284-5)

To my mind, ...care for others should not be put before the care of oneself. The care of the self is ethically prior in that the relationship with oneself is ontologically prior. (Foucault 1997j: 287)

To restore to critique its character as ontology, we must stop trying to understand ourselves primarily through the eyes of others. We should not seek to form ourselves at first in relation to others, not only because this is not preferable, but also because it is a contradictory relationship and impossible to maintain as far as the question of ethics and politics are concerned. Of course, we will always have to have social relationships with others. But, it does not follow from this that our active self-formation practices must start from others. We should keep in mind that the self from which we should begin is already a social self because one’s mode of being is socially formed. In other words, the suggestion here is to begin from our ontological experiences rather than from those of others. Of course, as Gadamer would suggest different modes of being can and should come together by having dialogue with each other. But there is always a difference between an interaction which is based on epistemological criteria and one that is informed by ontological experiences.
Modern scientific discourses claim to provide the eyes of others through which we are supposed to know ourselves. But, as noted, every scientific discourse must also be understood as a thought-process. Thoughts put us in relation to ourselves. Therefore, realistically speaking, one cannot be detached from oneself in an active process of forming knowledge of the self. To ask someone to see herself through the eyes of the others from without is to ask her to remain passive. Passivity and thought are ultimately irreconcilable. To be thoughtful is to have a problem and to be alert. The history of ideas and science is the history of thoughts because scientific theories are the outcome of an active process of dealing with certain problems and dangers. Foucault says that his approach to scientific discourses is a genealogy of problems because his “point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous” (Foucault 19970: 256).

In short, political knowledge of the self is always ontological because it results from a process of thought, and thought involves a relation of the self to itself. And this is ontological knowledge, a form of knowledge of a being in which the subject and the object of knowledge are one. To use Foucault’s expression, ontological knowledge of the self is “the soul’s mode of being” (Foucault 19970: 276). Such knowledge should be recognized as the true basis of moral and political practices.

This approach to the question of politics has a significant implication for science. As I have already argued, we need to sever the relation of science and ethics which was historically established through positivism. First of all, there are no necessary links between science and ethics. Secondly, even though discourse is inherently political, it is not the only means of forming an ethical subject. There are a wide variety of non-
discursive or less discursive procedures for this purpose. Here is how Foucault explains these points:

My idea is that it's not at all necessary to relate ethical problems to scientific knowledge. Among the cultural inventions of mankind there is a treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures, and so on, ... which can be very useful as a tools for analyzing what's going on now—and to change it (Foucault 1997o: 261).

This means that we should form ourselves more ontologically. Discourse is an event, and its archaeological examination does not address any epistemological issue in it. However, there is an epistemological orientation in scientific discourses because they take hold of some methodologically established truths. The same is true of critique. Critique is basically ontological. Those who try to avoid the political power of a theory and try to show that its epistemological contradictions are ontologically motivated. However, if we say that Foucault's project is an ontological critique of thought, we wish to emphasize that Foucault does not seek to avoid a discursive form of governmentality through another scientific discourse. Rather, he seeks ways that are less dependent on scientific discourses. Here is an example:

What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life? (Foucault 1997o: 261)

All Foucault's criticisms of modern disciplinary institutions such as the clinic, the prison, the asylum, and the school and all those criticisms of modern scientific discourse were meant to show that we should make ourselves like a work of art, and not as an object of discourse.
The ontological shift in the politics of the self is a *theoretical revolution* in an ironic way. It is a *revolution* in the sense that it frees politics from theory. And it is *theoretical* because at the same time it liberates theory from politics and allows it to advance according to epistemological criteria. In other words, sociological theories may be formulated mainly for scientific purposes, while political concerns are addressed ontologically. To make things more complicated, the irony is that while Foucault makes the case for this shift theoretically, it does not need Foucault's theory for its politics. It is generous enough to let Foucault’s theory of discourse to find its proper place in the family of sciences.

We should be under no illusion, science will always remain politically potent as a tool for inventing new and more effective technologies of domination. Ethical practices that are ontological can only free the technologies of the self from the power of scientific discourse. We can only hope that if we form ourselves as ethical subjects in an ontological fashion like a work of art we may need fewer technologies of domination. But there is no factual support for this optimism. Furthermore, only a few social scholars (Foucault, and Marx to some extent) have made the call for freeing science and ethics from each other. Even Foucault has rarely been understood as making such a call. Thus, we may conclude that for the time being, the ontological shift remains an unanswered call, and various sociological theories continue to be formulated in search of an acceptable basis for the formation of ethical subjects.
The temptation of discourse is its power and politics of truth. This work, in a Foucauldian fashion, sought to explain our relation to the truth as constituted by sociological theories. We did not study the works of various scholars to evaluate their truthfulness, as most critics do with regard to sociological theories. We analyzed these works to see what kind of relationship we could have with the truths they assert. As people who live in the age of science and positivism, it is more important for us to know about our relation to sociological truth than sociology's truth. Thus, in Comte and Durkheim, for example, we found that they wanted to save us against irrational and arbitrary forms of governmentality, while Weber and Popper tried to create more space for us in the face of too much rationality. Marx and Foucault pointed toward a totally different type of relation to truth, i.e. an ontological one.

The Sociological Significance of Discourse Analysis

In Chapter VIII, I explained that Foucault's discourse analysis is a scientific approach that does not deal with the sciences at the level of their scientificity. Being epistemologically neutral, it tries to study the discursive aspect of the sciences in relation to other discourses and socio-historical non-discursive events. Here, I would like to
briefly comment on the sociological merits of such an approach. However, I should first make a remark with regard to discourse analysis (or archaeology) being a science and in that sense epistemological. As mentioned, discourse analysis is itself a science and must conduct its studies epistemologically in order to qualify as a science. But it differs from other epistemologically oriented fields of study in the sense that it does not study science as an epistemological endeavor. It rather studies science as discourse. With this remark, I have sought to clarify that discourse analysis is not a social constructivist approach to science in the prevalent sense of the term. There is no idea of discourse in the social constructivist literature. Even though it understands knowledge as a social construction or institution, as I explained earlier through Donna Haraway, social constructivism has serious epistemological implications. Moreover, Popper also argued that it was a form of sociological reductionism. I have already explained that discourse analysis is epistemologically neutral; while it takes socio-historical events into account, it does not reduce knowledge to them.

Epistemological inquiries into a science cannot be considered a political critique because what is political is discourse, not science itself. Discourse is not epistemologically sensitive. Foucault's brilliance lies here, not in instituting a new scientific field of investigation with its distinct domain of analysis. He is able to explain why scientific discourses change and how the changes in the domain of discourse may change the direction of science through non-epistemological means. Foucault himself exemplifies this point. His discomfort as a social subject motivated him to alter his self. For this purpose, he studied and aesthetically evaluated different forces that he held responsible for his self-formation. He was not satisfied until he found the true source of
some of these forces in the discourses of his society and culture. This aesthetic or ontological finding informs his discourse analysis as a scientific field of investigation. Once a scientific field of investigation, discourse analysis can be subjected to all the relevant epistemological criteria. Discourse analysis differs from other sciences only with respect to its subject matter, i.e. discourse. Otherwise, it has basic features of a scientific discipline.

There is no direct link between discourse analysis and scientific shifts. Foucault, or for that matter, other discourse analysts are not able to suggest corrective changes in the domain of science through archaeological study. Analysis of discourse only reveals how discourse uses science to constitute the subject. It cannot tell science what is epistemologically right or wrong. But, it can tell a critical subject how the relationship between the two could be modified or severed. It is the subject who ontologically assesses the value of the relationship between discourse and science. Discourse analysis tells her where the strategic points of connection are, and what roles a particular type of arrangement plays in discursive formations. As a result of her ontological assessment and this knowledge of the organization of science in discourse, the subject can decide what kinds of changes she wishes to introduce in this relation. One option is to modify the relationship between the two if possible and desirable. If this is not possible or desirable, another option is to search for a new scientific findings and articulate a new discourse upon them that is more politically and ethically acceptable. In most cases, this second option is more difficult and less likely to be pursued. A third option, which is even more difficult, and given the emphasis of the western culture on discourse, may be impossible, is to sever the relation of discourse and science altogether.
The third option was discussed previously in connection to Foucault's power-knowledge thesis. In the first two options, changes and shifts in the sciences are not the direct results of the analysis of their respective discourses. They are mediated by critical social actors. Discourse analysis is often expected to offer an alternative to the discourses it analyzes. Discourse analysis is not a critique by itself because critique is conducted ontologically, and discourse analysis (or archaeology) is a science; it is a description of the systems of positivities in a discursive field. However, I discussed that there is nothing epistemologically right or wrong about these positivities. Therefore, discourse analysis—as a science—cannot evaluate their epistemological soundness. If there is a problem with them, it is a problem that the subject may have with their roles in the constitution of her self. Thus, the expectation that genealogy should provide a better alternative for what it studies is a misplaced expectation. It can only describe what the systems of positivities are in a particular discourse, and what other positivities could be formed in their place. But no words can be pronounced as to which positivity is better. Foucault was particularly troubled by this expectation to the extent that in some cases he found it difficult to explain the implications of his work to scholarly symposiums. One example:

I never behaved like a prophet—my books don't tell people what to do. And they often reproach me for not doing so (and maybe they are right), and at the same time they reproach me for behaving like a prophet. I have written a book about the history of psychiatry from the seventeenth century to the very beginning of the nineteenth. In this book, I said nearly nothing about the contemporary situation, but people still have read it as an antipsychiatry position. Once, I was invited to Montreal to attend a symposium about psychiatry. At first, I refused to go there, since I am not a psychiatrist, even if I have some experience—a very short experience as I told you earlier. But they assured me that they were inviting me only as a historian of psychiatry to give an introductory speech. Since I like Quebec, I went. And I was trapped because I was presented by the president as the representative in France of antipsychiatry. Of course, there were nice
people there who had never read a line of what I had written and they were convinced that I was an antipsychiatrist. (Foucault 1997a: 131-132).

These misreadings and unreasonable expectations are mainly caused by the fact that most readers of Foucault do not have a clear understanding of what discourse analysis is and how it is related to Foucault's critical project.

To understand the relationship of critique and discourse analysis, we should always bring in the subject as the mediating agent between the two. Critique of discourse is an ontological critique which can be informed by discourse analysis. For the sake of argument, let us assume that some marginalized social groups are aesthetically convinced that a sociological discourse is something to be critical of, because it is a source of their social marginalization and discomfort. They can critique the sociological discourse either by totally rejecting it, in a somewhat spontaneous manner, like many anti-science movements all around the globe. They can alternatively critique it by endless trial and error until they find a sociological discourse which is aesthetically acceptable. However, a more systematic critique can also be conducted through a discourse analysis. Such a critique seeks to change the discourse in question through systematic interrogation and by confronting it with a plurality of political questions. Informed by an analysis of the discourse, these questions can identify strategic points in a discursive formation and suggest some alternative discursive formations. They can also pose these questions to the alternative discourses to assess their ability to satisfactorily deal with the changing conditions of these marginalized social subjects.

But, unfortunately, discourse analysis is a painstaking task and no one has fully assumed this responsibility with respect to sociological discourse. Many authors have written on history of sociology, sociology of sociology, philosophy of the social sciences,
and the critique of sociology. But, none of these studies directly and consistently deals with sociological discourse as such.

In my opinion, the absence of a discourse analysis of sociological discourse best explains the theoretical and empirical confusion that we are witnessing in the discipline. Every department of sociology has become a battleground for contesting knowledges. This does not mean that “sociology” should not be contested. On the contrary, sociology, like any other science, should be challenged as a science in epistemological terms in its proper domain. It can also be critiqued, as a discourse, in ontological terms, as Gadamer and Foucault would argue. This second challenge is more fruitful for ethico-political purposes. It is even potentially more fruitful for scientific purposes, as is shown by how Foucault’s political objectives led him to a new scientific domain. My point here is that current theoretical rivalries in sociology are characterized by a kind of ontological spontaneity. That is, since sociologists (or the critical actors) are not informed by an archaeological analysis of the discipline and sociological knowledge, their critique of the existing body of knowledge is more like a spontaneous reaction against it. An archaeological study of sociological theories can help us to make a more accurate assessment of what should be changed and what should be preserved for political purposes. A Foucauldian discursive approach can make theoretical rivalries more explicit and more fruitful.

For example, Foucault believed that the events of May 1968 presented politics with a whole series of questions. Marxist political doctrines of the time could not satisfactorily answer these questions. They were about women, the environment, minorities and marginalized groups in general, the role of the sciences and experts in
everyday life, delinquents and others (see Foucault 1997k: 115). Of course, these questions were not posed only to the Marxist political doctrine. Sociological and philosophical discourses were and are also expected to answer these questions. In many cases, these questions are political in nature, and sociology as a science cannot answer them. This impasse is usually overcome through discursive sociological theorization. In other words, political actors formulate discursive sociological theories in response to questions that sociology as a science cannot answer. This has been the main deriving force behind theoretical shifts in sociology.

Sociology has always been looked up to for solving social problems; its discourse has always been political. Stephen Cole cites a review of the history of American sociology by Stephen P. Turner and Jonathan R. Turner where it is argued that “from its inception the people attracted to the study of sociology have been motivated by a desire to bring about social reform, not answer theoretical questions” (Cole 1994: 152). Cole thinks that this socio-political activism cannot be reconciled with the theoretical advancement of sociology. Thus, he suggests that research topics be selected only on a theoretical basis:

For example, if every adviser to every Ph.D. student would require the student to justify a dissertation topic on the basis of its theoretical significance, there might have been a more rapid accumulation of theoretically relevant knowledge in sociology. (Cole 1994: 152)

Justification of research topics in terms of its theoretical, or scientific significance is what every science should do if it is to grow scientifically. But in contemporary sociology, this does not seem to be a prevalent practice because as we noted in Part I, sociology has always made the question of ethics and politics its major concern. The scientific “value-
freedom” which Weber sought was never realized, while sociologists have not been willing to wholeheartedly embrace Max Weber’s advice:

But the professor should not demand the right as a professor to carry the marshal’s baton of the statesman or reformer in his knapsack. This is just what he does when he uses the unassailability of the academic chair for the expression of political (or cultural-political) evaluation. In the press, in the public meetings, in associations, in essays, in every avenue which is open to every other citizen, he can and should do what his God or daemon demands. (Weber 1949: 5)

This passage should not be read as a preemptive measure to deter an anticipated danger. Rather, it should be viewed as desperate attempt to save a science on the verge of becoming intoxicated by discourse, above all, religious, political, and moral discourse.

But, should political activists leave their politics behind the gates of the university when they are convinced that what goes on in the university has far-reaching political consequences for their life? Sociology came into existence as a result of political interests, and never lost its interest in politics and ethics. Therefore, political actors do not see why they should leave its further development to the discretion of “scientists.” The problem seems to have assumed a self-perpetuating character.

In his editorial introduction to the special issue of *Sociological Forum*, which asks *What’s Wrong with Sociology?*, Cole describes the present state of sociology in the following words:

*Today there is a sense among many American sociologists that all is not well with their discipline...academic administrators seem to have a generally low regard for sociology departments that seem to engage in much more internal bickering than departments in other disciplines. As Turner and Turner (1990) point out, enrollments in sociology departments, both undergraduate and graduate, have sharply declined...Sociologists who do research in Washington are advised when going to the Hill to identify themselves as “social scientists” rather sociologists. The low opinion ...is shared by many members of the profession itself, who*
believe that somehow the discipline has failed to live up to its promise. (Cole 1994b: 129)

Elsewhere in this special issue, interference of political ideology with cognitive development is discussed as one of the main contributors to the present state of sociology. Cole, for example, argues that the intense political interest in its subject matter makes a work theoretically less significant. He asserts that

When feminists study the cause of gender inequality most are not doing so primarily because this topic is of theoretical significance but because they want to show that the inequality that is "bad" is a result of discrimination that "should" be eliminated. (Cole 1994a: 151)

Indeed, this might be the case, but one has to go beyond this level of interest in order to explain why sociological theories shift in the way they do. Even Weber did not have any problem with the kind of political interest Cole attributes to feminists as long as, methodologically speaking, they could remain within the scientific norm of 'value-freedom'. Weber accepted the relevance of sociology with regard to political issues before and after the actual research. We need to explain how sociological theories become intrinsically political even when they are based on the findings of the most positivistic oriented minds in the field. Such an explanation is possible only if we understand these theories as discourse.

Foucault has theorized what almost everybody suspected, namely, that knowledge has power. There is thus a theoretical justification for the presence of politics at the university. At the same time, he has also shown where we should look for the power and political charge of science: in discourse. Discourse is ideological, political, and related to power. In addition, through Foucault, analysis of discourse has also become a science. Therefore, we are able to scientifically inform our politics of the self if we want to
conduct it discursively, and not just aesthetically. However, the political act is not
directly related to discourse analysis; rather, it is ontologically decided upon, and
archaeological analysis is just an aid in this process.

We should bear in mind that the political questions now being asked of sociology
are different from the ones asked of classical sociology. They are more directly related to
the politics of the self. As Foucault noted, in the Iranian Revolution there was a call for a
new subjectivity:

This perhaps is the soul of the uprising: “Of course, we have to change
this regime and get rid of this man, we have to change this corrupt
administration, we have to change the whole country, the political
organization, the economic system, the foreign policy. But, above all, we
have to change ourselves. Our way of being, our relationship with others,
with things, with eternity, with God, etc., must be completely changed and
there will only be a true revolution if this radical change in our experience
takes place.” I believe that it is here that Islam played a role. (Foucault
1988: 217-218)

For Foucault, the Iranian Revolution, like the events of May 1968, represents the
intensification of a whole new series of political questions which can no longer be
responded to through predominant contemporary political discourses. This is because
these questions are related to the politics of the self, with our “way of being, our
relationship with others, with things, with eternity, with God, etc.” Modern subjectivity,
constituted through scientific discourse, has become a problem, a social problem. There
should be studies into the discursive aspects of this subjectivity before any attempt is
made to respond to the issues related to the politics of the self. In the early eighties just
before his death, Foucault himself “proposed a two-pronged research project with
colleagues and students at Berkeley—on the political spirituality and self-fashioning in

437
the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the arts of socialist governmentality in the twenties" (Rabinow 1997a: xxiii).

The emphasis on the politics of the self and its relation with modern scientific discourses led us to a new course of investigation into the contemporary political questions, to the politics of the self in modern societies. As noted earlier, non-discursive socio-political institutions such as the state and the economy are closely related to discursive practices, and thereby to the politics of the self. Foucault uses crucial concepts such as discourse, ethics, governmentality, and critique to study what socio-historical developments are involved in the formation of the social subject. Given the epistemological and discursive orientation of modern society, any scientific study of this society must be equipped with an appropriate method of studying scientific discourses. And for political and critical purposes, we must also have an approach such as archaeological analysis enabling us to ask the right questions with regard to the socio-political reality of modern society. This is how I view the sociological significance of discourse analysis given the historical disposition of modern society. However, generally speaking, Foucault would rather to adopt a more ontological approach to ethics and politics.

**Discourse is Nobody's Property**

Foucault cautioned against the dangers of discursive truth, which was established through a very complicated process and under the directive of various rules of formation. These processes and rules are too complicated to be easily discerned. One has to painstakingly conduct archaeological studies of a discourse and its relation with other
discursive and non-discursive events before one can explain how that particular discourse is constructed and how it can be rearranged strategically in order to produce a different truth. In other words, discourse is not very accessible to individual political actors or even to a group of them. It belongs to a general episteme, not to a particular discipline or an interdisciplinary field. That is one reason why this dissertation has no claim to be an archaeological study of sociology. I tried to argue that sociological theories should be understood as discursive events and show some of the advantages of such an approach as compared to conducting an epistemological analysis of sociology. I believe our first task is to establish the legitimacy and worthiness of such an endeavor before we collectively decide if we wish to assume this responsibility.

In short, my point is that discourse is too wild to be brought under individual or even collective control. As we noted, discourse is the positive unconscious of knowledge, and as such it eludes the consciousness of its initiators. I am not quite sure that even great scholars know about the operation of different positivities and rules of formation in their discourse. In my discussion of Durkheim, for example, I mentioned that his unique conception of society as a real ontological entity allows Durkheim to avoid some of the dilemmas of his sociological approach to knowledge and ethics. This is a very small discursive operation in his work, but I doubt if anybody has paused upon reading this passage in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*:

To interpret a sociological theory of knowledge in that way is to forget that even if society is a specific reality, it is not an empire within an empire: It is part of nature and nature's highest expression. The social realm is a natural realm that differs from others only in its greater complexity. It is impossible that nature, in that which is most fundamental in itself, should be radically different between one part and another of itself. (Durkheim 1995: 17)
Through a special conception of society and nature as infallible beings, Durkheim avoids all the confusions and paradoxes of the sociology of knowledge, epistemology, feminism, and the critique of ideology. If knowledge is socially constructed, we should not worry about its epistemological validity, which is critical for a positivistic notion of science because society as natural entity can make no mistakes. I am not disputing Durkheim’s conception of nature here. Rather, I want to show that this crucial step is taken by Durkheim without trying to establish why nature cannot be wrong. An archaeological analysis of the modern episteme may one day reveal that such a mystical conception of nature which most positivists would attribute to primitive people was still part of the modern episteme.

Let us turn to the temptation of discourse. Discursive practices are seductive in their power. We may think that a particular discourse is our property because we have produced it, and thereby know it very well. But, the fact is that rather than being anybody’s property, it is everybody’s master. Its power may induce pleasure in us, but we should decide if we want to live with its risks. There are two types of risk involved in a discursive orientation, one related to our politics and the other to our sciences.

As far as ethico-political questions are concerned, we should choose between an aesthetically- or ontologically-achieved ethics which is more accessible to and manageable by us, and one that is discursive, over which we have little control. Jalal-u-Din Rumi is a great Persian poet who employs many ancient legends to make moral points. He describes a magician who found a dragon dead on the icy top of a mountain. He decides to carry it to the city of Baghdad and arrange a circus for the public to come and see the dragon. Once in Baghdad, a large number of people gathered to see the
dragon. Everybody was amused, including the magician himself. The dragon slowly began moving and people praised the skill of the magician for moving a dead dragon as though it were alive. The magician knew that it was not his work, but he was enjoying the public reaction toward him. The poor man had brought a frozen dragon to the hot Sun of Baghdad, and as it was exposed to the rays of the Sun more and more, it became more and more agile. Suddenly it gained enough power to rise up and destroy the magician and the gathering public. Such is the temptation of discourse in the circus of politics.

The natural sciences rose and progressed as a result of their close relationship to the industrial capitalist economy. The rise of the social sciences, on the other hand, was linked to social, political and ethical matters. Based on my argument in this dissertation, however, we can see that these two types of relationships are radically different. In the case of the natural sciences and technology, the truth that is established in their relationship is not directly involved in formation of the subject. But the truth of the social sciences is intended to form us as ethical subjects. As long as these sciences exhibit this type of interest in social subjects, political actors will continue their critique of the social sciences.

As far as sociology is concerned, I believe we should decide whether it is more to our benefit to limit sociology to formal analysis, or to continue to politicize it through discursive practices. I happen to be a Weberian in this respect and believe that sociology may scientifically progress to the degree that its claims regarding political matters are modest. It was with such a conviction that Weber believed science was just a vocation among others, and we should not seek it for any direct practical reason. I should add that the scientific knowledge provided by sociology can be used for practical purposes.
according to our ontologically-established values. I know that many would say science is inherently political, and we cannot employ it only as a tool. Since I have already responded to this position in my discussion of feminist epistemology and the sociology of knowledge, I will not repeat myself here.

I have also argued that Foucault’s approach can be adopted for the purpose of studying social phenomena that conventional sociology is interested in. Socialization processes, social institutions, and knowledge are areas in which this approach has already produced valuable results.

Finally, I have reached certain conclusions regarding theoretical shifts. I am now inclined to say that there was never a radical shift in sociology. Sociologists from Comte to Marx, and Parsons never abandoned their interest in politics, and the current politicization of the discipline is the natural outcome of the discursive potential that sociologists have continually introduced into the discipline over the last two centuries. An epistemological sociology and a discursive sociology have always coexisted together in a tense relationship, and in this sense there has never been a radical change in the nature of sociological theorization. Theories have been constructed in such a way that they could meet the demands of these two sociologies simultaneously in the best possible manner. But because of the difficulty of managing the tension between epistemological criteria and discursive politics critical actors had to formulate new theories constantly. I have tried to explain these theoretical shifts through Foucault’s work. However, I have also argued that there can be a more radical theoretical shift as represented by Foucault. The Foucault shift in the social sciences is based on a sharp separation of politics as an ontological field from science as an epistemological endeavor. But since this shift is not
completely adopted by other sociologists, I believe that there is still a great deal of continuity in the discipline insofar as sociological theories are still constructed with regard to the demands of the two sociologies mentioned above. We should decide what kind of sociology we need, a discursive or a formal one? Should we be interested in the aesthetic and ontological form of politics, we will have to stop expecting ethico-political solutions as opposed to *problematizations* from sociology.

Since an ontologically-acquired ethics is not imposed from outside, this might be a good reason to be concerned about its unpredictability. Ethics is essentially a constraint on freedom, and an ontological system of ethics also serves this purpose. However, the only difference between an ontologically-oriented ethics and an epistemologically-oriented ethics is that the former relies less on moral codes, and more on moral judgements and ethical insights. This aspect of the ontological approach to politics and ethics needs to be further studied. One source of concern might be that an ontological ethics is too individualistic to be of any use in social life. I believe while this is a valid point, it overlooks the fact that our life experiences are almost entirely social, and therefore any ontological experience is social and reflects our social experiences. As I have noted several times, all forms of ethics are *essentially* ontological under all socio-historical conditions, and the differences we observe between various ethical systems are due to the degree of emphasis we put on ontology or epistemology. In other words, the social character of ethics is not a matter of dispute, but rather the question is whether it should be imposed epistemologically or ontologically. I believe a more direct ontological orientation toward ethics can produce a more genuine ethical response to social problems.
than a system of morality which argues one ought to do this or that because scientific findings support it.

However, if we find the ontological choice unrealistic given the present socio-historical conditions, we may still choose a formal Foucauldean approach to social phenomena, because Foucault's discourse analysis also enables us to see how scientific discourses are constructed, and how they may be rearranged. As I noted, discourse is largely unmanageable, but if one is to give in to its temptation, discourse analysis will be a great help in this venture. And if neither of these two options appeals to us, we should lower our scientific expectations from sociology, and let it be one more game among other discursive political games.
References

Adorno, Theodor W.

Bakhtin, Mikhail

Ben-David, Joseph

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann

Berger, Peter L. and Hansfried Kellner

Boudon, Raymond and François Bourricaud

Cole, Stephen

Coleman, James

Colin, Gordon

Collins, Randall

Comte, Auguste

445


Dawe, Alan


Derrida, Jacques


Dews, Peter


Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Paul Rabinow


Durkheim, Emile


Engels, Frederick
Faubion, James D.
Foucault, Michel


**Gadamer, Hans-Georg**


Giddens, Anthony

Gilbert, Margaret

Goldmann, Lucien

Gouldner, Alvin W.

Habermas, Jürgen

Halliday, Terence C.

Haraway, Donna J.

Harding, Sandra

Harris, Wendell V.

Hartsock, Nancy C. M.

Heidegger, Martin
Hoy, David Couzens and Thomas McCarthy  

Ibn Arabi, Muhyi-D-Din  
1975 *The Wisdom of the Prophets (Fusus al-Hikam)*. Translated from Arabic to French by Titus Burckhadt and from French to English by Angela Culme-Seymour. Gloucestershire: Beshara Publications

Kant, Immanuel  

Kemple, Thomas M.  

Kierkegaard, Søren  

Kolakowski, Leszek  

Kuhn, Thomas S.  

Lakatos, Imre  

Lenzer, Gertrud  

Lipset, Semour Martin  

Lynch, David M. and Richard McFerron  

Luhmann, Niklas  

Lyotard, Jean-François  

Mannheim, Karl  

Marcuse, Herbert  
Marx, Karl

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels
1975 *The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the “Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon”*. Moscow: Progress Publisher.

Matthews, David Ralph

McCarthy, Thomas

Molotch, Harvey

Outhwaite, William

Parsons, Talcott

Pocock, D. F.

Popper, Karl R.


Rabinow, Paul


Ramberg, Björn T.


Rosen, Stanley H.


Scaff, Lawrence A.


Simpson, George


Smith, Dorothy E.


Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty


Swedberg, Richard


Touraine, Alain


Tweney, Rayan D, M. E. Doherty and C. R. Mynatt


Wallace, Walter L.

Weber, Max


Williams, Raymond

1976 *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Fontana Press.

Zeitlin, Irving M.