

Editor's note

Thank you for picking up the second issue of "The Reed," St. Olaf College's student-produced existentialist journal. "The Reed" is a forum for under-graduate students who are interested in existentialist thought. As you can see from the table of contents, this is not a dry academic journal. One of our goals is to encourage existentialist thought in any medium, whether it is traditional academic writing, creative prose, poetry or visual art. If you are interested in submitting a work for publication, please send a hard copy of your work with a PC-compatible disk to:

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Comments From The Subway Underworld

Arrika Finn

Madrid, Spain 1992

Tunnels link tunnels to darkness only.
This is where the world loses all its
unpocketed change. Half the city is drunk
and rocking with the rush of metal
trains. We've been warned about those
who come here to sleep off dreams -
The New World is only catacomb
and two-track lines, *Bland-Exile Laid Open*.

Heavy, yellow light
driven into so many backs pushing toward
half-parted doorways. Could it be their sudden reflections
which draw them into paused cars? I am shoved
as packs of children dare each other to touch,
to ear-press humming steel.
Noise has nowhere to go, everywhere.

God will be driven out
by sound, if not by hot scent of urine, stale bits of
newspaper print which precipitate in corners.
I had been thinking there was no such thing
when someone read from the wall:

*Everyone into the sea
so the sharks can have something to eat.*

It-Boy

David Batcher

In the dying afternoon light in his tiny living room in a small Minnesota town, Tim, who, thanks to Marlboro, has sustained a cold for four weeks, is expectorating like a champ and chain-smoking while suffering quietly through an anxiety attack about a number of things at once. His phone should be shut off any time now and he has no way to pay the bill; his antidepressants will run out tomorrow and he has likewise no way to pay for that; the meat he's coughing out of his chest is getting darker in hue, from the radioactive yellow-green to a color he can no longer deny is *purple-gray*; he doesn't know where he's going to get cigarette (or food) money; and he's afraid to show his face at the hotel where he works because he's been blamed completely unjustly for a rash of children burnt by a freak over-chlorinating of the pool. And, oh yeah, he can't see that he has any real future. He graduates in two weeks with a degree in English, concentration in Elizabethan drama, which he vaguely recalls having once enjoyed. And the only job possibility is to write for TV-- he's got an "in" via his sister's boyfriend and everyone's advising him to "go for it," since he wrote a one-act which everyone thought was "just real funny stuff" last Spring.

So in desperation, before the phone's cut out, he's on the phone to his sister's boyfriend, who works out in L.A. on a sit-com called "Emergency!" which chronicles the madcap adventures of a country E.R. staff, and who has told Tim to call him re: maybe getting a gig writing for the show after he graduates from college. Tim's calling to make sure that it's a pipe-dream and can be added to his list of impossible futures.

"Tim-san!" Devin greets him. "How's life on the tundra."

"Super," Tim dispassionately trying to teach himself to cross one eye. "I was, uh, wondering about that thing you said at Christmas."

A pause on the other end of the line. "Help me out here, buddy."

"About writing... for the sit-com."

"Hey- bueno idea there, grasshopper. Send something pronto."

"Yeah?"

"Actually, super-prontella. We need all the help we can get, our head writer just OD'd on, uh, something or other, and we've got other writers here, you know, but I'm

getting the sense, and this is on the q.t., that we need a new voice around here. No one has a single idea."

"So you're... what're you saying."

"I'm saying that what I'd normally say is that you should write some spec scripts and send 'em out, and I'm still saying that, but in addition what I'm saying is that we might use your stuff right off the bat because we're scraping. I mean, this week Urkel's doing a guest spot."

"Oh."

"So you called at a, how would I, really fortuitous moment is what I'm driving at."

"Well, what do you need, as far as, uh, what's the show about?"

"Country E.R. whose resident is from New York City, a sort of fish-out-of-water, 'Northern Exposure Lite', sort of thing. Hicks with funny injuries, the occasional horse, pig or duck finds its way in, with a broken leg or beak or whatever, and I'm advising you to stick with the cute animals by the way, no chickens or snakes or any shit like that."

"There are snakes... on farms?"

"And- hey!- this is super brainstorming here, really a creative moment we're having- but one of the cast members, the one who plays nurse Mary Lou, she just got out of a treatment program for anorexia/bulimia, and I'm thinking, like could you write an episode for her, sort of one of those funny-but-deeply-serious things, like "This week, on a Very Special episode of "Emergency," etc etc?"

"I think I hear you," lapsing into a coughing fit which produces a lavender glob which Tim grimly examines after spitting into a kleenex.

"That's my man, yeah, get right on it. You could really help us out, we'll take a look, and see where it goes from there."

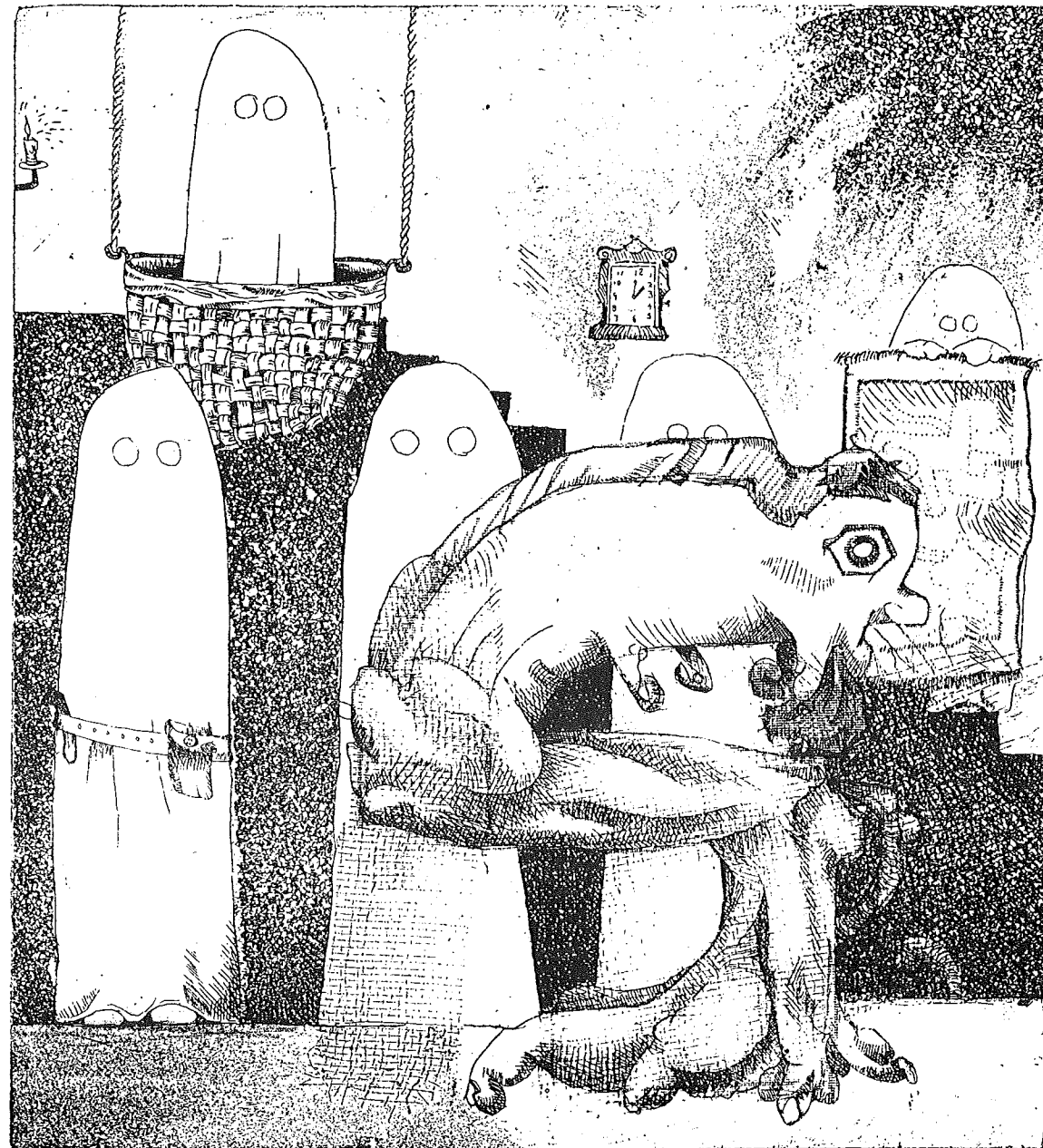
"All right."

"Mega-bueno! Fed-ex it, Timmo. Till then, take your passion and make it happen."

"Chow."

This call went much better than Tim had hoped for. This seems like the kind of opening he should welcome as a big break. He is simultaneously aware of several things:

(a) An exhausted, passive refusal to whore himself out to the Hollywood entertainment machine. It inches against the inside of his skin; it's a resistance he feels pulling him away from the computer whenever he sits down to start the script.



Albert felt uneasy...

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(b) That he's a walking cliché. Not wanting to play the game of the adult world. Feeling like one of the Lost Children of his generation. He thought he would outgrow this and, like so many of his peers, suddenly become excited about the Job World, Money, and a Normal Life. Hasn't happened. But it's not like he has any other, more subversive, ambitions. As he thinks about it, the only ambition Tim really has is to figure out a way to sleep and smoke at the same time.

(c) That starvation, and eventually, eviction, are becoming ominous shapes on the horizon of actuality. He's going to have to figure out a way to sing for his supper.

(d) That he's still a virgin. This datum has nothing to do with his present situation, but it's exactly at times like this when the thought reoccurs to him. This is the decisive factor, though, which leads him to finally perch in front of his ancient laptop and punch out a script. When he is tired or discouraged, he tells himself: "Sit-com writers must get laid. They must."

Lo and behold, three months later, Tim is the hottest thing on the sit-com block— he's being wined and dined by producers, he's got more money than he knows what to do with, he's writing full-time for "Emergency!" which has shot from the brink of cancellation to number three, and Entertainment Weekly, who branded him "Hollywood's It-Boy", gives him single-handed credit for "'Emergency!'s miraculous transformation from one of TV's worst shows into the hippest, cleverest, and most insightful part of Wednesday night's line-up." And, since that article was published, complete with picture of him lying on the floor, hair scattered, looking half-dead with eyes half-open, he's been getting laid. Every night. By women whose kind did not exist in that small Minnesota town. He doesn't even have to try; these women come right up to him. He's also been sleeping a lot with the woman who plays Mary Lou. TV stars and models. It's a miracle, all right.

He's sitting in on one of the daily morning meetings of the production staff and cast, who are all grovellingly grateful for his presence. He doesn't seem to get it— writing these scripts is easy, something he doesn't find particularly hard. In his first three weeks he stomped out five usable scripts, had produced one a week since then, and now it's mostly hanging with the staff and cast and doing rewrites when it's called for.

Anyway, he's at a long table, it's about 10:30, and the director, Gus, is at the head, with Tim at his right, and next to Tim is a more or less regular love interest, Jane, who plays

Nurse Mary Lou, and across from her at the table is Mark, who plays Dr. Goldberg, the jaded New Yorker who refers to his time in the country E.R. as "being lost in the desert, without the hope of a promised land," and there are various other cast members (the ambiguously gay x-ray technician, the East-Indian gastroenterologist, the arrogant but bafoonish head surgeon from upstairs, the devastatingly handsome paramedic/ambulance driver, as well as the local handyman who's in charge of down-home backwardsness) sitting around the table, with producers in dark suits with gelled hair and a couple other writers dotted among them. And Devin, beaming. Up to 63% of those present are wearing sunglasses even though there are no windows in this room. Most are sipping "frappucinos," blended fruit "smoothies," or Diet Cokes. Tim had to invest in a coffee machine for the office, out-of-pocket, but of course he's the only one who uses it.

"All right, people," Gus begins, "real superlativos on last night's show, and again a big gracias to our It-Boy Tim, whose script is producing buzz, major buzz, and I don't think it's premature to say some Emmy-chatter, and now let's get started on a read through of this week's script." He turns to Tim. "Any pearls of wisdom, words of explanation, before we begin?"

"No... I, uh... No."

"Fantastic."

They begin reading. The show's main plot revolves around Buford, the handyman, and the burden that he's feeling, approaching his 30th birthday, of his virginity. He confides in Dr. Goldberg, who tells him it's no big deal and swears secrecy, but via Mary Lou the word gets out and soon everyone has two cents. Raheed, the gastroenterologist, explains grimly that "sex is a very pleasurable doorway into a world of pain," and Mary Lou drives him crazy with irrepressible that's-so-sweet looks and when he irritably asks her "What?" she's always saying "Nothing," then leaving the room and giggling audibly from off-stage. Jason, the strapping paramedic dispenses big-brotherly advice which only depresses Buford more, and Dr. James, the head surgeon from upstairs, feigns disinterest but eventually confides to Buford, in a scene as touching as it is funny, that it's a tradition in his family for the father to take the son on his sixteenth birthday to the local whorehouse.

"I'd never pay for sex!" Buford exclaims.

"There is no such thing as free sex," Raheed comments as he passes by. "Somehow or other-- you pay."

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Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and 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. (EST, 117)

I claim that the genealogical critique is no more than a practice of “thought” for Foucault.³⁸ As an antiscience, genealogy is non-systematic. Therefore, it does not subvert the local differences that global theories must in order to capture its object in the form of “doublet.” This non-systematic character indicates that genealogy, *just as thought*, is not interested in questioning an object “as to meaning,” but in “[detaching] oneself from it.” And I argued before that genealogies took discourses to be evidence of problematization; *just as thought* “reflects on [its object] as a problem.”

There could be a genealogy of Feminism. Such a discourse would describe the space in which the female body recovered itself and developed its own science of “the female subject.”³⁹ And no doubt this would be a critique of feminism. So in this way, I can manage an answer to Fraser’s original objection. That answer is to say: yes, Foucault’s genealogy does *not* help us differentiate between good and bad social regimes and good and bad kinds of resistance. It cannot perform this task because it is not a global normative knowledge; but because it is not a global normative knowledge the genealogy is also able to subvert the domination which traditional critique actually enables. Its answer is not an autonomy or a liberation, but the constant practice of freedom. This is Foucault’s freedom of thought—moving beyond “the subject” by uncovering “subjectification.” Here is the possibility of a feminist discourse and a critique that does not *oppress*: because it does not *liberate* in the modern sense, either.

³⁸ Note that Foucault says that thought takes an object. This should not alarm us, however, because establishing an object is a far cry from subjectifying through science.

³⁹ See a radical example: Rosi Bradotti’s “sexed ontology” in “The Politics of Ontological Difference.”

Nigel, the ambiguously gay x-ray technician, sympathizes and drops ambiguously gay factoids about his own sexual history (“You know, I didn’t lose it until I joined the Navy”). There’s also an interconnected sub-plot, wherein guest-star Alyssa Milano (who will be dressed like Daisy Duke in cut-offs so short that a production assistant will have to make a Nair run) drops in with a sick heifer.

“I didn’t spend six years in medical school to treat livestock!” Dr. Goldberg cries.

“Please, Dr. Goldberg, she’ll die without your help!”

“Udderly ridiculous!” Nigel quips.

Of course Dr. Goldberg, beneath his hardened exterior, has a heart of gold, and agrees to help. But it ends up that this cow is going into labor, and who comes to the rescue but Buford, who delivers the calf off-stage and wins the affection of the Alyssa Milano character, who, it is suggested in a scene that takes place the following morning, lays Buford repeatedly that night. All is well. Lights up and out.

The crowd around the table, minus the jealous-eyed writing staff, applauds Tim for a job well done. Dewy-eyed, the guy who plays Buford thanks Tim for his first star-vehicle, saying, “You’ve given Buford a depth I never could’ve imagined.”

Tim nods, recalling that it took less time for him to write that script than it will take to air the show next Wednesday night.

He’s lying in bed with Jane, smoking a cigarette. He’s experiencing a sensation which has been familiar to him since he was about thirteen-- post-ejaculatory loneliness, that mercilessly clear head which follows the frenzy of working toward orgasm, the ten minutes of calm objectivity which can range from very pleasing to very scary, depending on other life-variables. Thing is, he always imagined that this sadness would at least be much less acute in the presence of another person, which would make sense, but he’s feeling about as lonely as a little guy can. And tonight, for whatever reason, a little expressive.

“Jane,” he asks quietly, “do you ever get the feeling that what we’re doing is kind of... empty?”

She issues of sigh of forbearance. At least he can’t see her eyes rolling in their sockets.

“It’s a job,” she says. “If you don’t like it, quit.”

“So much democratic possibility,” ignoring her, “and we don’t utilize it.”

"You're the writer. You write the shows. Lift the masses, big boy. My guess is they want to laugh."

He's a little disappointed by her response. And suspects somewhere that he's not addressing what's important: that, truth be told, he doesn't care about democratic possibility, that the job would be fine if he were fine, if he didn't feel like the poster boy for the Lost Generation. He's maybe a little troubled that his own lack of spiritual dynamism, his vague depression, his inability to find a reason (besides good old poon) to do much of anything, is extremely stylish and paying his bills.

"Do you think that, were I happy and satisfied, enthusiastic and outgoing, that I would be the It-Boy right now?"

A snort in the smoky dark. "I think if you think too much about yourself, you'll suffocate. Just chill out."

"Still, answer the question."

From the living room, the sound of his cat hacking.

"What's that?" she asks.

"That's Chuck D. I think I gave him bronchitis, or maybe lung cancer."

"Geez. Now that's sad."

"Yeah, I feel really badly about it."

He stubs out his cigarette and resists lighting another one.

"Am I just the flavor of the month? Do you have any interest in me as a human being?"

Sounds of violent expectoration travel in from the living room.

"The cat has responded for me. For Christ's sake, get out of this."

The hacking in the living room subsides, and all's quiet.

"If it makes you feel any better," putting her head on his chest and stroking his under-developed bicep, "when you're not in a mood like this, I find you very sweet. And charming, and cute."

"Thank you," he said.

"And what about me?" she asks. "Am I a fringe benefit of the job or something more?"

He inhales, exhales. Although he can't honestly say he feels a whole lot of anything these days, he says, "Yeah, I like you. You're the realest person I've met since I got here."

fusion unfolds in an "antiscience": not a poetic and empty rebuttal, but a local emergence in power-knowledge of the critical force of a disqualified, "nonscientific" discourse. (CP, 22)³⁷ It is as an "antiscience" that genealogy is most clearly a critique. For the antiscience characterization of genealogy highlights its two key characteristics: first, its non-systematic aspect; and second, its local point of application. Because the genealogy is local it does not need to subvert internal discrepancies; and because it dispenses with a theory of the subject, it takes on a kind of non-systematic character. The genealogy does not develop a list of subjects and pathologies. It is an "anarchical" disruption in power-knowledge; but that is appropriate "because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting." (AME, 380) What Foucault has done is redefined 'critique' by calling it 'genealogy'.

Fraser's diagnosis of autonomy is mistaken. And genealogy is a critique because it tells us so: autonomy is a question in a field of power-knowledge where "the subject" has yet to be assigned. Who will be the subject? The woman or the man? If Fraser calls technocracy "autonomy" then she must also call it doom for some individual or group— who, by virtue of normative saturation, will be forever "object" and "other." Foucault's genealogy rightly evaluates Fraser's diagnosis as doom. The technocracy, then, is no more an instance of autonomy than it is permanent domination, and it takes the genealogical critique to articulate this.

Genealogy is a knowledge, and therefore it has its own truth. But genealogy's truth is not in Fraser's super-disciplinary science-world, populated by normo-robots; it evades this because genealogy unearths beneath the subject and the subject's autonomy a history of oppression. Instead, genealogy's truth comes by way of freedom. Although it does not purport to lie outside of power-knowledge, its local and non-systematic construction mean it will never be a science. Thus it has no list of subject and object; genealogy replaces these lists and overturns the systematic normativity on which they are based. The dualism which genealogy exploits is not subject-object or repression-liberation; it is discipline-freedom, where freedom comes by virtue of thought:

³⁷ In this sense, DP was anti-humanistic, because "humanism" described contemporary discipline as enlightened, humane, and less horrific; but Foucault unearthed in discipline a burgeoning pantry of horrifying criminal sciences. These sciences applied to the criminal's body in new ways, saturating punishment with prescriptions for the criminal *being*. Thus modern punishment is the rise of discipline encoded in sciences of the criminal. It charts and marks all its inflections: psychopath, loon, thief, murderer, and lay-about. In HS a similar scientific voice probes the body for sexual deviancies, uncovering the pedophile, the hysteric woman, the sexed child, the nymphomaniac, and the masturbating teen.

I argued before that the body was the physical locus around which the force of knowledges in the field of power-knowledge applied. Discourse marked the body into problematic regions and incited institutions to regulate the behavior of these regions. This is Deleuze's death: it is the bestowal of "particular features," it is discourse investing the body with regions of "truth." The technocracy, then, is complete death. Fraser tells us that this is the condition of autonomy. The subject here is autonomous because it no longer puts up resistance to these deaths. The subject internalizes normative systems such that acting no longer becomes a kind of resistance: "all would surveil and police themselves." Disciplinary norms would come from within. In Deleuze's terms: the differentiated deaths constitute life; life *is* death, or the multiplicity of deaths is the interior of life. Having no resistance means that death would speak the life of the individual. *Autonomy?*

• • •

In "Two Lectures," Foucault argues that the period of ten to fifteen years preceding the 1970's was marked by two important events. First is the "efficacy of dispersed and discontinuous offensives." Here Foucault wants to note how effectively a-systematic discourses were able to resist the domination of global theories. These irregular historical events "lack any systematic principles of coordination"; they make only "vague and fairly distant" references to theoretical edifices already established; they often appear in anarchical ways. (CP, 19) Foucault calls the global theories they resist "totalitarian" because theoretical unity subverts local difference. It is at these local points that "discontinuous offenses" apply themselves. Second, Foucault acknowledges what he calls "subjugated knowledges." These knowledges are discourses that have been relegated to insufficiency by some more global, more scientific theory: "naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity." Criticism, attaching to global discourses, reinvigorates these "disqualified" knowledges; it invests them with power by enrolling them in a critical relation to the dominant discourse. (CP, 21)

These events mark the emergence of the *Genealogical Critique*. The genealogy—one such "union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles"—is itself a historical event in the field of power-knowledge. It is the point where local critiques unite with disqualified knowledges. This

"My poor tortured artist," she coos, squeezing him. "Fighting for artistic legitimacy in La La Land. You're so cute!"

Another three months of basically the same thing, and Tim can't understand why he's at a low-point. The show is now number one: his brainchild, having a superstar do a cameo every week, is a fantastic success; not only are people tuning in to see who will be on this week, but stars of all stripes are virtually begging to be put on the show. He's living very comfortably in a bungalow in the Hollywood hills, with a view of the entire valley, just at smog level. (It is in fact amazing: right at his window is the line. Below, the city looks sick and sleepy, enveloped in a greenish yellow. Above, the sky is blue, and there's Mt. Baldy jutting into it, nearly invisible through the pollution to those below. One universe sitting on top of another. Physically connected, but somehow not reconcilable.) Tim does love his bungalow, but hates to descend every day, not quite used to the steep grades, the hairpin turns around which he navigates the one pure joy of his life, his new blue BMW roadster. The traffic in L.A. is a nightmare, and while there's a lot of praise and titillation at work, it leaves him feeling extremely scattered. Like he literally forgets who he is when he's alone, and then being alone, he finds himself actually wondering Who the Hell Am I? since he knows that he can't be the genius they're calling him at work, everyone in Hollywood's a genius for Christ's sake, nor is he a Hollywood type, nor is he the guy that all the girls are sleeping with-- no, that's a different man indeed-- nor is he a tortured artist, he doesn't think. So like when he's not being all those fake characters, he's alone in the bungalow, and no one. And the one person who he felt knew him, Jane, has barfed her way, as of a month ago, into an inpatient treatment program. Which fact he's been good at convincing himself is liberating, since now he's free to get laid guiltlessly with whoever he wants.

But back to that car for a moment. It is the love of his life. The hum of the engine, the sound-system, the power. His drive home from work is one of his favorite parts of the day, and on the weekends, particularly in the last month, he's been driving out into the desert, towards the Springs, where Jane's treatment center is, swallowing up gallons and gallons of gas, feeling the power and perfection of this automobile.

He's on one of these weekend drives right now. He's got the CD player cranked up so that, despite the fact that he's in a convertible going close to a hundred miles an hour, he can hear Placebo's "Every Me, Every You" just perfectly. He's thinking.

About the cameo they had last week, in which George Clooney came screaming across the sound stage with blood spraying wildly from the stumps where his arms had been, and Clooney's character, a farm hand who lost his arms in a threshing accident, upon being asked if he was allergic to any specific pain medications, replied, "How do I know? I'm not a doctor. I don't even play one on TV."

About how this car's responses are faster than electro-chemical nerve transmissions: there is nearly zero difference, in a car with this kind of power, between thinking of passing someone and having passed them.

About how he misses Jane. She kept him honest, kept him humble. Just such a no-bullshit woman. When he would start whining about his situation, she was always quick to reinform him that he had a choice. That he always had a choice.

In Palm Springs he drives past her treatment center, surrounded by a high wall. Visitors are not allowed inside it until the last week of treatment. That's three weeks away.

He starts thinking, on the drive back to L.A., that maybe he should try some celibacy for a while. Go back to good old whacking off, where you were at least supposed to feel lonely when it was over. With the girls that he meets in the clubs and on the lot, the would-be actresses there for auditions, sleeping with him for career-advancement purposes, he feels lonelier, because the absence next to him in those cases are living, breathing absences that sometimes speak. And none of them stay till morning. They never sleep over.

He remembers lots of mornings, waking up in a shaft of sun, Jane's sleepwarm body so peacefully snuggled up against him. He feels a sharp longing at this memory. Surprised, in those moments, at how gentle he could be, taking ten minutes carefully sliding out of bed so as not to wake her, going into the kitchen and making breakfast even though she's never eat it, just have a slice of toast (no butter) and a glass of orange-papaya juice.

He's behind a truck, thinks of passing it, and has passed it.

She looks healthy sitting at the table in the dining room of the treatment center. Her face is full, her eyes are no longer sunken like stones into her head.

"And the food here, well, of course it has to be good-- I mean they're forcing you to eat at first-- but it's better than any other cafeteria food I've ever had."

"Well," Tim says, "for what you're paying."

"Yeah," she says. And looks at the table.

As feminist theorists, we must take note that "the female" has no biological primacy. She is female only after some regime of institutions and discourses have identified her body as female by problematizing her physiology, her inclination towards certain social behaviors, and so on. Is this dismissal of biological primacy disempowering? It is disempowering; but it is also, in Foucault's sense, freeing. It escapes the ontological condition of "femaleness" (woman as a type of being: woman-subject) by removing the discourse from the field in which it has historically been invested and reinvested in many roles. 'Woman' has played "object"—it has been sex, commodity, and fetish—and now, among feminists, it is "truth" and "subject" and "I." It has, as a discursive form, been the source of struggle.

Nancy Fraser's most important insight in "Michel Foucault: A Young 'Conservative'?" is to question why feminists would choose to liberate their theories from the subject-object divide of Enlightenment political theory. She calls Foucault's bluff: why, she asks, should women fear a totalitarian normative regime?

...one can imagine a perfected disciplinary society in which normalizing power has become so omnipresent, so finely attuned, so penetrating, interiorized, and subjectified, and therefore so invisible, that there is no longer any need for confessors, psychoanalysts, wardens, and the like. In this fully "panopticed" society, hierarchical, asymmetrical domination of some persons by others would have become superfluous; all would surveil and police themselves. The disciplinary norms would have become so thoroughly internalized that they would not be experienced as coming from without. The members of this society would, therefore, be autonomous. They would have appropriated the other as their own and made substance subject. Class domination would have given way to the kingdom of ends. The ideal speech situation would have been realized. But, it is claimed, this would not be freedom. (CP, 203)

I will call this society the *technocracy*. I call it 'technocracy' because it is the perfection of the technologies of discipline that Foucault outlined in DP onward. These technologies, operating in a "microphysics" of the body, do not bear down on the body as a repression, but process it into *death*. What kind of death? Deleuze gives us an idea: "We can no longer even say that death transforms life into destiny, an 'indivisible and decisive' event, but rather that death becomes multiplied and differentiated in order to bestow on life the particular features, and consequently the truths, which life believes arise from resisting death. What remains, then, if not to pass through all these deaths preceding the great limit of death itself..." (FD, 95)

in fields of power to coerce and subjectify the individual, but in how individuals assembled already-existing discourses in a certain style, constituting a self.

The docile body argument is right in its premises but wrong in its conclusion. Foucault does replace the agent with the “imprinted” body; but this replacement *subverts* discipline, not insures it. In effect, McNay attributes the enlightenment dualisms of repression-liberation and subject-object to Foucault himself. But this is a fallacy; the force of Foucault’s position is that it demonstrates that these dualisms are themselves the instruments and effects of domination.³⁵ Here, then, is the crux of the genealogy: unlike a politics of liberation, the genealogy demonstrates the discourse of subject-object to be purely contingent. Thus it is itself a kind of freedom, and it is as an exercise of freedom that the genealogy takes form as a critique.

The Genealogy and Normativity: *engaging technocracy*

Foucault’s thesis in all his genealogies is that *truth coincides with the production of the subject*. In DP and HS this truth belongs to the disciplinary sciences. And this is precisely why Foucault *must* fail when his agents are tested for will. Domination, for Foucault, is the scientific saturation of “the subject” in fields of power-knowledge.³⁶ Institutions and discourses interlock, pinning the individual under a net of scientific-normative global knowledges, creating things like “the will.” To say “You’re disempowering the subject, the agent, the thinking-willing female!” is to miss Foucault’s *truly* liberating move:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, comes [*sic*] to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual that is, is not the *vis-à-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (CP, 36)

(This was my thesis in the preceding paragraphs.) He would have to give up his theory of knowledge because he would be restoring the subject to primacy; but in AK, Foucault clearly takes discourse as primary.

³⁵ Thanks to Roy Elveton for this formulation of McNay’s analysis.

³⁶ Production of “the subject” via knowledge-power is domination; it is the truth of science. Production of “the subject” via “care of the self” is not a domination because it does not saturate this subject in normativity. It could, depending on the discourse; but Greek Ethics was not so much concerned with global, systematic, scientific discourses as with the practice of self-creation. All I need here is the primacy of discourse and its different implementation—systematic and non-systematic.

"I'm really glad to see you," he says.

"Me too." She looks at him and smiles. She seems a little nervous. So does he, but he seems that way most of the time. She asks, "How's the show?"

He shrugs. "Fine. Still number one. Had Nicholas Cage on last week, reprising his role from Raising Arizona. A little more obscure, but I think people dug it."

They look at each other for close to a minute. He slides his hand across the table and she takes it.

"I need to talk to you about something," squeezing his hand. "This isn't easy."

"Go."

"You know how I always told you that we have a choice."

"Yes."

"Well, I've been thinking," looking away from him now and out the window at the pool area. "I've been thinking that I need to leave Hollywood."

He nods.

"To go, I'm not sure where. Maybe back to grad school. I don't know."

She glances quickly at him and looks away again.

"I just wanted to tell you."

"Can I ask a question," he says.

"Yeah."

"Can I come with you?"

She looks at him, surprised.

"I'm thinking I'm ready to get out, too."

"What will you do?"

"I don't know," he says. "It's just, I've never really had much care for the future.

But like probably because I couldn't see one. I'm just always sort of right here--" pointing at the table "-- wherever I'm put, just sort of making do."

She waits for him to continue. He looks down at the table, really afraid of what he's going to say.

"But with you, and I don't want to get sappy on this. When I think about you I think about a future. I see ahead. I see us. And I don't know how long, but it's just sort of revolutionary that I see a future at all. You know?"

She nods.

"So yeah what I'm saying is, if you'll have me, I'd like to go with you."

He feels like he's let something out that he can't get back. Like he's not in control anymore. There's sweat all over his body somehow, and it's chilling him. He's staring at his thumbs and they're not giving much encouragement; he's got dirt under his nails and they somehow look the wrong size. He knows he's going to have to look up sooner or later, and does.

She's smiling.

Foucault could not simply admit that "I perhaps insisted too much on the techniques of domination." He would have to give up his theory of knowledge and his theory of power.³⁴

Instead, Foucault wants to expose how ethics has historically shifted. Greek ethics, on Foucault's reading, is simply the cultivation of freedom. It is not the autonomous subject resisting power, but an individual employing discourses so as to stylize him or herself. This is not a theory of the resisting agent: "One sees how far one is from a history of sexuality organized around the good old repressive hypothesis and its customary questions (how and why is desire repressed)? It is a matter of acts and pleasures, not desire. It is a matter of the formation of the self through techniques of living, not of repression through prohibition and law." (EST, 89) I established above that Foucault conceives of power as active and implying some state of freedom. It is this freedom and the ways in which it has been problematized that interests Foucault. Furthermore, it interests him as a historical project; Foucault does not conceive of Greek ethics as his prescription for society:

Q. Do you think that the Greeks offer an attractive and plausible alternative?

M.F. No! I am not looking for an alternative... You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions... I would like to do the genealogy of problems, or *problématiques*. My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. (EST, 256)

"Everything is dangerous" refers to the existence of certain games of truth or fields of power-knowledge. These structures evince problematizations—they are the positivities, the discursive evidences with which Foucault writes his genealogy. The fact that certain discourses exist is the issue: "Since there is an important and large literature about loving boys in Greek culture, some historians say, 'Well, that's the proof that they loved boys.' But I say that proves that loving boys was a problem. Because if there was no problem, they would speak of this kind of love in the same terms as love between men and women." (EST, 257) Throughout much of Greek society, Foucault uncovers an ethics that since has been replaced by systems of normativity and disciplinary science. To uncover this transformation, Foucault cannot work on subjects; he must remain with his genealogical project. Discourse is still primary; this time, however, Foucault is interested not in how discourse was invested

³⁴ Foucault would have to give up his theory of power because re-investing the subject with autonomy would constitute an affirmation of the conceptual matrix of Enlightenment political theory (and modern philosophy). This conceptual matrix includes power as a repressive, juridical force, which is overcome by individual and collective acts of liberatory resistance.

As a historian of knowledge and power, Foucault's artifact is *discourse*.³¹ It is discourse because the genealogy inverts the traditional approach to history, which "[starts] out with a theory of the subject." Instead, Foucault starts with "a given form of knowledge." In DP and HS this form of knowledge was disciplinary science. In his last works, it is a "care of the self" and then a "hermeneutics of desire." Behind both interests, however, lies Foucault's conviction that the Enlightenment *discourse* founders on the subject-object "doublet." It founders because the subject (like the "I"; like the "Public") itself follows historical transformations—transformations which invest it with different meanings and engage it in different roles. These roles both liberate marginalized individuals *and* marginalize them in the first place. The "autonomy" of "the subject" brings with it "the suppression" of an "object".³²

Taking sexuality as an example, it is clear that a number of liberations were required vis-à-vis male power, that liberation was necessary from an oppressive morality concerning heterosexuality as well as homosexuality. But this liberation does not give rise to the happy human being imbued with a sexuality to which the subject could achieve a complete and satisfying relationship. Liberation paves the way for new power relationships, which must be controlled by practices of freedom. (EST, 284)

While liberation articulates "the subject," so does discipline. Discipline works in subjects; it subjectifies. Whether discipline or liberation, "power relationships" invest the subject with different meanings. Making subjects, in Foucault's mind, is a dream in which the disciplinary society is the nightmare: individuals, fully bereft of freedom, are articulated *vis-à-vis* fields of power-knowledge. Normative systems saturate social institutions and pin down the body. They deploy a long list of pathological types: fools, pedophiles, and criminals are broad categories that begin the list. And somewhere in there: *feminists*.³³ In this way, Foucault's last work could not inflate the subject as McNay wants it to; for if it did

³¹ He once said, "I am... obsessed by the existence of discourses, by the fact that words have happened..."; Gutting, 228.

³² Here it might be advantageous to consult the appendix. In it, I consider the feminist narrative and the status it has in a Foucauldian theory of knowledge. The important tension occurs between the narrative's function of "telling the truth," and Foucault's treatment of discourses of truth. If there is no truth of experience, how is it that the feminist narrative can tell it? How can we preserve the political importance of the narrative inside a genealogical perspective?

³³ Is liberation a kind of discipline? Is feminism one science of liberation that Foucault sees taking its place in the disciplinary constellation of human sciences? If it is, then feminists must have their own list: abusers, rapists, chauvinists, and patriarchs. The feminist science catalogues beings as does any science.



Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: Language and the Mystical¹

Sara Leland

“(The blossom, just opening out. What is *marvelous* about it?)
We say: ‘Just look at it opening out!’” (*Culture and Value*, p56).²

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*³ is often thought of as a work of logic and philosophy of language (and his discussion of ‘the mystical’ could be taken as suspiciously metaphysical). It is a difficult piece, and an unusual piece; in it, we find a description of the world and language that doesn't appeal to common sense. Wittgenstein's view of the world seems more invented than discovered, and his theory of the proper use of language is something that apparently even he cannot speak within. Yet we will certainly not say that Wittgenstein is careless in his philosophy. Then we must ask why he would “invent” such a world view and “theory” of language. When we question in this way, we find that Wittgenstein does not leave us choking on complex language theories, logic, and some sort of metaphysical mysticism at the end of the *Tractatus*. Rather, he leaves us with, on the one hand, the ordinary and factual (what he calls natural science) and on the other hand, the human, and he shows how different a relation each of these has to language. With the help of some of Wittgenstein's later comments,⁴ I hope to show that the boundaries between the two uses of language are not so distinct and precise as the *Tractatus* suggests since individuals and individual lives are capable of altering the ordinary significance of words and injecting all shades of subtlety and depth into what they communicate or receive in communication.

Wittgenstein says that the limits of the world are also the limits of language. Within the limits are states of affairs; these we can talk about. Beyond the limits is all that transcends the world or transcends language; and this we cannot speak of. (Not “this we *may* not speak of,” but “this we *cannot* speak of.” You may object, “But I *do* speak of it. I spoke of it yesterday.” Wittgenstein might say, “You may have been moving your mouth

doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is simply fabricated into the doing—the doing is everything.” (GM, 25) Note that Nietzsche doesn't deny the possibility of action; indeed, “doing is everything.” Nietzsche's innovation is to unearth beneath the Enlightenment dream of “the subject” an “unchristian, immoral truth”: that the will was the invention of “common people,” people suffering from the ravages of “nobles.” (GM, 10,25) Encoded in this subject, this will, and this “I” is a morality that calls the nobles “evil” and thus says *No* to life.³⁰

Foucault answered our question by claiming that inside “the subject” had been written “the object.” Nancy Fraser summarizes his position well:

... no sooner does this subject pole endow Man with this privilege and value than it defines the opposing object pole that denies them.

The humanist political project, then, is that of solving the Man problem. It is the project of making the subject pole triumph over the object pole, of achieving autonomy by mastering the other in history, in society, in oneself, of making substance into subject. Foucault's claim, both in *The Order of Things* and throughout his subsequent writings, is that this project, premised as it is on the “subjected sovereignty” of Man, is self-defeating, self-contradictory, and can lead in practice only to domination. (FIF, 21)

Foucault's retreat from the “sovereign, founding subject” is a retreat from domination. In a world where power-knowledge fields swarm around bodies and confine them, ‘freedom’ is not the autonomous action of the subject. Thus calling Foucault's individual “docile” is to ignore the most basic premise he takes:

Q. But haven't you always “forbidden” people to talk to you about the subject in general?

M.F. No, I have not “forbidden” them... What I rejected was the idea of starting out with a theory of the subject... and, on the basis of this theory, asking how a given form of knowledge was possible... I had to reject a priori theories of the subject in order to analyze the relationships that may exist between the constitution of the subject or different forms of the subject and games of truth, practices of power, and so on. (EST, 290)

¹ The thoughts in this paper have arisen as a result of discussions with John Poling, PhD that took place over a span of four months. His thought is apparent in this work, and has been a powerful stimulant to my own thinking.

² Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value*. Trans. Peter Winch. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980.

³ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. London: Routledge, 1974.

⁴ The *Tractatus* was written in 1921, *Philosophical Investigations* in 1945. Dates are given with *Culture and Value* citations.

³⁰ Do not confuse Nietzsche's dismissal of the will here and in the epigraph with his notion “will to power.” On my reading, following the will to power would result in dismissing the concept of the will. Nietzsche believes in actions, in doings; the will is an edifice for us from the rabble.

without doing a historical and critical study dealing with desire and the desiring subject. In other words, without undertaking a “genealogy.” [... I propose to] analyze the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen. In short, with this genealogy the idea was to investigate how individuals were led to practice, on themselves and on others, a hermeneutics of desire... (TUP, 5)

McNay schematizes Foucault’s shift around two poles: that of the active subject, and that of power. These two poles are complementary; the subject is active if and only if it can, by virtue of its will, negotiate fields of power-knowledge. And this is possible if and only if power is not, as McNay reads in Foucault, “monolithic [and] dominating,” but as Foucault originally elaborated, “the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter always local and unstable.” (FF, 59; HS, 93)²⁹ For McNay, Foucault’s previous theory of power was “dominating” because it discovered “peripheral sexualities” not as the act of an individual will, but as power acting on individuals’ bodies. This concern for “individual will” brings us back yet again to the question of Foucault’s agent. *Of what is the agent capable?* But I have already answered this question. And what’s more—Foucault has answered it also.

My epigraph tells us that Nietzsche rejected the “will” and the “I” as illusions. Figures of speech, he called them. That is how I answered the problematic of the “I”: I took the strongest starting point possible. Nietzsche robs the “I” of its reality and replaces it with “doing.” In GM he writes: “But there is no such substratum; there is no ‘being’ behind the

²⁹ Just what “shift” Foucault is making and how it mitigates the problem of the docile body is bound up in the reading we make of power and the agent. In his earlier works, what was the status of these relations? McNay claims that Foucault’s concept of power was dominating because it trapped the subject beneath the body. Unable to move, completely constrained by normativity, Foucault’s agent was powerless. It had been repressed; *Power repressed the agent*. Again, McNay offers us her reading: “In order to understand how the individual comes to perceive him/herself as a subject of desire, Foucault is unable to proceed in his ‘top heavy’ analysis of discursive practices.” (FF, 50)

But as I claimed before, Foucault wanted to subvert the question of repressed agent *vs.* power from the beginning. From the time of AK onward, Foucault even insisted that “the repressive hypothesis” was itself indicative of the disciplinary matrix of Enlightenment science and discipline. One of Foucault’s major claims in HS was that the theory of repression and liberation in sexuality has been foisted on us. It was draped over the disciplinary matrix of a *Scientia Sexualis* and covered up the domination this science of sex had implanted in institutions.

At issue... is the type of power [“the bourgeoisie society”] brought to bear on the body and on sex. In point of fact, this power had neither the form of the law, nor the effects of the taboo. On the contrary, it acted by multiplication of singular sexualities. It did not set boundaries for sexuality; it extended the various forms of sexuality, pursuing them according to lines of indefinite penetration. (HS, 47)

To read this analysis as offering a “monolithic” theory of power is to miss Foucault’s thesis: that the power-knowledge field proliferated, and as a result, so did “deviancies.” And the historical appearance of deviancies in discourse and in practice is no more than the proliferation of normativity inscribed in a science of sex. This thesis relies on a conception of power as active lines of force, branching out and enveloping the body: not in the shape of a monolith, but of a web.

and vocalizing words, but you were saying nothing.”) We speak directly about the world, while what is transcendent (mystical) makes itself manifest to us in our speaking or in situations in the world. In other words, communication about the mystical can only occur through showing rather than saying (*Tractatus*, §1, 2, 4.1212, 5.6, 6.522).⁵ Wittgenstein’s project is the outlining of all that can be said, whereby what cannot be said is made manifest (§4.115). He proposes to work his way out to the limit of language from the inside, since the limit is not something which can be directly laid out by a proposition. “The limit...makes itself manifest in the totality of elementary propositions” (§5.5561). The *Tractatus* is intended to lead a reader to an understanding of the difference between saying clearly and showing silently—and ultimately, to an understanding or a sense of what it is that can only be shown.

This understanding or sense is to go beyond the attempted explications Wittgenstein gives of that which is transcendent, but these explanations are a starting point for understanding. He tells us, for example, that while we *articulate* propositions, propositional or logical form *makes itself manifest* in our propositions. We cannot talk about the form of propositions or laws of logic because they are not states of affairs in the world, but everything said about the world is cast in propositional and logical form. A law like the law of causality is not a description of the world; we describe the world in terms of the law of causality, and it is in these descriptions that the law is revealed (§6.13, 6.32, 6.34, 6.36). Wittgenstein also tells us that while we can describe actions we have taken in past situations, we cannot formulate sensible propositions of ethics since all value transcends what is the case (§6.42, 6.421).⁶ For example, that so-and-so did such-and-such is a state of affairs in the world, a fact; but that it was good (or bad) that she did it is not a state of affairs, not a matter of fact. (An ethical sentiment could be *revealed* to me in the tone of voice a person uses to speak to others, in how she approaches people who suffer, in how she rocks and soothes a crying child.) Aesthetics also cannot be put into words; in fact, “Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same” (§6.421). (My aesthetic ideals are shown in how my eyes move over a photograph, in how my face changes when emotion flows through it.) Neither can we make

⁵ For those not familiar Wittgenstein, “transcendent,” “mystical,” “saying” and “showing” may be confusing terms in this context. I hope that both some common understandings of Wittgenstein’s uses of these words and eventually my own understanding become clearer as the paper progresses.

⁶ See also *Notebooks 1914-1916*, pp77-79. (Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Notebooks 1914-1916*. Eds. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961.)

religious statements—“God does not reveal himself *in* the world” (§6.432), God transcends the world, all that is the case. Hence, I cannot understand how a person relates to God by hearing a dispassionate profession of faith or an explication of the facts of Christianity. (I might better understand a person’s relation to God by observing how he endures a tragedy.) Then the good, the beautiful, the miraculous, the wondrous, etc. is all included by Wittgenstein in ‘the mystical’ or ‘the transcendent.’

When we do try to speak directly of what is mystical, we are either talking nonsense or what we say fails to have the transcendental meaning we wish it to have. If I say, “I wonder at the existence of the world,” this is nonsense since I cannot imagine what it would be for it *not* to exist (it is not a state of affairs in our world which might have been otherwise). To use ‘wonder’ correctly, I might say “I wonder that this house still exists here and has not been torn down,” but here I am saying something very ordinary. Similarly, I might use the word ‘miraculous’ to mean something science has not yet explained, but when describing something I feel to be transcendental (religious, or in some other way other-worldly) with the word ‘miraculous,’ I am drawing this transcendent something into the world (the realm of all that is the case) and the miraculousness (in the transcendental sense of miraculous) escapes like a vapor. I could speak of something being ‘good’ in the sense of beneficial or useful, but if everything in the world, everything we can speak of, is accidental — then how could I speak of the *absolute* good? (“Lecture on Ethics,” p41-43)⁷

But if we can’t talk about the transcendent, then we cannot say, as Wittgenstein does, that we cannot talk about the transcendent. We cannot say that ethics is outside the world, that the phrase “I wonder at the existence of the world” has a meaning other than the ordinary. Of course this incongruity of the *Tractatus* does not elude Wittgenstein.

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them — as steps — to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) (*Tractatus*, §6.54)

That is, we will consider seriously each of Wittgenstein’s propositions as we are first reading the *Tractatus*. But once we begin to feel it settling together as a whole, we will understand

⁷ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. “A Lecture on Ethics.” *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951*. Eds. Klagge and Nordmann, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.

The notion of techniques of the self derives from a self-critique conducted by Foucault on his earlier account of the links between power and body.^[27] Like many of his critics, Foucault acknowledges that, in his previous work, the emphasis he placed on the effects of power upon the body resulted in an understanding of social agents as passive bodies and in a monolithic and functionalist account of power. (FF, 48-9)

To be sure, McNay is not alone in this reading of Foucault; Jana Sawicki repeats the criticism of “agency” in her essay, “Foucault and Feminism,” attributing it to Linda Alcoff, among others. (CP, 347-8) And consider the passage that McNay offers to support her interpretation. Foucault says himself:

If one wants to analyse the genealogy of subject in Western civilization, one has to take into account not only techniques of domination, but also techniques of self.^[28] One has to show the interaction between these two types of self. When I was studying asylums, prisons, and so on, I perhaps insisted too much on the techniques of domination. What we call discipline is something really important in this kind of institution. But it is only one aspect of the art of governing people in our societies. (FF, 49)

“I perhaps insisted too much on the techniques of domination”: a problematic sentence from Foucault. McNay, as is perfectly reasonable, sees Foucault repudiating his past work, particularly DP and HS, for its relegation of the willing “I” to a docile body. Using this primer she reads his last books, TUP and *The Care of the Self*, as products of Foucault’s awareness of his own previous theoretical shortcomings. Readers also have the introduction to TUP. In this introduction, whose first section is entitled “Modifications,” Foucault offers an *apologia* for the strong methodological shift he perceives in his work to come. No longer confining his interest to cataloguing the penetrative forces of discipline as they take hold of the body, Foucault is interested in “techniques of the self.”

In any case, it seems to me that one could not very well analyze the formation and development of the experience of sexuality from the eighteenth century onward,

²⁷ “Techniques of the self” is one of Foucault’s later interests. After writing DP and HS, Foucault became engaged by the way people develop and cultivate their selves as works of art (this is what “techniques” refers to). The status of this interest in comparison with the earlier notion of “the body” will be developed below.

²⁸ I believe that the translation here left out an article before “subject”: these phrases usually read “genealogy of *the* subject,” not “genealogy of subject.” However, it is impossible to know and most likely unimportant. The only issue is if “subject” is related to “subjectification” or “subjugation,” which would significantly change the passage. A genealogy of subjectification would not imply as much of a return to modern philosophical notions of the willing “I” as would a genealogy of the subject. The first lends itself more easily to being a “derived function” of discourse—that is, of being the subject which the enunciative function of the statement made possible and to which it referred.

the *illusion* of a unified identity (“the locus of the dissociation of the Me”); and second, as a surface “imprinted by history”—that is, as a materiality on which transforming fields of knowledge and power apply pressure. It is the physical surface of the body to which power-knowledge attaches itself, marking, identifying, and normalizing the body in its disciplinary strategy. Therefore, to uncover discipline, as Foucault wants to do in both DP and HS, one needs to write a history of bodies.

But this elaboration only transports us back to our first two questions: if in the genealogy “the subject” is a body, then how can one articulate the possibility of subverting dominations? How can a subject act or change her mind or oppose institutions? The second question is broader: how are these histories, in fact, *critiques*? If part of Foucault’s project is to resist global normative discourses that have, at their centers, a theory of truth and a value-positing discourse, how might a subject develop a normative basis for proper political action? Fraser puts it perfectly when she notes that Foucault can’t answer the simplest question: “So, why is discipline bad?” Eventually, I will transform both questions into one problem: that of resisting global normative systems. For now, however, I want to concentrate more heavily on the question of the subject. Before we question the possibility of a critique, what about the possibility of a *critiqu-er*?

The “Docile Body” Thesis

It is the body with which Foucault is primarily concerned in both DP and HS. The body is the point of contact for forces. Knowledges and powers apply themselves to the body; they subdue it by finding in it a subject. But if Foucault’s body is not a willing thing, and “the subject” is only the product of fields of power-knowledge, what resources does the individual have to resist discipline? How can theorists account for such resistance? These are the grounds on which McNay criticizes Foucault for rendering the subject a “docile body.” Foucault’s subject is a docile body because it is necessarily passive in the face of disciplinary domination.

McNay writes:

that none of the propositions, taken as what it says and only what it says, is entirely correct; that each proposition is meaningful only for the picture that arises when all of the propositions are placed together in the correct arrangement; that when this whole picture arises, the individual propositions actually drop out. Hence, as Wittgenstein ushers us toward his way of seeing, he is making extensive use of what he calls ‘nonsense.’ He says things which cannot be said in order to help us arrive at an understanding of what can and cannot be said. In other words, the *Tractatus* is given to us from the ladder, not from the destination, as though Wittgenstein has descended from his place of clear vision to retrace his climb — this time taking notes for us and composing these notes, but with the background of his familiarity with the entire process and the final understanding.

However, in retracing these steps and presenting us with nonsense, it seems that Wittgenstein is misusing language and applying an incorrect philosophical method, for—

The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e., propositions of natural science — i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy — and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. (*Tractatus*, §6.53)

But if Wittgenstein had used the correct or proper method in philosophy, that is, if he had given us the *Tractatus* from the destination instead of the ladder, we would have a description of the world—a compilation of facts, or states of affairs in the world. There would be no mysticism, no ethics and aesthetics, no wonderment, no showing, no passing over in silence. As far as we could tell, the *Tractatus* would be the work of not even a logical positivist but a natural scientist describing what everyone already sees and agrees upon. It would be all truth tables and no selves, all possible states of affairs and no “feeling the world as a limited whole” (§6.45). How diminished the *Tractatus* without its mysticism! Imagine how differently we would read it if it were stripped of its transcendence. Most of us would simply dismiss such an uninteresting piece or at least dismiss it as philosophy. Its potential for assuming a significant place in an individual’s life and thought would be severely reduced.

Again, these concerns do not elude Wittgenstein; he knows the power and beauty of what he calls nonsense. Regarding humans’ perpetual attempts to speak and write about ethics, Wittgenstein says: “. . . it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I

personally cannot help respecting deeply and would not for my life ridicule” (“Lecture on Ethics,” p44). More importantly, the temptation to engage in this nonsensical chatter seems to be irresistible to Wittgenstein himself. (How odd that a philosopher would construct an ideal language but not himself use it.) He *knows* what the correct method in philosophy is—but he speaks to us from the ladder anyway. His final solitary proposition in the *Tractatus* (“What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence”), *the culmination of the book*, is nonsense, for we cannot *say* that there is a ‘what’ if this ‘what’ is to be passed over in silence. In the “Lecture on Ethics,” Wittgenstein of course insists that Ethics cannot be directly talked about, but he also rejects the theory that statements of ethics are allegories or similes, since to compare two things we must be able to understand and articulate each individually or the allegory is nonsense. And yet he writes:

I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor, that, if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world. . . . Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water [even] if I were to pour out a gallon over it. (“Lecture on Ethics” p40)

It is striking that not only does Wittgenstein step outside the linguistic boundaries he himself has discovered and shown to us, but what’s more, it is precisely when he steps outside (as he does with the above quote) that he speaks most powerfully, most expressively. It is this sort of passage that someone might read over and over, might grasp and contemplate with more than just his intellect, might allow to insinuate itself into his life. Yet, ordinarily when we speak of nonsense, we use the word as a dismissal. (“Don’t pay attention to that—it’s just a piece of nonsense.”) Nonsense is something silly, absurd, totally wrong or completely incomprehensible. The nonsense of the *Tractatus* is so absolutely incompatible with nonsense traditionally conceived that I find myself strongly resistant to Wittgenstein’s calling them by the same name. Wittgenstein’s nonsense seems to strike at the core of what it is to be a human, to create a self, to live. I am unwilling to dismiss what Wittgenstein conveys when he speaks this way; if this is nonsense, then it is sense that I will more readily dismiss.

Throwing away the ladder seems to me like throwing away one’s childhood, saying “History is nothing. Old stories, old crayon drawings, photographs, long-lost friends are nothing. I am nothing but a report of what I did today.” I refuse to give up the misuse of

In DP Foucault argues that punishment has shifted from demonstrating the power of the monarch by torturing bodies to *discipline*. Today the juridical institution is saturated with normative theories which mark, penetrate, and inoculate the body in order to grasp the soul, the psyche, or the being. Of course, punishment has always worked on the body; it still must, because the body is the physical point of application for forces.²⁶ But now discipline does not end in the body; disciplinary punishment normalizes the *being* of that body, reshaping and rehabilitating it. Capturing this shift is the central thesis of DP.

This is why both DP and HS are “histories of bodies.” For Foucault, the “criminal” and the “pervert” aren’t primitives; they are the product of a particular discourse, a particular knowledge. Thus rejecting the experience of either “subject” leaves us only with a history of bodies: a history of individuals that is anything else is impossible. And if we perform a genealogy of these bodies, we will reveal how the discourses and institutions of punishment (the multiple forces defined thereby) have become *disciplinary*. ‘Discipline’ saturates bodies in fields of power-knowledge, fashioning them as abnormal subjects. Highlighting the body will highlight this transformation, this strategic shift in which science takes hold of “the subject” by changing its hold on the body. Thus the “genealogy” is a historical method which plots and reveals *forces*—the force relations that compose institutional and discursive power as they subjectify (objectify) individuals. At his most eloquent, we have Foucault in his essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”:

The body is the surface of the inscription of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of the dissociation of the Me (to which it tries to impart the chimera of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body. (AME, 375-6)

A full account of this passage would take me beyond my current scope and into Foucault’s reading of Nietzsche. What is important for us here is how the body is a “locus”: first, for

²⁶ It is important that the body is a *physical* surface. Foucauldian vocabulary is dominated by geometrical terms: map, plot, space, diagram, landscape, physics, terrain, and so on. Deleuze even refers a “topology,” or a geometry of continuity and surfaces. This is confusing, because I don’t think either Foucault or Deleuze wants to develop a historical physics. But neither should ‘force’ be understood to refer to some non-material property. First, force is always a relation. Second, it is always a historical event; force relations occur in history. Third, forces apply to the limit of structures and events so as to transform them as they themselves are reconfigured, increased, or decreased. So I call the body a *physical surface* because it is in this trope that it is easiest to visualize how the body is the limit of the individual that can be historically imprinted by force relations.

Foucault supports this theoretical position by adopting what he calls “Nietzsche’s Hypothesis”: “if power is properly speaking the way in which relations of forces are deployed and given concrete expression, rather than analyzing it in terms of cession, contract, or alienation, ... should we not analyse it primarily in terms of *struggle, conflict, and war?*” (CP, 28) And Foucault points out that struggle always presupposes some resistance. “It should also be noted that power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free. If one of them were completely at the other’s disposal and became his thing... there wouldn’t be any relations of power.” (EST, 292) Thus, “the subject” can be defined by a particular field of power-knowledge because ‘power’ refers to an active relation of force “deployed” against a free individual. This power is “non-subjective” because it does not reflect the decision-making of an individual subject, but it is simultaneously “intentional” because it always serves some strategic purpose. (HS, 94-5) Foucault opposes this theory of power to what he calls both an “economic” or “juridical” analysis of power. In “economic” analysis, power is a kind of commodity distributed amongst individuals, groups, states, etc. Those who possess more power than others can force the others to do what the powerful want, regardless of the others’ interests. From this counterfactual analysis (based on the notion of what the less powerful would have done) comes a theory of *repressive* power. Power always comes from above, and it is what represses the acting subject. In this case, ‘power’ names an a-historical state of affairs against which one must act to preserve freedom.²⁵ “Juridical” power refers to this opposition—power vs. freedom—often referenced in legal theory and revolutionary practice. It is this opposition that Foucault disputes.

When Nietzsche wrote “the form is fluid,” he was denoting the historical transformation of “a thing.” (Recall that for Foucault, discourse is always an event in history.) But when he wrote “‘meaning’ is even more so...” it was *strategy* that he wished to expose. In Nietzsche’s genealogy it was the strategy of the “value-inverting eye,” or slave morality; in Foucault’s genealogies, it is the strategy of the science of discipline:

One would be concerned with the ‘body politic’, as a set of material elements and technique that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge. (DP, 28)

²⁵ Do not confuse this use of ‘freedom’ with Foucault’s ‘freedom’, which I will develop later on.

the word ‘wonder’ — I refuse because of how differently someone looks in my eyes when I try to tell him about the wonderment of a person (that such a thing should be!) than he does when I talk about the wonder that some certain person is in this room right now rather than not. I *cannot* throw away the ladder, because of where it has taken me, because of how unmoved I would have been without it. It is only by taking us through the incorrect philosophical process that Wittgenstein can bring us to feel the weight of his remark on the only truly correct method in philosophy. But the value of Wittgenstein’s nonsensical propositions lies not only in that they brought me to a certain understanding or inspiration; if this were their only importance, then my holding onto them after having arrived at an understanding would be a matter of mere sentimental reverence. No, the significance of the nonsense remains even after I have arrived at an understanding beyond the nonsense. The understanding and the inspiration cannot be divorced from the steps that were taken to get to them. I could not understand the weight of another person’s expression of a longing without knowing the life and the person behind that longing; the life *is* the weight of the longing, and if the life as context is cut off from the longing, the meaning or import of the longing is cut off with it. Wittgenstein’s nonsense is heavy with meaning, and it must be constantly present as background for the understanding beyond the nonsense, or the understanding will fade into an insignificant intellectual grasping of concepts (that is, it will hardly be an understanding at all or at least a very impoverished understanding).

Of course Wittgenstein, in choosing not to use the correct method, recognizes the value of his nonsensical propositions as tools to communicate. He knows how much this kind of language and these ways of speaking can communicate, the subtleties they can achieve. —Then why would he still insist on calling his propositions nonsense and saying we cannot say these things? Why does he not accept them as perfectly valid and appropriate means of communication? To answer this, we need to look again at Wittgenstein’s conceptions of sense and saying. First, as we saw, Wittgenstein says that the mystical, Ethics, etc. is outside of the world (the space of facts, the realm of all that is the case). (E.g., see §6.41, 6.421, and 6.432.) Secondly, he says that only claims about the world (true or false statements describing states of affairs) can have sense: “A proposition must restrict reality to two alternatives: yes or no. . . . a proposition is a description of a state of affairs” (§4.023); “Only propositions have sense. . . .” (§3.3). Thirdly, Wittgenstein says that we can only speak about states of affairs in the world, what is the case. “. . . [O]ur words will only

express facts. . ." ("Lecture on Ethics," p40). Hence, as we said earlier, according to Wittgenstein, we cannot speak about the mystical, and when we try we end up with nonsense. But Wittgenstein also says, "... what can be said at all can be said clearly..." (*Tractatus*, p3; see also §4.116).

To understand why Wittgenstein might say that a statement like 'I marvel at the existence of the world' is nonsense, to see that "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (*Tractatus*, §7) says nothing, we must see the *Tractatus* as a closed system and recognize the inter-definedness of Wittgenstein's propositions and terms. (It can be compared to the mesh or net in §6.341 and §6.342.) Wittgenstein's use of 'speak,' 'talk,' 'say,' etc. as outlined above is obviously quite different from our ordinary, everyday use. In the ordinary setting, it would be ridiculous to say that we are unable to speak of ethics we hear about morality every day, volumes have been written on ethics. (You were right, in one sense, to object "But I *do* speak of it. I spoke of it yesterday.") Wittgenstein has laid out a very particular use for 'speak.' *Every* proposition (all that can be said) is precise, clear, determinate, and plainly true or false. There is no disparity or dislocation between language and what is described. What language reaches toward it captures completely. (This is possible because each language (e.g. English) corresponds with the single underlying logical Language.) The distinction between what has sense and what lacks sense is carefully drawn. There is a totality of all elementary propositions (from which all other propositions are constructed). The realm of what can be said and what cannot are mutually exclusive; there is no blurring of boundaries.

Then, if within the *Tractatus* there are specific ways of speaking and making sense distinct from what we usually think of as speaking and making sense, is the mystical also to be met with a peculiar and specific kind of silence? That is, if speaking is describing precisely and propositionally, then passing over in silence may mean: not forcing into precise propositional form. The demand for silence may be not an insistence that you give up the misuse of 'wonder,' but that you look at your own life and realize how different a place wonder or the mystical or ethics or aesthetics or religion has in it compared to the strictly scientific and how different a means of description is appropriate for each. The destination of the *Tractatus* may be only a starting point where we are finally ready to look at personal history without demanding that it conform to a scientific, logical world view. We do not throw away the childhood, we look at it aright, we give it its proper place and

with some end in mind. Instead, there exists a historical struggle in which institutions interact with discourse to produce *strategical* power. Here is Nietzsche's claim in GM:

[...]for history of every kind there is no more important proposition than that one which is gained with such effort but also really *ought to be* gained, — namely, that the cause of the genesis of a thing and its final usefulness, its actual employment and integration into a system of purposes, lie *toto caelo* apart; that something extant, something that has somehow or other come into being, is again and again interpreted according to new views, monopolized in a new way, transformed and rearranged for a new use by a power superior to it[...]

The form is fluid but "meaning" is even more so... (GM, 50-1)

Compare this to "The Body of the Condemned," in DP:

Now, the study of this micro-physics presupposes that the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property, but as a *strategy*, that its effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity... (DP, 26; my italics)

The "strategy" which Foucault mentions here is the same strategy according to which "a thing [is]... transformed and rearranged for a new use" in Nietzsche. If "the subject" remains at the center of history, then the shifts in strategy in which a thing "is again and again interpreted" would go unnoticed. The "shifts" would go unnoticed because one subject perceives history from one perspective. In Nietzsche's terms, "the subject" writes history according to its own strategy; it "monopolizes" historical events in order to "transform" and "rearrange" them for its use. Through this process it defines the truth of history, a truth which "lies *toto caelo* apart" from the "actual" thing. But as I outlined before, the genealogy replaces the subject with a focus on the "manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, [and] functionings," or the strategies, of different individuals and groups.²⁴ Again Foucault illustrates how "the subject" is a production of discourse; but now he has enriched his assertion with a theory of institutions and power. "Power-knowledge" refers to the fluctuating network of relations between institutions and discourses which is responsible for defining the subject. In Foucault's terms, "the subject" is a *correlate* of power-knowledge.

²⁴ For Foucault, there is no more to an individual or group's strategy than the knowledge (the discourse) it deploys. Meaning is itself a maneuver, a tactic, a technique; so is "truth." So is "the subject."

telos as that agent causes conceptual transformations, authors legislation, or fuels resistance. It is the action of this autonomous agent which promises liberation and which history “remembers.”

Foucault’s histories subvert this centrality of the subject. In The Archaeology of Knowledge, Foucault outlines a theory of knowledge in which *discourse* is both historically transformed and *a priori*. Before the speaking “I,” the intentional subject, or the consciousness—and logically previous to these structures—Foucault discovers the existence of what he calls “statements.” It is the configuration of groups of statements which describes the possibilities for “the subject.” And although the “I” must speak language, evaluate propositions, and correct syntax, this “I” is identifiable only insofar as some discourse marks it out, problematizes it, or charts it as a noticeable space. Thus discursive groups (which comprise statements) are *a priori* to “the subject.” But Foucault is not simply a structuralist. Discourse is not a timeless determining structure, but an event in history. Thus “things said” are also transformed through time—inverted, elided, combined, and burked. Historically *and* logically antecedent to “the subject,” discourse is the *historical a priori*:

[The Archaeological method] also presupposes that this enunciative domain refers neither to an individual subject, nor to some kind of collective consciousness, nor to a transcendental subjectivity; but that it is described as an anonymous field whose configuration defines the possible position of speaking subjects. (AK, 122)²³

In DP this theoretical assertion resurfaces as part of a theory of power and discourse. This is the theory of “power-knowledge,” and it is the basis for the genealogical method I adumbrated before. Following Nietzsche’s development in On the Genealogy of Morality, Foucault claims that institutions and discourses are not established by a subject,

²³ AK is an extremely complicated and intricate work. There is no room to explicate Foucault’s theory of knowledge here, beyond bare necessity. The statement, for Foucault, is an enunciative function (88-105). The enunciative function is language at the level of historical existence. It is not logic (language as proposition), nor grammar (language as syntax), nor psychology/anthropology (language as semantics, meaning, hermeneutics). The enunciative function is defined by having a correlative space, a collateral space, and a material existence. As such, the statement, unlike other analytical levels of language, is bound up in a field of other statements and institutional structures wherein it interfaces with power relations. (The relation is not interior, but exterior—fields of statements, as knowledge, always interlock with and issue from fields of power.) Statements are essentially *mere* (they are impoverished in the face of the structural possibility of language), and therefore leave room for physical struggles over meaning. As Foucault puts it, they “pose the question of power.” (120) For a basic overview, refer to Gary Gutting, Michel Foucault’s Archaeology of Scientific Reason, 1989: the chapter entitled “The Archaeology of Knowledge.”

importance in our lives, and we see how to go about remembering it, examining it, contemplating it, sorrowing over it, cherishing it.... Wittgenstein’s nonsense is that he has tried to get us at the mystical by means of a logical analysis, an analysis which does not stick to its proper domain but steps over the limits and speaks of the mystical. Wittgenstein is showing us that logical, rational treatment is *inappropriate* for all of the mystical subject matter—and it is this forcing of all sorts of human experiences into one and the same form of and understanding of language (the proper subject matter being natural science, matters of fact) that we are asked to give up, to throw away.

Of course some things in life are well-suited to a precise language while others are not. *Of course* I am more confident that I have communicated clearly (and that I am understood) when I announce the fact that the moon rose at 9:40 p.m. than when I try, with words, to paint a picture of the colors of a moonrise for someone who didn’t see it. *Of course* I hesitate to tell someone that wonder is the way I meet a moonrise; that watching a moonrise is somehow central to the fullness of existence. *Of course* I’ll look for other than technical means of communication to convey these things.

What if the entire Tractatus is about wondering at the existence of the world—no,—is about something *so much larger* than wondering at the existence of the world that it took a *whole book* just to make one tiny gesture toward it? How *immense* is that which Wittgenstein gives us by means of his propositions—and he tells us that propositions have no capabilities of speaking beyond the straightforward and factual matters of this world? We almost feel him, beneath his words, secretly screaming “*Believe* in the immensity! *Believe* that words take you beyond themselves!”

I walk in the woods. I sense something deep about nature and spiritual matters. I want to tell someone else. I try to express it as something metaphysical; it quickly becomes ridiculous. I try to capture it in the description of a stream and a canopy of willow bushes, and I end up with a poorly written description of an ordinary stream and an ordinary canopy. Finally, I have to just offer my ridiculous and ordinary attempts and repeatedly emphasize that they are ridiculous and ordinary and that what I’m really trying to get at is ineffable. The Tractatus and the “Lecture on Ethics” give us a clear account of this: Language is worldly and factual. Putting the transcendent into words brings it into the realm of the world and facts, diminishing—destroying—what is transcendent. In the Tractatus,

Wittgenstein tries to show the transcendent in not saying certain things — that is, by leaving things unsaid; but he also says that it is unsaid, so he ends up saying it and then saying that he can't say it. As though I were walking along with someone and I point and tell him to look at something; and then I tell him I am pointing at nothing even as his gaze is following my finger and resting on something in the distance. As though talking about the transcendent is an *irresistible* temptation, so important it is in our lives; but we hold it with such respect that whenever we talk about it, we feel we must afterwards apologize. Language cannot touch whatever inspiration occurred in me. The experience is *toohuge, too extraordinary*, language too humble, too ordinary.

Then I find a poem. This poem takes what I sensed in the woods and wanted to express and moves, *dances* one inch above it, caressing it like the air off of a hawk's wings caresses the earth — the experience is unchanged, untouched, but caressed, *silently(!)* from *only one inch above*. This is how language reaches out to the mystical, to God, to wonder — . Language reaches to it not with the hope of grabbing it, closing its hand around it and stealing it from the transcendental realm to bring it into its own linguistic world of perceptions, emotions and ideas. Language does not touch the mystical; it points, gestures, brushes by it, traces its shape in the air around it. But language can only reach like this from within a human life. *What is mystical is mystical by virtue of a human taking it into her life as mystical*. Words point to the mystical when a person is moved by them. The words in the Tractatus are not in themselves powerful; they gain their enormity when they inspire a particular person who studies them and when they create within her new ways of seeing her life, shifting the limits of her world.

If the point of the Tractatus is to get us to see the magnitude of the transcendent in our lives, it is overwhelmingly successful. Its fault occurs in looking too closely at words themselves and not enough at the situations in which the words are spoken, the people who speak them, and the lives and experiences behind the people who speak them. Because of this, Wittgenstein correctly emphasizes the difference between the ordinary and the mystical but makes an error in drawing a careful distinction between the two where no clear distinction can be discovered. Whether or not words point to the mystical is dependent on the life out of which they come or into which they are accepted, and therefore, the power of

and Feminism, I take the treatment of the subject to be indicative of how Foucault's method might shore a feminist critique.²² I begin the essay by outlining the treatment of “the subject” in Discipline and Punish and the first volume of The History of Sexuality. Next I develop McNay's criticism of the “docile body” and its relation to power, including her reading of The Use of Pleasure as a shift “from the body to the self.” I counter McNay's interpretation of TUP by developing the account of Enlightenment humanism that Fraser outlines in her essay. Foucault's position on Enlightenment humanism illustrates why he treats “the subject” as he does. To illustrate this relationship—between “the subject” and normative systems—I have attached an extended analysis of the narrative.

I conclude that the genealogy dismantles liberating political theories (and thus traditional critiques) to the extent that it displaces “the subject” from the center of history. However, Foucault's genealogy is well suited to expose how marginalized subjects and their knowledges disappear beneath the surface of global normative discourses; and while the genealogy cannot validate *any* discourses with regards to external conceptions of truth or experience, it can plot their occurrence, their dispersion, and their immediate differences from dominant discourses and institutions. The genealogy becomes a critique, then, in a different sense—in the sense that it reveals the historical contingency of dominating discourses and counters their domination with what Foucault calls the “freedom of thought.” Most importantly, it is Foucault's treatment of “the subject” that gives the genealogy this capability.

The Subject: Discourse and The Body

Foucault's project in DP is to write a history of systems of punishment. But he makes it explicit that it will not be a history of concepts or *mentalities*: “Analyse punitive methods not simply as consequences of legislation or as indicators of social structures, but as techniques possessing their own specificity in the more general field of other ways of exercising power.” (23) Foucault's point here is to escape the methods of writing history which have, at their center, the will, intention, or agency of a subject. In traditional histories, an agent knows the event, and its experience is the truth of history; as a result, history can proceed towards some

²² Fraser does not indict Foucault simply with regards to “feminist” criticism or “feminist social criticism”; her claim is that Foucault's method falls short as an adequate social criticism *simpliciter*. As I explained before, my analysis does not bind itself up with feminism in any particular way except for its special concern with “the subject” and with the narrative, two themes in feminist literature.

Fraser's perspective speaks simultaneously from two camps: first, as a critical theory; and second, as a feminism. Fraser is a Habermasian political philosopher who continually interrogates Foucault's "rhetoric" for any evidence of the theoretical support that she feels feminist social criticism requires to justify its normative bias. While I will not confront any particularly "feminist issues" in this essay—misogyny, patriarchy, or gender discrimination, for example—I do intend to draw all of my critical material from these two "camps." The question of the critical force in Foucault's method comes primarily from Habermassians; and the status of "the subject" is the most common concern of feminists reading Foucault. Later I will argue that these questions are, in fact, intimately related. Thus, following Fraser, I will employ these perspectives and their foundational concerns as a guide in my reading of Foucault.

Foucault's "genealogy" is a historical method whose foremost concern is dismissing the centrality of a *theory of the subject*. No longer concerned with first establishing what the subject's world is really like, how it knows, or on what basis it can differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate actions, the genealogical history instead lends primacy to an "endlessly repeated play of dominations." (AME, 377) Groups and individuals struggle amongst each other and conclude in a domination. Only in the emergence of this domination is "truth" defined, according to the "manipulations" and "interpretations" of the dominating force. Thus, both "truth" and "the subject" are of secondary importance in the genealogy: it is not by virtue of them that a certain history becomes possible, but *vice versa*. But if this is the case, how do we employ Foucault's position to evaluate social practices? Defining 'critique' as the analysis and evaluation of social practice—essentially Fraser's "social criticism"—the problem becomes clear. Without an active subject or a non-contingent standard for truth, how do we perform a critique?²¹ Where is our impetus for change, and where is our basis for determining what that change should be?

I will use this space to defend Foucault's genealogical method. In response to Fraser's insightful challenge, I assay the architectural strength of the genealogy *vis-à-vis* the foundations of a social critique. But instead of attempting to formulate the conditions for the possibility of social criticism—a project beyond my scope—I will address Foucault's treatment of "the subject." Following the example of Lois McNay in her book, Foucault

words (the ability to merely express clearly something we all know, etc. or the ability to take us beyond themselves) occurs in degrees and shades.

In the following list of statements, can we really say at what point we move from acceptable ways of speaking to nonsense? Which of these have sense? Which are grasping for (or gesturing toward) something that is beyond words?

There's a river.

The river makes sounds.

I like the sounds of the river.

The river's sounds are beautiful like a song.

Listen to the song of the river; it is wise.

Can we not imagine a context in which the first statement might be the most mystical and powerful? Two people are exploring in a forest. They follow elk footprints in the mud. They come upon a moss-carpeted castle of boulders and trees. They climb over the boulders to the crest of a ridge. Land lies tremendously spread out below them. One touches the other on the shoulder, points to something in the distance, and whispers, "There's a river!"

The simplest phrases, dull and common on their own, can be pressed into pure poetry by the swelling wonder, beauty, or emotion of the life behind them. "A whole world of pain is contained in these words.' How *can* it be contained in them? — It is bound up with them. The words are like an acorn from which an *oak tree* can grow" (Culture and Value, p52, 1946). Whether or not an acorn becomes an oak tree depends on where the acorn falls. In other words, we cannot understand what is bound up with words or how deeply words are meant to go or the power of words without looking at them in a context, without remembering that some person in some situation arranged those words in just that way. Words are uttered by *people*, words are carefully chosen by *people*, words are mulled over and considered and reconsidered and considered again by *people*, words are *agonized* over by *people*, words burst spontaneously and explosively from the mouths of *people!*

If I try to describe a discovery, a wonder, a marvel, I often end up describing its impact on me—perhaps the feelings or thoughts it evokes in me—or maybe I personify it and allow myself to engage in conversation with it or cherish it as I might a person. Why do I need to include this type of thing in the description I give to someone else? Because I

²¹ It seems we need either an extra-linguistic (transcendental, empirical, Platonic) or inter-subjective (Hegelian, Habermasian) standard for "truth" to have normative status.

don't want him to understand an object or an event (or a fact). I want him to understand something that transcends that object or event but is revealed to me *through* that object or event. A matter-of-fact description which would be appropriate for objects and events may not give any suggestion of anything beyond (like a *Tractatus* with no nonsense). And apparently the easiest or most natural way for me to gesture toward what is beyond is to attempt a description of how it fits in with my life, how it fits into *my* world. And so I tell someone, "I've been listening to this song over and over for hours." "I can't read this story without crying." "I hiked along, utterly exhausted and felt perfectly at peace with the whole world." "One look in her eyes and I thought I had known her since we were children." "The river whispered to me, 'It's going to be o.k. It's going to be o.k. It's going to be o.k....'" I don't report on the river; I describe what the river inspired in me. And the more this person whom I tell is acquainted with me and my life, the more she will understand the force which the experiences I describe had for me.

If I were more artful in my abilities to communicate, perhaps I would not have to rely so much on this more direct description of an experience's impact on me. Wittgenstein's idea of nonsense (nonsense being saying that which cannot be said) runs parallel to Søren Kierkegaard's notion (or rather, his pseudonym Johannes Climacus' notion) of the contradiction of communicating to another person what is wholly inward and subjective.⁸ For Wittgenstein, nonsense is not a wall we run into and bang our heads against — we *can* communicate that which must be passed over in silence, by means of showing rather than saying. Similarly, Kierkegaard, despite the contradiction, allows for communication of what is inward, but the communication must be artful. For Kierkegaard, the difference between ordinary, direct communication and artful communication is a matter of reflection. For the former type of communication, one needs only a single reflection, on what it is she wants to say. The single reflection is choosing the right words to express a thought to another person and is sufficient for clear, direct communication. Artful communication, in contrast, requires double reflection. The second reflection brings the words back into the life of the communicator. The communicator reflects on her relation to her words, how what she says fits into her life. Kierkegaard describes reflecting doubly as being "interested" in your own thinking and communicating, "essentially interested,"

⁸ Kierkegaard, Søren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Eds. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong. Princeton: Princeton University, 1992, pp73-78.

Genealogy as Critique? Foucault, "the Subject," and Normativity

Matt Steilen

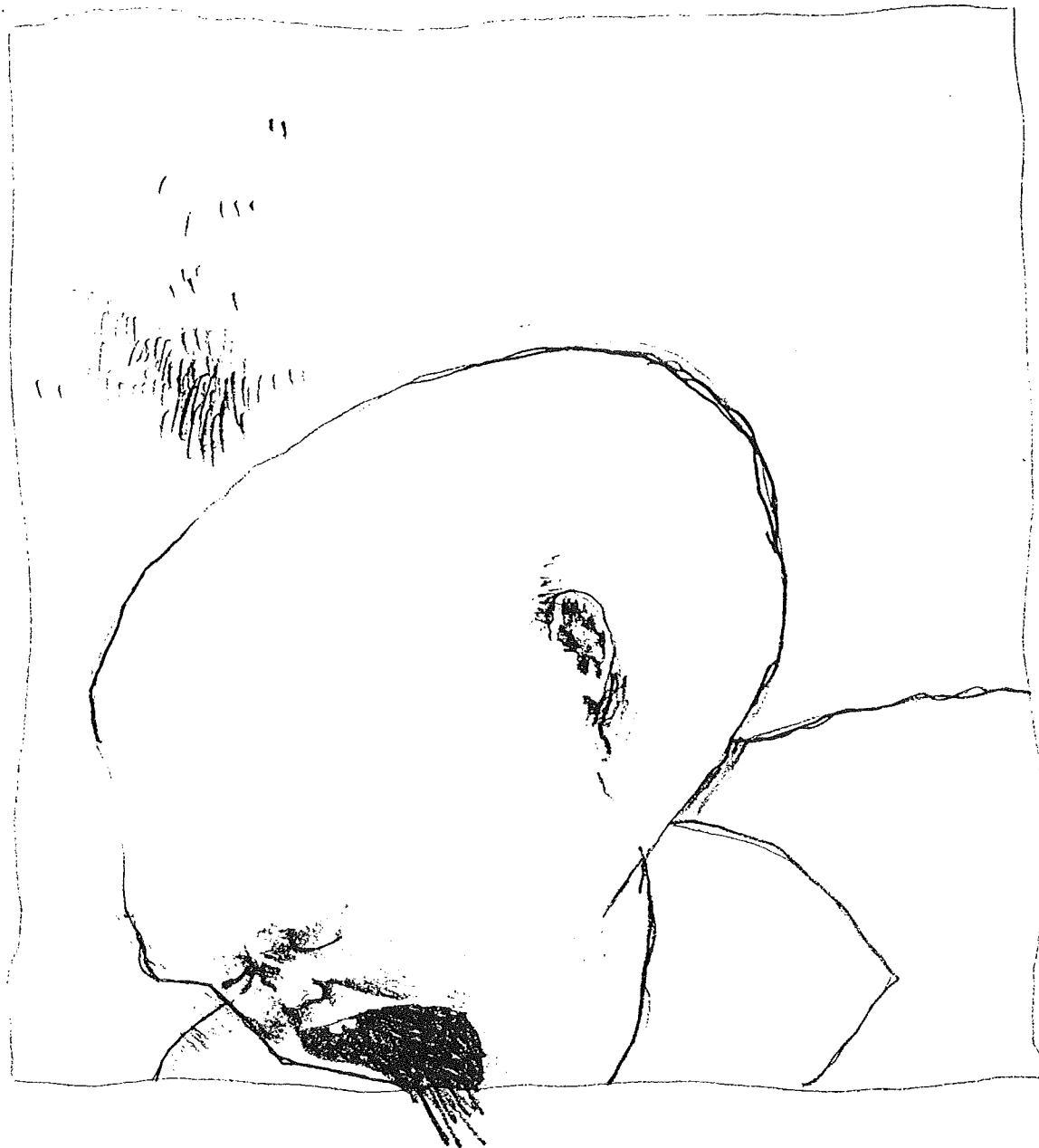
In the meantime, we have thought better of this. Today we don't believe a word of all that anymore. The "internal world" is full of optical illusions and mirages: the will is one of them. The will no longer moves anything, so it no longer explains anything either—it just accommodates events, and it can be absent. The so-called "motive": another error. Just a surface phenomenon of consciousness, an accessory to the act, which conceals the *antecedentia* of an act rather than representing them. And as for the "I"! That has become a fable, a fiction, a play on words: it has completely and utterly ceased to think, to feel, and to will! What's the consequence of this? There aren't any mental causes at all! All the supposed empirical evidence for them has gone to hell! *That's* the consequence!—

— Nietzsche²⁰

Constructing a critique of social and political institutions has been one of the foremost projects of contemporary modernity. The critique has taken many forms—it has intersected with liberal political theories, Marxian theories of labor, environmental ethics, and radical feminist theories of "sexed ontology." In this essay, I will map one intersection that has proven especially challenging: the collision with the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault's methods—the "archaeology" and the "genealogy"—often appeal to philosophers; however, in the historical and political-theoretical communities his banners have faced more pointed criticisms. Nancy Fraser provides an eloquent (and rather common) example in her essay "Michel Foucault: A Young 'Conservative'?":

We may question, for example, whether Foucault's rhetoric really does the job of distinguishing better from worse regimes of social practices; whether it really does the job of identifying forms of domination (or whether it overlooks some and/or misrecognizes others); whether it really does the job of distinguishing fruitful from unfruitful, acceptable from unacceptable forms of resistance to domination; and finally, whether it really does the job of suggesting not simply that change is possible but also what sort of change is desirable. These, I take it, are among the principal tasks of social criticism, and they are tasks with respect to which Foucault's social criticism might well be judged deficient. (FIF, 25)

²⁰ TW, 32. (I will use an abbreviation to indicate the source for all my citations; the key to these abbreviations is in the bibliography.)



“existing in it” (p73). You must travel with your words as they leave your mouth rather than letting them randomly and irresponsibly bounce around outside of you. Wittgenstein says, “Don’t for *heaven’s sake*, be afraid of talking nonsense! But you must pay attention to your nonsense” (*Culture and Value*, p56, 1946). You must get clear about it; you must understand how it fits into your life.

The artful communicator who understands the double reflection and who wants to communicate a thought which is wholly inward not only chooses her words with infinite care — she also chooses her facial and vocal expression with infinite care, and she chooses her actions with infinite care (artful communication is not only linguistic). She chooses, with essential, infinite care, an entire restructuring and redirecting of her life around this thought which is wholly inward (and therefore of the utmost significance). The outward words, expression, actions and activities of the artful communicator are true to the inwardness of this subject; inwardness is made manifest in outwardness by the artful communicator. In other words, she finds saying to be an insufficient form of communication for what she wants to communicate, because she wants to communicate what is mystical. Therefore, she relies on showing — using words carefully and poetically, communicating with her actions, communicating with her whole life.

Interested receivers will constantly look for the artfulness in what is communicated to them, rarely taking significant communication at face value. Suppose two people could say exactly the same thing to me. I might call the first person’s words nonsense, in the more ordinary use of ‘nonsense’; that is, I perceive that there is little or nothing in the life built up around these words. I might call the second person’s words nonsense in the Wittgensteinian sense; that is, I perceive that words alone don’t begin to touch that which is being expressed, but the thrust of the life behind the words hurls the words very close to it. Of course, if I am receiving communication in literary form, I have less access to the life and activities of the communicator (the author). My duties are thereby increased; it is up to me and my interest to actively seek out or actively open myself to the artfulness of a text. Suppose another person and I are both reading the *Tractatus*. For me, some questions of logic are clarified; the other person begins to redirect his life because of the book. At least for him, the artistic writing, the amount of self and passion the author subtly put into his words, is of great importance. But that is not enough to make the words point to the mystical. He as reader also has to engage himself, his thought, his passion, his inwardness. An author has to

put artfulness (inwardness, passion, care) into his words and a reader has to allow artfulness to come out of the words. If either fails to do so, the words are just words — they comprise a factual report or they are nonsense.

In one sense, then, it is correct to say that words are this-worldly. If I say something like “the river speaks,” I can take this to be a very ordinary, though false, statement about the world. My concept of a river (in the ordinary and most common sense) is quite clear, as is my concept of what it is to speak. Even if we take a phrase where it is harder to point to instances of each of the words or concepts in the world, still words are articulations made by human mouths, and their correct use is a matter of consistency with the usual and normal uses. “Theology as grammar” (*Investigations*, §373).⁹ The words of theology talk about a transcendent being. But they are words (‘transcendent’ and ‘being’ are themselves words) arranged according to implicit rules of a community of people participating in the same linguistic customs. You want to know what is God for theologians? Look how theology uses the word ‘God.’ See which words they tend to put with that word, how they tend to arrange the words, in which contexts they let the word ‘God’ be used and in which they object to its use. One wants to protest, “Certainly the words of theology have meaning!” Yes, they do, insofar as they are consistent with certain recognized rules of usage, varying only slightly in certain comprehensible ways.

Theology seems empty, devoid of force, when we give it this quick grammatical treatment. Is that really all there is to theology? Well, yes — *until you make it part of your life*. Grammar comes alive in a human life. Theological works come alive when a person makes a “quite different place” in his life for them than he does other historical narratives or exegetical writings (*Culture and Value*, p32, 1937). Christian texts are transcendentally infused when a person begins to reorganize his life around them or according to them. “Christianity...offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to a historical narrative, rather: believe, through thick and thin, which you can do only as the result of a life” (*Culture and Value*, p32, 1937). If it were not for humans describing their lives with words and letting the words of others shape their lives, language *would* be precise, clear and determinate. Because you are a person, you have capacities to believe as can only be done as the result of a life, love as can only be done as a result of a life, marvel as can only be done as the result of a life. Nonsensical remarks

the sea for the sake of friendship, we can enjoy communion with a world that we are a part of, we can go on “without appeal.”

From this perspective, *The Fall* ceases to be a dead end. Camus did not destroy his own project by creating Jean-Baptiste. Indeed, he would have destroyed it had he not created him.

It is already clear that The First Man is very different from The Fall. Camus was beginning a novel that would reconcile humans to themselves after the fall. Jean-Baptiste is not the final product, nor was he ever intended to be. He is the product of a culture, confused by anti-human ideologies, i.e., Christianity, which have created inhuman standards and enabled judgment and subsequent guilt. Clamence is the aggregate of the vices of a generation, but they are considered vices from the Western Christian perspective. The purpose of The Fall is to expose realities of human life and is leading to a revolution in self-perception. Whereas The Fall is a painful novel devoted to truth telling, The First Man moves to find beauty and enjoyment in life without forgetting what Jean-Baptiste has said.

Humans are duplicitous and ugly but our nature is indelible, so, according to Camus, we should learn how to live naturally in our “ugliness” since that is the only way to live truthfully. Jean-Baptiste’s guilt, and the guilt of post-World War II society comes from its inability to accept completely our freedom from transcendental authority. The First Man was going to reinfuse some beauty into the life made “unappealing” by Jean-Baptiste.

While it is fair to ask whether Camus has undermined his entire philosophy of the absurd and whether his project has fallen into despair, I have argued the contrary. Camus is trying to tell the truth, but Western-Christian standards do not. These standards argue that the universe is just before Mersault’s brutal execution, they insist that the dozens of bloated corpses piling up on the streets of Oran have not died from plague and then try to console us after watching a young child senselessly suffer and die. If we accept the legitimacy of The Stranger and The Plague, we must also accept Jean-Baptiste. But after we have accepted Jean-Baptiste, we can move on.

The Fall is a step towards rejecting these anti-human standards and is not a fall into despair; it does not herald the failure of the Camus project. Jean-Baptiste is a large step forward in a revolution of self-perception through which we can see our world and ourselves truthfully and learn to live without unrealistic expectations and inhuman standards. He is confused and disenchanted because he seeks to become the impossible: the innocent murderer. Jean-Baptiste feels guilty because he has not purged the standards that still have profound authority even for an “absurd man.” Jean-Baptiste does not lead us into a desert -- a complete void where we cannot even be sure of our own motives -- he shows us the sand that has always been under our feet. But there are oases in this desert. We can still swim in

have expressive power, they *do* have meaning, and meaning of utmost importance and depth, only because (only when) you understand the remarks with your life, you make sense of them with your life. You *could not* make sense of them with logical reasoning alone. Without *your* life, nonsense has no power, no meaning; it is truly nonsense.

A Ginkgo tree drops all of its leaves in one day. One morning, brilliant yellow fans flutter in the breeze. The next morning, a wintry skeleton rises out of a shocking yellow blanket. I walk by, I keep walking. Yellow leaves pull at red heart, red heart longs, but I keep walking. And I do not understand the Ginkgo tree. I could not understand it, unless I stopped. Unless I let red heart become yellow, let heart lie naked, outside me, exposed, staring up at its tree. We must do this with words too. We must *let* them reach right into our life, grab it, twist it, squeeze it, rip it open — and only then can the mystical come surging in.

Fall and the Faith.” Christianity and Crisis.

⁹ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1958.



Perhaps Tarrou also came to this conclusion at the end of his life. We cannot tell from the text, but Tarrou's thinking seems to be leading up to Jean-Baptiste's. Also, it is important to note that Jean-Baptiste was a lawyer, and this draws a clear connection to Tarrou's life, but he probably also represents upstanding and successful middle-class professionals in general, e.g., a selfless doctor. In other words, Rieux is a young Jean-Baptiste. Perhaps one day Rieux will ask himself how he really felt when his wife died. What will he do when he begins to feel grateful for this liberation that came at the expense of the person who was (supposedly) dearest to him?

After *The Plague*, Camus surely explored these problems coming around the corner. Rieux is a strong development of the Sisyphean hero who serves humanity in his struggle, but he is still deluded. We cannot be sure what Tarrou's doubts were, but they were unresolved when he died. Camus had to develop these doubts and open them in order to continue telling the truth. Truth telling is one of the major focuses of his work and it is coupled with the quest to live without appeal: being skeptical and avoiding despair.

So can we put Jean-Baptiste back on the shelf, or brush him under the rug saying "He just doesn't understand God's love yet, give him some time"?¹⁹ Is an interpretation that abandons rebellion fair to Camus? Jean-Baptiste, like Mersault and Tarrou, is a truth-teller and he deserves just as much attention as any character in Camus' corpus. The recent publication of Camus' final and incomplete novel, *The First Man*, sheds more light on a fuller interpretation and shows that he was still developing ideas of how to know the truth and enjoy life. The main character, Jacques, grows up in French-colonized Algeria in a poor family. His father dies in World War I and Jacques never meets him. His mother is mute and nearly deaf. His uncle knows only several dozen words because he is also almost mute, but he teaches Jacques to enjoy physical pleasures; not sexual pleasures, as we might interpret this, but all of the pleasure that can come from being a healthy human being interacting with nature. Jacques' strict grandmother runs the household. She, unlike the others, can speak, but the values she teaches Jacques are those learned from a lifetime of hard work and poverty: respect for power, labor and money. In this sort of environment, Jacques does not develop any spiritual, moral, national, or cultural ties and lives in beautiful, innocent communion with the world around him.

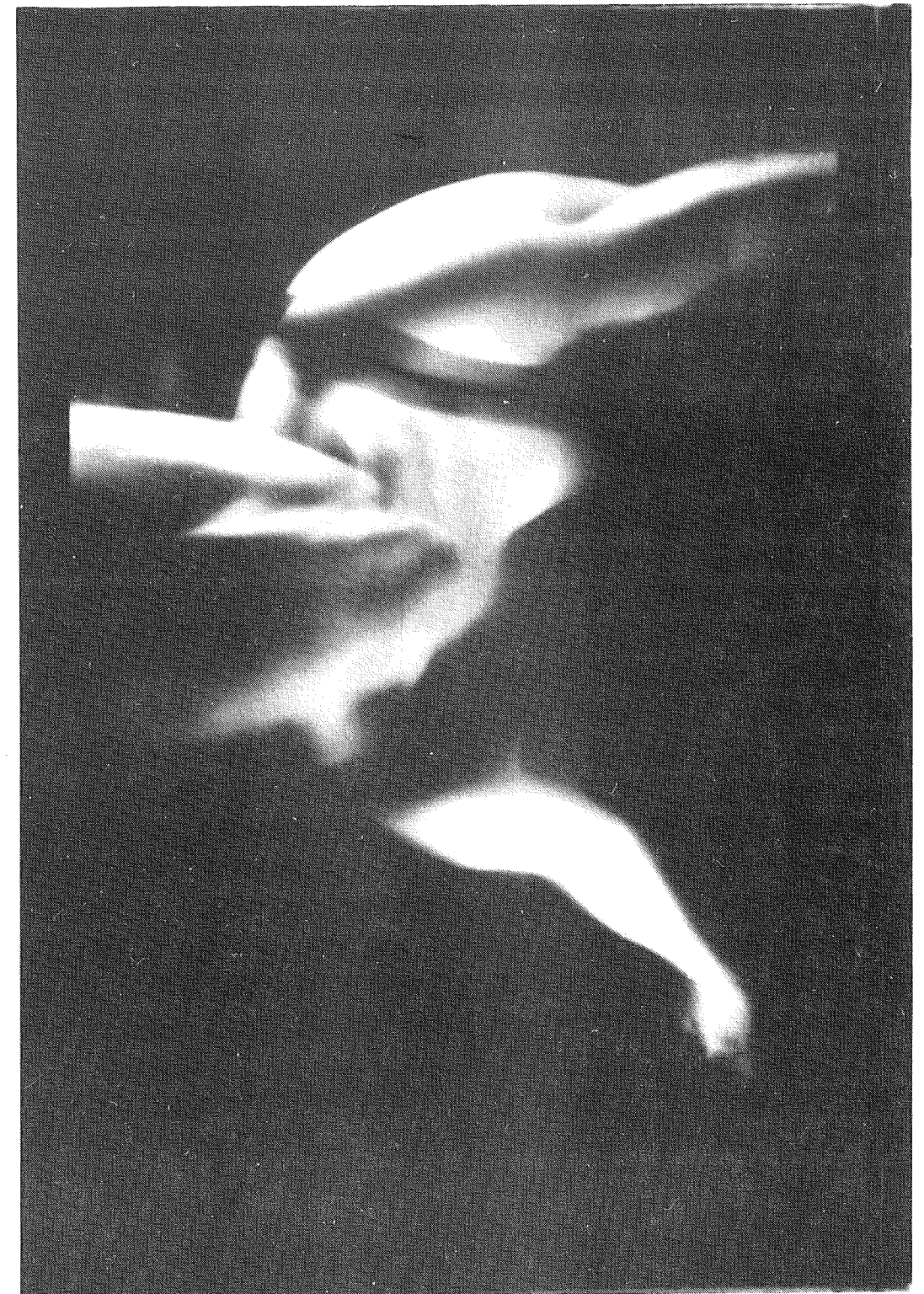
¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 278.

¹⁹p. 140 Wilder, Amos. "The Modern Mask: Two Versions." *Christianity and Crisis*. see also, p. 126 Brown, Robert. "The

young. His father was a prosecuting attorney and Tarrou admired him very much. He went with him to court one day and saw him viciously argue for a man's execution. Tarrou sympathized with the meek and frightened defendant, and consequently lost all respect for his father and severed all connection with him. He left home and joined rebel groups in order to fight any system that supported death. In spite of his intention to fight plague, one day he realized that the ideas he was fighting for would ultimately lead to the death of others. The truth Tarrou found was that everyone sanctions someone's death somewhere, and that everyone therefore has plague: *everyone is guilty*. Tarrou wants to escape this paradox -- the flight from ineradicable guilt -- by becoming an "innocent murderer" or a saint without God. An innocent murderer would be someone who can truly cure people of plague and find peace. In spite of his tireless struggle against plague Tarrou feels guilty, contracts real plague and dies.

Rieux has the final word. After watching children suffer horrible deaths, hearing sermons blaming the people for bringing plague upon themselves, seeing thieves and smugglers profit from the plague and the deaths of his best friend and his wife, he nevertheless concludes that "there are more things to admire in men than to despise."¹⁸ This ending strikes the reader as inspiring; but it seems deeply ironic after considering the conclusion of The Fall, which could be "there is nothing to admire in men." A deeper reading will show that this obvious discontinuity does not derail Camus' line of thought.

Guilt overwhelms Jean-Baptiste. He is very similar to Tarrou and Rieux in that he thought he has been a plague fighter, but, unlike Tarrou, Jean-Baptiste is disenchanted, not because he sees plague in the ideas he fought for, but as a fundamental part of himself. A soft mocking laughter leads him to comprehend his indifference towards the widows and orphans and his deep egoism. Plague overwhelms him and the laughter follows him throughout his life, and he reveals that he still hears it occasionally at the time of his confession. He cannot find peace in nobility, depravity, chastity, or anywhere else. Motivating his struggle is a powerful drive to fight plague and cure himself of it, to become an innocent murderer. He is not happy about how the world is, but he eventually resigns himself to it. The role of judge-penitent is the only position that has brought him the greatest fulfillment, albeit tainted and incomplete fulfillment. Being innocent as a murderer, he discovers, is not possible.



Being Human: A Prologue

Eric Strean

This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
His brain even like despair. (l 220-2)

The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bound. (l 203-7)

---Shelley 'Alastor'

I

I'm sitting by the shore
Seeing turning leaves and fall debris
Sand, clay, the warmth of autumn's day:
Straw like streams of russet smoke,
Time unconscious of its change.
Poplars rise like strokes of paint,
Flaming with motion,
Burning a violent color.

Fall comes in furies, harbingers of sleep,
Shaping this world with ethereal agency;
Stirring vapors red and white
Blowing waters white and black.

Once I felt a rage for

force in their lives: plague. On one level the plague represents actual disease, but, in a larger sense, it represents active and pitiless forces antagonistic to humans and life. The main character, Dr. Rieux, is an heroic depiction of the absurd man. Recall that with Mersault, the path of the absurd man is clear: he is to revolt against death (plague), suffering and everything that carries or encourages it (thoughtless people and bureaucracy); he must always remain aware and never let the revolt leave his mind. Rieux embarks on this course of life without questioning his intent nor the validity in trying to save the same people who might have demanded Mersault's death: he only knows that it is right to fight plague. He even says that it is the people's duty to fight plague, that simply by fighting plague they were justified and there can never be any question of guilt.¹⁴

Whereas society metes out guilt in *The Stranger*, in *The Plague* guilt comes only to those who do not fight plague, live in unconscious habit, and must deny the absurd to maintain their way of life. When asked why he is fighting plague and what moral code prompts him, Rieux answers, "common decency."¹⁵ Rieux has no doubt in the rightness of his fight nor his own decency. Tarrou seems to possess the same attitude, when he explains his moral code is "comprehension."¹⁶ Their attitude towards plague is simple: it must be fought, because if we ignore plague, it will come after us. They must fight against the comfort of habit and the crowd. However, the doctrine of comprehension is dangerous because it leads to greater comprehension of oneself, and, ironically, even more dangerous because it is naive about human evil and human duplicity, which Jean-Baptiste is supposed to illustrate. Comprehension poses no problem for Rieux, only for Tarrou. Rieux never doubts the purity of his or others' motives or emotions, but it is clear that Tarrou still wonders about his own innocence. The difference between Tarrou and Rieux is that Rieux is too heroic and unrealistic and is blind to radical evil that may exist in the human heart. He is inspiring, but too statuesque and admirable to be believable.¹⁷

Tarrou is a drifter in Oran. He is among those who fight the plague with the greatest zeal and organizes most of the preventative measures against plague. His character is very elusive. His struggle with plague is more complex than Rieux's because Tarrou confesses that he had experienced "plague" formerly. Tarrou became aware of plague while he was

¹⁴p. 121 Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. trans. Stuart Gilbert. The Modern Library: New York, 1954.

¹⁵ *ibid.* p.150.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 120.

¹⁷This could be why Camus felt the need to delve further into the ubiquity of guilt in Jean-Baptiste.

Since he is an absurd man, Mersault is incapable of feeling guilty and has to remind himself that he has become a "criminal." Guilt simply means nothing to him, and he does not conform to society's standards for judgment. Before his arrest, he indifferently disregards much of his life because it offers him no real meaning. In jail, he gradually comes to understand what it means to be free and he longs to swim in the sun and see his fiancée. A priest visits him before his execution, and their conversation understated Mersault's feelings about rebellion and life.

The priest tries to convince Mersault to confess his guilt and, out of shame, to ask for God's forgiveness. Mersault, of course, feels innocent and cannot agree. The priest reminds him of God's justice, but Mersault counters with the ridiculously obvious fact that human justice has already decided to take away his life. The priest passionately insists that God's justice maintains order in the cosmos. In desperation, the priest tries to ingratiate himself to Mersault and tells him that he is *on his side*. Mersault can no longer stand the absolute falseness of the priest's reasoning and breaks out at him in fury. Clearly, if the priest were on Mersault's side, he would try to stop his execution, and would not condone the society which sentenced him. Also, Mersault knows he is alive and does not allow himself to be deluded by illusions. He only hopes to be met at his execution by howls of execration from a dead society; it is the priest who cannot even be sure that he is alive because he unconsciously lives his inauthentic life, built on illusions and lies.

Had Mersault not been executed, he might have taken on new interest in his life, having gained consciousness of his struggle and the sun's and the sea's beauty and meaning while sitting in his cell. Greater certainty of what he knows and does not know clarifies his revolt, and the revolt itself invigorates him. Mersault's last wish for "howls of execration"¹³ will justify his revolt against a society that does not even know what life is. He will know he is alive because they hate him. Mersault wants to live in consciousness and is no longer the completely indifferent clerk we saw at the beginning of the novel. Nevertheless, Mersault's development is only the genesis of the absurd man. Mersault never had the chance to spread his wings and try to revolt for his entire life.

The Plague introduces the idea of radical evil. It is the story of an average and boring town full of average and boring people and how they react to an active, malevolent

the injustice and disorder of the universe. However, at the same time, he strives to create an order that is just.
¹³p. 154. Camus, Albert. The Stranger. trans. Stuart Gilbert. Vintage Books: Vintage Books, 1954.

Truth
A distrust of fate,
Always thinking the order of a life
Could meet the corners of the mind.
But on quiet nights
That share the privacy
Of this afternoon,
I wander these deserted streets
Beneath the sapphire sky
When the night says something about intimacy
Tempered by
The measureless twilight.
And along latched windowpanes
And the arches of porchlights,
Among wind-stricken oaks
Ordering the walks of intersecting streets,
This emptiness is heard
Like rhythms in the vacant tune
Of sifting winds in early June.
And I've seen the barren trees, the pain of leaves
Caught in the steel fence and pressed,
Blown to a contour by the fluid wind
That shapes the summer walls of rain
Like sheets of down-rushing storms.

I feel the slowness of the moment,
Pressing each thought until it bursts
Into what is beautiful,
But at times I have feelings
I do not know.

II

Now that the season of love is in bloom
Music plays through walls of darkened rooms
Sweet as the warmth of hidden rooms.
I hear the whispers melt in undertones
Behind the blackened walls
And wonder if it's love at all,
Because I've seen the anger and the pain
That ends whatever it begins,
So love must be frail
If it's smart at all.

In the hallway a woman sits outside her room
Transmitting pain through the telephone
Announcing
'It wouldn't make much difference
If you weren't here,'
With a look that says she's feigning anger.
I stare for a minute,
Wondering if my smile should be a frown
To suggest
Her sadness or her loss,
And the hidden pain
In passing couples who parade along the walks
When the nothingness of night
Settles into dreams tonight,
When the paleness of flesh
Mocks the nakedness
Of loving someone.

Once in the concert hall
When a favorite strain of Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring'

his most powerful indictment of modern humanity, because it reveals every human as totally and utterly guilty, neither exaggerating human tendencies nor diluting the grotesque realities of life. This work is especially problematic in that it seems contradictory to his other works and his overarching moral project to fight against suffering, death and oppression. A limited reading of The Fall renders a limited conclusion. Namely that Jean-Baptiste is a despairing dead end or some final step before Camus' conversion to Christianity,¹⁰ but these interpretations miss the mark. By reconsidering the truthfulness of Jean-Baptiste's critique in light of the evolving thought of Camus' work as a whole, we can reject what is generally said about The Fall and find a more accurate interpretation. That is to say, The Fall fits into a steady development of thought, and does not abandon Camus' moral project to create a philosophy that always tells the truth and does not fall into despair.

The picture of humanity in The Fall is beyond redemption, paralyzed by guilt, and contradicts Camus' earlier depiction of the absurd human. His early essay, The Myth of Sisyphus, describes the "absurd man" as one who lives in total awareness of the absurd -- inevitable death in a cold and benign universe. This awareness requires the absurd human to reject transcendental standards (e.g., Christian morality), thereby embracing and acknowledging his unquestionable innocence regardless of what other humans might impose upon him. The absurd human's universe, having lost the glitter and excitement of purpose, offers no incentive to continue living. The "absurd man" must learn to live in this "unappealing" universe and resist committing suicide¹¹, finding consolation in the consciousness of his revolt. Camus' philosophy of the absurd, thus far, has rejected the guilt that formerly oppressed the absurd man and the hopelessness of life has been tempered by the idea of revolt.¹² These problems appear in The Stranger and the story of Mersault, perhaps the quintessential absurd man.

The Stranger is the story of a hapless and estranged young professional, involved in an uncontrollable string of events, that lead him to a bizarre shooting of an Arab. The novel illustrates the disorder and meaninglessness of the world, and the absurdity of guilt.

¹⁰ "[Jean-Baptiste's] descent into hell is a one-way journey." Yu, Anthony. "The Experience of the Fall in Camus' La Chute" 25 (1970): 287-310.

"[W]e need not totally despair of Jean-Baptiste. [...] [I]t is possible that he may one time hear something else beside the laughter of judgment, the even softer, but more penetrating laughter of joy which says, 'Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.'" Brown, Robert. "The Fall and the Faith" 17 (1957) 123-126.

¹¹ p. 52-53. Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays. trans. Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage International, 1991.

¹²This theme is metaphysical rebellion which Camus explains in depth in The Rebel. The metaphysical rebel rebels against

Can we get back up, after The Fall?

Richard Tudor

It's a bland and foggy night in Amsterdam; you duck into a dirty bar to get out of the rain and to forget yourself, if only for an evening. There's some guy sitting alone in a corner; you think you recognize him so you sit near him. It turns out he's some pretentious French expatriate you've never met before who starts rambling about gin and his own sophistication. He is a stranger but friendly and pleasant enough to chat with. Then the conversation moves beyond small talk and he shamelessly starts telling his life story. He is overwhelmingly egocentric: he has been a champion of widows and orphans, but he realizes that he doesn't give a damn about anybody else beyond their capacity to make him look good. The society that used to call him "noble" for his hypocritical humanism lives by the same stupid lies he did. His confusion has tossed him from countless cheap love affairs, to chastity, and then to drunken orgies that have almost destroyed his body. His whole life he has tried to know himself and to live true to his nature, whether it means helping the less fortunate or sleeping with prostitutes. Unable even to believe himself, unable to trust the sincerity of his own thoughts and desires, he considers himself vile. (You wanted to get out of the rain and find a petty distraction, and you certainly found one!)

You continue to meet for several nights and you visit him at his apartment the night before you have to leave town. Inside, he shows you a piece of Nazi war booty hidden in his closet. After his complete and utter self-condemnation, he lies in bed nursing a fever with gin. Suddenly his confession ends and he turns the attention to you. He asks you to look at yourself and he unabashedly announces that your tendencies, duplicities and lies are no different from his. He claims that he is aware of his guilt, and has gained a second innocence through acceptance. You have not, and no matter how wretched he may seem to you, you are no better and are, in fact, worse because you can't even claim to be aware of your guilt. He concedes that he may sound ludicrous, but he knows you will never forget his words. And probably not tonight, or tomorrow, but soon, you will agree with him, and you will go to him again, on another rainy night to the same sleazy dive not to forget yourself -- you will *never* be able to do that again -- but to confess to him just so you can live with yourself. Having confessed, he, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, rises above you, victorious in his awareness and self-acceptance as a judge-penitent.

This ending is the mocking conclusion of Albert Camus' final novel The Fall. It is

Echoed with a pain too close to truth,
I turned around and watched
Averted eyes
Nodding the sporadic tempo
Of a private allegro,
And there was no one to share
When feeling took the air:
The joy, the abnegation,
And the returning despair.
Walking down the road
Before the night turned red and black
I stared across the horizon and only saw
The fringes of the land receding to its edge
Pulling hemlocks, dark houses, and broken fences
To that dying end.
I could only wonder,
'Is this what it means
To have feeling?'

III

This is spring,
The season of greater needs
And now that feeling seems estranged,
The passing of this life
Seems to leave a hint of forgetfulness
Felt somewhere in a waking moment
On a casement ledge
Where unfamiliar rituals
(That used to be the playing-out of other's needs)
Seem some way like my own.
I'm keeping watch over man's sexuality
Protecting but admitting

An insufficiency:
Following these days,
As the morning rises up to meet me
And shadows lie down to leave me,
I've been living an act of destruction,
Not creation.
I've only known this struggle
Between knowing and forgetting
And seeing shadows everywhere,
As if the sky was lit from behind
And I wouldn't let me see anything.
What can I say
After seeing past the illusion
Of life's beautification?
But I'll leave the window
To the midnight air
And open the closed door
If the warm dream will come in.

