

Relational Ontology: An Exploration through the Work of M. Foucault

by

Seth K. Asch  
BA Philosophy, University of Victoria, 2004

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Political Science and CSPT

© Seth K. Asch, 2009  
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

## **Supervisory Committee**

Relational Ontology: An Exploration through the Work of M. Foucault

by

Seth K. Asch

BA Philosophy, University of Victoria, 2004

### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. James Tully, Department of Political Science and Philosophy, CSPT Member  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Warren Magnusson, Department of Political Science, CSPT Member  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. R.B.J. Walker, Department of Political Science, CSPT Member  
**Departmental Member**

## **Abstract**

### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. James Tully, Department of Political Science and Philosophy, CSPT Member

**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Warren Magnusson, Department of Political Science, CSPT Member

**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. R.B.J. Walker, Department of Political Science, CSPT Member

**Departmental Member**

This thesis is an attempt to articulate a ‘Relational’ ontology, and in turn relate this type of cultural worldview to Foucault’s philosophy and methodology. The major thesis being offered here is that Foucault can be read as a ‘Relational’ ontologist. The hope is that when he is understood from this standpoint, the unique methodology he operates with, one which allows us to view our social worlds as cultural, historical, and political products, will be seen as a coherent, authoritative, and legitimate challenge to the normalized way we envision our existence.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Acknowledgments .....	vii
Dedication .....	viii
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: On Ontology: A Movement From a ‘Foundational and ‘Atomic’ Model To a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ Schemata.....	4
A. How ontology is prevalently characterized.....	5
B. M. B. Foster’s thesis on the relation between cosmology, ontology, and methodology.....	9
C. Given M.B Foster’s argument, this thesis will characterize our traditional ontology, as: ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’ .....	16
D. The standard relational challenge offered against this traditional model.....	20
E. A cursory description of an ontology which might be considered thoroughly ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’.....	22
F. Three thinkers this thesis acknowledges as influenced by this ontological model of reality: B. Spinoza; M. Mauss; M. Foucault .....	26
Chapter 2: The extent to which M. Foucault can be read as operating upon a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology .....	35
A. Summary of last chapter, goal of this one.....	35
B. A clarification .....	37
C. Four Basic Ways the work of M. Foucault has been characterized by the .....	39
academic community .....	39
D. How this thesis will alternately consider Foucault: as utilizing a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist.....	48
E. The two criteria which must obtain if we are to read Foucault as operating upon a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology.....	51
F. Demonstration that Foucault can be read as a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist in SMBD (or the ‘Middle Period’) .....	51
1. Demonstration of Criteria #1 .....	52
2. Criteria #2.....	56

G. Demonstration that Foucault can be read as a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist in the ‘Later Period’ .....	61
1. Criteria #1 .....	61
2. Criteria #2 .....	63
H. Three analytical models that attempt to explain how ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ form our cultural worlds .....	65
1. A micro-analysis .....	66
2. A macro-analysis .....	68
3. A political analysis .....	70
I. Conclusion .....	84
Chapter 3: From Ontology to Methodology .....	86
A. Introduction .....	86
B. Recap of the relationship previously outlined between cosmology, ontology, and methodology .....	88
C. Reconstruction of our ‘Foundational’ and ‘Atomic’ ontology, and the .....	89
methodology enabled by this worldview .....	89
D. Reconstruction of our ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology, and the .....	98
methodology enabled by this alternate or ‘Foucauldian’ worldview .....	98
Chapter 4: An example to show the contrast between these two worldviews: The self as Subject and Foucault’s relationally, self-constitutive version .....	112
A. Preliminaries .....	112
B. 3 Reasons to turn to the self .....	113
C. Foucault on the self vs. the Subject- 3 Quotes: A/B/C .....	115
1. Return of Morality .....	116
2. These exact sentiments are amplified in the interview ECSPF .....	116
3. And finally made even more forcefully in Aesthetics of Existence .....	116
D. The way the self has been traditionally portrayed: the Modern Subject- 3 Points .....	117
E. Foucault’s relationally, self-constitutive version of the self- 7 points .....	123
F. Summary .....	129
G. A first glance response to problems of Agency vs. Structure or Freedom vs. Determination given this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ or ‘Foucauldian’ model .....	131
Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion .....	140
A. Summary as Political Stakes .....	140
B. Future Research .....	149
C. The ‘Relational Cut’ and the ‘Cultural Turn’ .....	150
Bibliography .....	152
Works Cited: by Foucault .....	152
Works Cited: on Foucault .....	155
Books .....	155
Articles .....	155
Other Works Cited .....	156
Books .....	156
Articles .....	157
Resources for Foucault .....	157

Books ..... 157  
Collections..... 158  
Articles ..... 159  
Philosophical Resources ..... 160  
Appendix: Key to the Shorthand Terms Used in this to Refer to Foucault’s Texts..... 162

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank a number of people for helping make this possible:

First, to my family who offered great love, consideration, and support throughout this project.

Second, to my father and his research group- In the spirit of Mauss:  
What is mine is yours, and what is yours is ours.

Third, to my undergraduate professors in Philosophy- D. Scott and E. Kluge- who tirelessly explained the nuances of Greek and Early Modern Philosophy, as well as taught me a number of basic intellectual principles, techniques, and exercises which I still use to direct my thought.

Fourth, to my graduate supervisors in Political Science and CSPT- J. Tully, W. Magnusson, R. B. J. Walker. You were all very gracious in both your time and energy, and not only grounded me (very well!) in the tradition of Political Thought, but also gave me the encouragement and space to explore contemporary thinkers and issues. It is only due to this excellent program and the very important interdisciplinary space that CSPT provides that I was able to triangulate my ideas in Philosophy, Political Theory, and Anthropology in a meaningful way.

I would like to thank the University of Victoria for the various bursaries and scholarships I was awarded, as well as the SSHRC for their generous funding. I would also like to acknowledge the incredible help that the Political Science and CSPT support staff have provided throughout the years. A direct and very vocal thank you must be offered to T. Da Silva, L. Barnes, and C. Husband.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the many people who helped me throughout this project: M. Asch, M. Pinkoski, R. Hancock, B. Ekeberg, S. Mallette, L. Heaney, M. Simpson, M. Maclean, J. Lodto- are to only name a few.

Finally, much appreciation and gratitude is in order for M. Lizin and the University of Victoria Bookstore staff for the constant employment with enjoyment. Also, thanks are in order for the Black Stilt, Black Raven, Pennyfarthing, and Demi Tasse in providing the space and sustenance to complete this endeavor.

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my grandmother Frances Asch and my great-aunt Betty James. You both still continue to aide, assist, and inspire me. Thank You Is Never Enough.

## Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to articulate a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology, and in turn relate this type of cultural worldview to Foucault’s philosophy and methodology. The major thesis being offered here is that Foucault can be read as a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist. The hope is that when he is understood from this standpoint, the unique methodology he operates with, one which allows us to view our social worlds as cultural, historical, and political products, will be seen as a coherent, authoritative, and legitimate challenge to the normalized way we envision our existence.

The first chapter will offer an introduction to the terms cosmology, ontology, and methodology. Afterwards, one way to understand the relation between these three concepts will be explained. This exercise will in turn allow us to describe the ontology that this thesis attributes to traditional scholarship, something which will also double as the position Foucault can be imagined as working against. In this thesis this ontological stance has been called ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’. In contrast, the worldview or ontology that this thesis assigns to Foucault in order to challenge our dominant model will also be offered, named here as ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’.

The second chapter will demonstrate how Foucault can be read as working within and through a relational perspective. First, four prevalent ways Foucault is interpreted will be canvassed. Afterwards a number of illustrative passages will be offered in order to provide sufficient textual evidence that Foucault can be imagined as employing a relational style of investigation. This chapter will end with an attempt to explicate three (of the many) analytical models Foucault offers in his later works to aide us in imagining

how all of cultural reality could be understood as based on and produced by an ontology that thoroughly privileges relationality and totally prioritizes Dynamics' and 'Relations'.

The third chapter will turn its focus back to the discussion initiated in our first chapter on the relation between ontology and methodology. This time the discussion will be centered on how each of the two disparate ontological standpoints already outlined are able to produce and legitimize their own form of a coherent scientific regime. What will be shown is that our traditional ontological stance delineates a methodology which gives many aspects of our cultural reality a status which is considered: foundational, a-historical, and without origin; fundamentally individuated, separated, and atomized; and as trans-cultural, de-contextual, and universal. Our Foucauldian or 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontological model will in counter enable a methodology whereby each and every aspect of our cultural world can be imagined as a unique cultural, historical, and political artifact, or something which has been produced and altered according to the particular 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' context it is embedded within and indigenous to.

The fourth chapter will then be devoted to analyzing a specific site- the self- in order to compare how this concept is captured by either ontology or worldview. First, the self will be described according to our traditional formula, and afterwards it will be examined or 'problematized' from our 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' or Foucauldian point of view. This chapter will conclude with a brief reflection on a key concern if a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology is to be considered acceptable: how the self is able to operate as a 'free, active, and productive agent' if it is imagined as fundamentally embedded within a prior, immanent, productive relational dynamic.

Finally, our conclusion will offer a summary of the previous four chapters in terms of the political stakes of culturally sanctifying or ‘governmentalizing’ either worldview. This thesis finally will conclude with a brief discussion as to the possibilities which are enabled if this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology and its delineated methodology are considered acceptable for further research and work. To finish, a quick reflection will be offered on what could be considered a ‘relational cut’ against our traditional notion of ontology, inaugurating a ‘cultural turn’ in order to counter the hegemonic and pre-supposed universality of our present philosophical and scientific regimes.

## **Chapter 1: On Ontology: A Movement From a ‘Foundational and ‘Atomic’ Model To a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ Schemata.**

How ontology is prevalently characterized; M.B. Foster’s thesis on the relation between cosmology, ontology, and methodology; Given M.B Foster’s argument, this thesis will characterize our traditional ontology, as: ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’; The standard relational challenge offered against this traditional model; A further move, a cursory description of an ontology understood as thoroughly ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’; Three thinkers this thesis acknowledges as influences for this ontological model of reality: B. Spinoza, M. Mauss, M. Foucault

This thesis must necessarily begin with clarification. What will be offered here, both in this chapter and overall as a thesis, must be seen as nothing more than a rough, course, narrow, confused, incomplete, and unclear account not only of the notion of ‘ontology’, but also of Foucault’s overall project or endeavor. I realize that attempting to discuss the notion of ‘ontology’, let alone explicating different articulations of it, and most especially in trying to account for how Foucault may have considered it, are all way beyond the present skills and capacities of this deliverer<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, it must be directly noted that this thesis absolutely acknowledges that there are many other legitimate ways to criticize

---

<sup>1</sup> To add, not only were all studies conducted in English, but my working knowledge of French, Latin, Greek, and German languages is poor at best, even though they would all be necessary requirements to seriously study this subject. Further, this thesis limited itself only to the writings of Foucault which only aided its argument found between the years 1976 and 1984. Lastly, there was neither the time nor ability to consider other ways a relational ontology has been articulated by other present day scholars. All of this makes this thesis a very nominal and tentative investigation. This type of apology follows Foucault’s statements on his own intellectual inadequacies as discussed in UPL: pp. 8-9.

our current situation of ‘reality’, and that other lines of inquiry could open up exactly the same concerns which are trying to be voiced here. In short, this discussion on ontology should not be seen as any attempt to found or disclose what could be considered the sole, singular, necessary, universal, obligatory, or true way to understand reality, nature, or existence; further it is absolutely not the goal of this work to ‘saddle’ Foucault with an ‘authoritative’ account of his project. Instead and in following Foucault, this thesis is offered as a test, essay, challenge, or exercise (askesis) for both myself and its readers in order to think differently about our normalized conception of reality, and by doing so allow for changes and transformations to occur both within ourselves and through each other via this process of reciprocal elucidation and relational exploration<sup>2</sup>.

### **A. How ontology is prevalently characterized**

There are different ways one can begin a discussion on ‘ontology’. Naturally the easiest and most direct approach would be to turn to how it has been traditionally classified by the philosophical community. Unfortunately, this is not an easy feat even though this particular type of study has become much more en vogue amongst recent thinkers<sup>3</sup>. This is because to simply offer a standard definition as to what ontology might

---

<sup>2</sup> This is also discussed in UPL: pp. 8-9, and touched on again in PPP: pp. 117- 119. In many ways this insight is based on the relationship between spirituality, askesis, and intellectual work, something Foucault often speaks of (AE: p. 48; CT: pp. 256, 263- 264; WICP: p. 384; ISR: pp. 130- 131).

<sup>3</sup> To only name a few of the contemporary thinkers who explicitly are working on ontological problems or through ontological models: G. Deleuze, M. Heidegger, J. Derrida, A. Badiou.

refer to or denote is always a contested, complicated and confusing endeavor<sup>4</sup>. Firstly, the notion of ontology is not a very well developed or defined concept in and of itself, and secondly if it is broached at all it is only considered as a sub-branch of Metaphysical inquiry<sup>5</sup>. Thus, to begin a conversation on ontological issues it is usually necessary to first enter into a discussion about Metaphysics<sup>6</sup>.

Quickly stated, Metaphysics is construed as the most abstract of all forms of philosophical inquiry- the intellectual investigation into what might be considered the first, under-arching, or most general principles of our very existence<sup>7</sup>. It purports to examine themes such as: the basis of the universe; the elementary facts of nature; and the broad structures of reality<sup>8</sup>. It is fair to characterize Metaphysics as the search into the most general features of human and cultural existence.

---

<sup>4</sup> It is not easy to even find a basic definition of ontology in any philosophical dictionary. This thesis looked for an entry in the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy and was told to look under the section on Metaphysics, p. 631. The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy again had a small entry, but again only in the Metaphysics section, p. 79. The most informative dictionary entry was found in the Oxford Dictionary of Religion, p. 535. Here it was explained that it is a very difficult notion to define and instead offered a number of definitions formulated by various thinkers throughout history.

<sup>5</sup> Traditionally the five branches of Philosophy are: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Aesthetics, Morality, and Ethics. A different way to structure this style of thought is via a Stoic model: Cosmology, Physics, Ethics. This thesis understands Foucault as following this latter model.

<sup>6</sup> Yet to begin an investigation with a metaphysical consideration of our reality is considered by most a very 'old school' approach to philosophical thought and critical inquiry. Both philosophical traditions dominant today- 'Continental, critical thought' and 'Analytical, positivist examination'- both disregard Metaphysics; albeit in different ways (see below). In short, to offer a political discussion which begins with a Metaphysical introduction makes any thinker today appear quite conservative, and will often be met with glazed eyes, cognitive recalcitrance, and even at times intellectual hostility.

<sup>7</sup> Blackwell, pp. 61, 62; Blackwell, pp. 563-564. It must be stated that for the purposes of this thesis, metaphysics will not be understood in a pejorative sense. Thus, it will not refer to what might be considered to exist beyond, over, or above the physical Reese 476; nor will it designate a realm which can be considered 'above reality', 'transcendental' or 'supernatural'.

<sup>8</sup> It must be emphatically stated that this inquiry must always be understood as a self-reflexive exercise. In other words this relational must always be considered in terms of how we represent these features to ourselves, at different times, in different cultures, and under different social mentalities (Blackwell, p. 61). Another term which could be used to explain this endeavor could be 'Cultural Analytics'. Using this concept would immediately introduce the idea that metaphysics does not necessarily have to be a 'universalist' pursuit, and instead could be considered the study of how different cultures explain their version of reality to themselves and others.

Now as stated, if ontology is considered to exist as a sub-branch of Metaphysical inquiry, then it must be seen as narrowing the scope of this grandiose endeavor. Conventionally speaking, ontology can be designated according to its linguistic roots, which by literal translation means the philosophical study, knowledge, or account (Logos) of Being (Ontos)<sup>9</sup>. Thus, according to traditional philosophy, given that Metaphysics is considered to be the inquiry into what we might understand or have isolated as the most primary structures of (our) reality, ontology can now be couched as the different way(s) the universe, nature, or existence has been captured and revealed under the basic rubric of Being. Ontology conceptualized in this way could be considered as synonymous with an investigation or study of Being at its greatest level of abstraction and in its most general form<sup>10</sup>.

For the purposes of this thesis, understanding ontology in this way must be considered inadequate. Firstly, it is unfair to understand this term solely via its Greek designation, since this same concept was most readily discussed and intellectually developed during the later 'era' of Philosophy referred to as the 'Modern Period'<sup>11</sup>. Second and importantly, this thesis believes that as soon as ontology is considered synonymous with the study of Being, a certain Metaphysical account or rendering of reality has already been pre-accepted- that existence both begins with and is fundamentally based on Being. This thesis believes that such a determination has already assumed far too much about its

---

<sup>9</sup> Reese, p. 535.

<sup>10</sup> Blackwell, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Reese, p. 535. Almost all thinkers during this period grappled with the notion of ontology, and the idea of foundations or first purchases- Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Newton, Berkeley, and Hume only a few of the more well-known attempts that tried to make this possible (and so actual).

subject matter, and is in fact already accepting the terms of its inquiry prior to the very investigation of the possibility and costs of codifying (our) existence in this way.

Instead, this thesis would like to understand ontology in a different and even more generalized sense: given a certain, specific, or particular metaphysical or cultural perspective, an ontology will be what attempts to capture those features which have been conceptualized by that group as the most basic or fundamental aspects of (their) reality. These can be depicted and portrayed in many different ways, but most often are construed as: the basic concepts and categories of thought; the first constituent elements of our material or formal existence; the primitive, general laws, or a priori structures that ‘naturally’ govern reality; or to put the matter as plainly as possible any space, entity, state, fact, event, or thing imagined, designated, or authorized as resting, existing, or subsisting outside, prior to, as the base, or fundamental to the particular universe which is being envisioned, articulated, and concretized.

Armed with this alternate description of ontology it can now be characterized as the philosophical practice which investigates questions like: what entities or aspects does any cultural worldview conceptualize or nominate as the basic or initial furniture of their universe; what are the secondary features or subsequent aspects of existence, imagined as produced or delivered by these prior and primary entities; how were these first aspects born or induced, and how does this reproduction continue; and what is the differential weight, value, or priority offered to any one of the initial aspects, both in relation to other first entities, and against the latter constituents which are envisioned as subsequently formulated by them. In sum, ontology can now be described as the study which attempts

to isolate what has been depicted, portrayed, and characterized as the most basic aspects of existence or nature, as articulated by that distinct and particular account of reality.

### **B. M. B. Foster's thesis on the relation between cosmology, ontology, and methodology**

Before we move on to describe the ontology which this thesis nominates as prevalent in our academic disciplines today, or the counter-view which this thesis will attribute to M. Foucault, there is one more philosophical issue about Metaphysics and ontology which we must discuss and 'problematize'. To state this concern quickly, it appears as if the major philosophical schemes offered by our academic disciplines in order to make sense of the world, each, and in their own way, claim that they have already ascertained what (our) basic ontology amounts to. On the one side, positions such as Analytical Positivism emphatically state that we as a community have developed our sciences to such a degree that the 'true' ontological basis of (our) reality has already been realized<sup>12</sup>. Resting on this claim, they can safely (and arrogantly) argue that 'Science' has developed to such a point that we have bypassed such basic philosophical concerns, and so now safely pursue a Post-Metaphysical, Positivist agenda<sup>13</sup>. Obviously if this is true, then any attempts to examine reality at this level of abstraction must be seen as spurious, meaningless, and superfluous endeavours.

---

<sup>12</sup> Blackwell, p. 67.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

On the other side, philosophical stances such as Critical and Marxist theory all reject the self-proclaimed pretensions of the positivists and their purported objective and value free methods. In turn, much of their work is devoted to exposing the lack of philosophical sincerity given by this positivist position, by ‘digging even deeper’ into our present account of reality in order to offer an even ‘Truer’ depiction as to what might reside as the basic structures and conditions of our primary existence. Alternately, Post-Modern Theory tackles this issue by declaring it to be not only completely irresolvable, but in fact fundamentally tied up with pre-modern forms of dogmatic or theological thinking which we are still learning to overcome. In short the dilemma we are trying to expose here is: if both camps claim that they have already resolved basic ontological issues, then how does one initiate a conversation or contrast about this issue differently today?

It is at this point this lecture/thesis would like to turn to the work of M. B. Foster, a little-known philosopher from the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His most important contribution to philosophy appears as three essays found in the journal *Mind* from 1934-36<sup>14</sup>. Here he developed a formula which not only makes plain the relation between cultural worldviews, philosophical ontologies, and scientific methodologies, but offers an argument which can work to undermine the positivist pretensions which under-gird and buttress *every single* philosophical system<sup>15</sup>. To try to simply explain his difficult

---

<sup>14</sup> Issues 43- 45.

<sup>15</sup> M.B. Foster was a philosopher who was very critical of the positivist movement which was en vogue during his time who claimed that philosophical thought had moved beyond mere theological assertion and metaphysical speculation about the world, and could be seen as now offering a truly scientific awareness about our reality. In other words, the claim being made by the positivists was that there was no longer any need to uncover the metaphysical presuppositions which grounded our scientific assumptions, or develop new ones which could make better sense of our world; instead it was argued that scientific regimes operating at this time had been developed to such a high degree of accuracy that scientific inquiry could simply examine the obvious, objective facts which were recognized as existent within the world.

narrative: a basic and fundamental relation exists between the Origin Story which any culture utilizes in order to found their particular portrayal of the universe (Cosmology); the Philosophy of Nature that this distinct Charter account grounds or assures as the most proper and coherent way to conceptualize and represent reality (Ontology); and the many different Scientific Regimes which will in turn be developed to exist as the legitimate, authoritative, and meaningful ways to interact with and make sense of the world (Methodologies)<sup>16</sup>. In other words there is a direct link between how the world is conceived as having entered into existence; the aspects of reality which will then be prioritized and isolated as paramount given this story; and the specific ways of understanding and interacting with the universe that will in turn be developed as authoritative, legitimate, coherent scientific practices<sup>17</sup>.

---

M. B. Foster, found the idea that science had become ‘pure’ or had ‘overcome’ the need for metaphysical standpoint was not only an unfounded claim, but was in fact based on a conceptual insincerity about the relation between science, philosophical thought, and cosmological pretences. This claim made by positivism- that it could operate as a ‘pure, objective free science’, one which had completely bypassed any metaphysical speculations- was not only impossible, but showed a fundamental lack of philosophical inquiry into the type of foundation which is necessary to ground a methodology . The argument offered instead by Foster showed that the methodology of Positivism was itself based on a total acceptance of the Christian Doctrine of Creation- it is this Cosmology which makes possible the philosophical framework which allows a Positivist science to be self-assured. In short, therefore positivists are not actually ‘pure scientists’ using ‘objective and value free methods’, but rather they are more akin to dogmatic theologians, or those who refuse to philosophically inquire into the grounds that make possible and determine their preferred scientific practices.

<sup>16</sup> It must be stated that this thesis has inflected or changed the terminology used by Foster in subtle but important ways. First, Foster argues that only a theology can ground a philosophy. This thesis finds the idea that reality must begin with a first Godhead already too constrained and pre-supposed. Instead we will use the notion of a cosmology in order to acknowledge firstly the fact that it is possible to have a coherent worldview without accepting a first Godhead (much the same way it is possible to have an ontology without first postulating the existence of Being), and secondly that cultural groups who begin with a cosmological outlook rather than a Theology are no lesser or at least are equi-consonant with those which begin with the latter. Further, the notion of a Philosophy of Nature has been shortened to ontology; and natural philosophy has been re-transcribed as scientific methodology or regime.

<sup>17</sup> To state this differently: particular scientific regimes can only be enabled via a philosophical structure. This is to say that the assumptions and presuppositions that any specific science must make in order to create the framework for their data, observations, and correlations to be meaningful is itself only made possible given a philosophical position that articulates that specific designation of reality. Moreover, in order to ground the philosophy for such a scientific regime, it is first necessary to invoke some theological or cosmological story in order to explain why the philosophical structure that is being utilized is the best way to imagine and coordinate reality. In short, all scientific approaches must first be grounded upon a

Other than the initial brashness of this argument and the fact that there is not nearly enough space or time to engage it in a critical fashion, there are three aspects to this claim which are of cardinal importance. First and most obvious, is the fact that the relations between any of these three terms are by no means bi-conditional or mutually reciprocal. Rather, each of them offers the foundation, base-work, or firmament for the next, and by doing so grounds the very possibility and coherency of the latter. Thus, it is the cosmological account which sets up and gives basis to the subsequent philosophy of nature or ontology, and it is this which in turn directs and delineates the development of the specific scientific regimes and methodological practices associated with it<sup>18</sup>.

In other words, once the initial aspects or constituents of any philosophical system have been articulated, these can be utilized as the original or primitive elements from which to found, ground, and authorize the basic assumptions needed to engage with the world in a critical or scientific fashion. To state this a little differently according to M.B. Foster, philosophy cannot by itself resolve the cosmological speculation it requires in order to authoritatively or definitively ground the truth of its own claims; and science cannot alone inquire into the basis, coherency, or legitimacy of its own foundations in order to guarantee either its findings or solutions. In both cases it is exactly and only the prior exercise which investigates the types of questions which the subsequent needs to presuppose in order to function and operate.

---

philosophical articulation of reality, since it is only this which can inform and assure it of its starting place, objects for analysis, and overall goals for research. Further, philosophies are themselves only made possible given a charter myth or origin story as to why the world came to exist in the particular way that that philosophy describes.

<sup>18</sup> Mind 43: pp. 446, 447, 448, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 456, 462, 463, 464; Mind 44: pp. 439, 440, 441, 442, 445, 447; Mind 45: pp. 6-8, 14

Second, different origin stories will naturally envision the universe as having entered into existence in alternate ways<sup>19</sup>. This in turn will furnish (our) reality with dissimilar first features or aspects. In other words, the differences which are generated by these origin stories or charter myths will naturally affect the particular way that the world will be conceptualized, organized, perceived, and represented at the ontological level. Following from this, the distinct ontological differences articulated will in turn incline the specific direction that the subsequent sciences will take in order to properly examine and comprehend that particular portrayal of reality. Thus, based solely on the type of cosmological account being offered and the unique ontology which is being expressed, the methodological assumptions and commitments will also be completely altered. This will affect questions such as: what will be recognized as the first, unquestionable, or nomothetic aspects to ground this endeavor; what will a meaningful unit of data consist of and how can it properly be observed; how should results be ranked and judged; what can be safely overlooked as merely an anomaly or celebrated as a new discovery; and what direction will future research strive towards. To be very clear here, this means that the methodologies which are delineated by any particular worldview should on the one hand always be seen as perfectly legitimate, coherent, and authoritative ways to interact and investigate reality, but of course only based on or given the particular cultural or metaphysical stance they are indigenous to and have been articulated and developed by. On the other hand, every worldview is able to cast serious doubt upon the possibility, the grounds, and the value of the scientific regimes of those which do not adopt the same initial cosmological and ontological perspectives.

---

<sup>19</sup> Mind 43: pp. 447, 448, 451, 452, 453, 454, 456, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466; Mind 44: pp. 441, 442, 445, 447; Mind 45: pp. 6-8, 14

Lastly, any alterations or changes made to the features of any specific cosmology or origin story, will in turn radically affect the philosophy or ontology being authorized<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, these ontological shifts will alter the direction and intelligibility of the sciences being developed by it. M. B. Foster's work in *Mind* is devoted to showing how the shift from a culture which understands the world via the Greek Doctrine of Creation (captured as Platonic and Aristotelian thought) to one which completely accepts the Christian Doctrine of Creation, bore with it the philosophical change from a stance of Philosophical Rationalism to one of Empirical Positivism<sup>21</sup>. Along with this change came a number of new philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, and thus a new set of scientific procedures needed to be developed in order to make sense of this new world<sup>22</sup>. Thus by imagining the world differently at the cosmological level a new way of conceptualizing our basic ontology was enabled, and with it a new set of scientific practices were formulated in order to make sense of this new understanding of (our) reality.

---

<sup>20</sup> *Mind* 43: pp. 447, 448, 451, 453, 454, 456, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466; *Mind* 44: pp. 441, 442, 445, 447; *Mind* 45: pp. 6-8, 14

<sup>21</sup> Obviously, the change here is not strictly ontological, since the features which are imagined as existing within the world still remain fairly similar. Of course, the idea that 'things' bare essential qualities; that everything exists together within a communal and shared substratum; or that the 'knower' can stand outside the field of what can be known, are major ontological differences. However, the shift from a cosmology where all things are understood to have always or eternally existed in a teleological continuum, to one where everything was produced all at once and fully formed at some time, by some entity, whose purposes are unknowable, will radically change the methodological commitments for a practitioner of either worldview. In short, if things have an essence and were made by a rational creator to realize their basic and overall form, then the strategy which is enabled for a scientific practice is one which allows a practitioner to intuit these essential qualities; in counter, if the world was created out of the love and will of a God who voluntarily produced our world at some time and for a reason which is beyond us, then an empirical methodology is enabled which demands a physical interaction with reality in order to glean what possible knowledge could be accrued.

<sup>22</sup> He also shows the many methodological differences which obtain between alternate philosophies of nature existing during the time of Modernity (either Rational or Empirical), yet falling under the same Cosmology; as well as the distinctions which arise between alternate Greek accounts of philosophy and science although based on the similar charter myths (Plato and Aristotle).

Equipped with this argument on the relation between cosmology, ontology, and methodology offered by M. B. Foster, we can now assert that *every single* philosophy or worldview must exhibit an ontology- even those which purport to be purely post-Metaphysical! Whether one operates as a Positivist or Christian Scientist, a Kantian Realist, a Hegelian-Marxist Dialectician, a Heideggerian Phenomenologist, or a Foucauldian Post-Structuralist, each of these positions must be seen as operating upon a number of ontological assumptions. Thus, despite the arrogant claims made by any particular stance that it has ‘actually’ obtained the most ‘Real’ or ‘True’ account of (our) basic ontology, a position which would allow them to happily declare that their preferred scientific regime is the sole method that is perfectly, legitimately, and authoritatively grounded, we can now state that this might be so, but only because of the specific cosmological and ontological commitments they already hold and have pre-accepted.

In concluding this section, it can be declared that the general goal of this thesis is to try to articulate the methodological differences which arise once the world is no longer envisioned according to our traditional ontological formula. The hope is to show that the alternate ontological stance articulated- ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’- is able to deliver, ground, and make possible its own version of a coherent, authoritative, and legitimate methodology, one which can be seen as perfectly intelligible, cogent, and utilizable within the philosophical worldview it is wedded to and produced within, but can also be used as a philosophical tool that enables us to reflect critically on the traditional, normalized, and prevalent way we have been taught to ontologically codify our world<sup>23</sup>.

---

<sup>23</sup> This naturally leads us into a political conversation as to the ‘political stakes’ of having fundamentally accepted either (or any) worldview as the basis of our reality. This will be addressed in our conclusion.

**C. Given M.B Foster's argument, this thesis will characterize our traditional ontology, as: 'Atomic' and 'Foundational'**

To continue, this thesis believes that in academia at large, and particularly within the disciplines of Philosophy and Political Science, a specific form of ontology is quite dominant. Broadly speaking this specific way of conceptualizing reality is one which points all the way back to Plato and beyond. It is this way of envisioning existence which has become the standard account driving most of our philosophical arguments and political debates, and it is this mindset which grounds much of our scientific imagination and its methodological practices<sup>24</sup>. For the purposes of this thesis this ontology will be named 'Atomic' and 'Foundational'.

Now to characterize an ontology as 'Atomic' and 'Foundational' is to imagine that the world or reality at its most fundamental or basic level bears some very distinct qualities and particular characteristics. Stressing the Atomic aspect of our denotation first: this type of ontology or philosophical worldview envisions that a number of self-contained, individuated, separated, isolated, distinct, and distinguished units or things reside as the most basic features of reality, nature, or the universe. Turning to the Foundational clause of this ontological stance: these same basic units will also be conceptualized as a-historical and fundamentally irreducible since they are imagined to reside as the very first aspects of reality. Putting these two clauses together: a 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' ontological perspective is one which will imagine that the basic, elementary, or originary

---

<sup>24</sup> Again we are only examining the disciplines of Philosophy and Political Theory in this thesis; however there is little doubt that this is also the prevalent way to imagine our world in the humanities (especially History) and social sciences (specifically Anthropology).

terms of reality, exist as a plurality of atomic, foundational, self-contained, individuated, first units, and thus as a-historical entities which made their pre-fabricated, pre-determined, pre-distinguished entrée into the universe at the very beginning of time, or minimally prior to anything else. In short, to operate according to a 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' ontology is to initiate our philosophical imagination, and so every single methodological investigation by first imagining and representing the world as being furnished with a host of already pre-defined, self-enclosed, bounded, unified, discrete, atomized, fundamental and foundational forms, units, or things.

As Foster's argument shows, one could delineate the relation between this distinct and specific ontological account and the cosmology or origin story which both grounds and lends credence to it. One could point to how this viewpoint is completely consonant with the Christian Doctrine of Creation, a narrative which founds our world at a specific moment in history, already furnished with a number of original inhabitants, aspects, and goals. Another story which enables this philosophical vision is the never-tired thought-experiment entitled the 'State of Nature'. Again, an origin narrative is offered about what life must have been like at the very first moments of human existence in the 'Original Cradle of Mankind', conceptualized as having began all at once, and again with a number of already pre-articulated and pre-defined protagonists, objects, and notions. Other arguments that allow us to produce this ontological state of mind are: the argument offered by Descartes on the necessity of the Cogito; Kant's discussion on the existence of universal, a priori categories which are common to all people' as well as his demand that we must always recognize the concept of 'space' as pre-existent to 'time'; and our present-day reflections on cosmology, a scientific discourse which claims that all of (our)

reality was first produced via a primitive eruption or universal conflagration entitled the 'Big Bang'.

Although much insight can be gained on examining the cosmological assumptions which ground this sense of ontologies, this thesis would like to instead focus on the relation between ontology and methodology. What will be shown is that this 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' ontology is able to ground its own distinct, particular, and robust brand of scientific regime. In fact, despite the obvious differences between any of the origin stories quickly mentioned above, once our existence has been codified as having arisen all at once, and in a first, primal explosion, something which inaugurates an original point and basic first point for all reality, then immediately ushered into existence will be these many initial, primary, and basic elements, structures, and patterns. Moreover, as soon the basic terms of our existence are accepted as having been born into the universe in this way, this 'naturally' enables them to appear as the first constituent units upon which all subsequent reality is composed, all inquiries must be based on, and from which all history derives.

The third chapter will discuss the distinct methodology enabled by this particular worldview or ontology at greater length in, but at this point a quick statement could be made about the power, value, and direction of this approach. By founding the world according to this 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' account, or in other words by assuming, asserting, and postulating that (our) existence begins with these first, basic, foundational, and atomic ontological entities, then these can be safely ordained as the basic pre-suppositions needed for what is considered proper and legitimate scientific inquiry. In other words, as soon as these initial units are recognized and nominated as the first, most

basic, and universal aspects of reality, they can safely serve as the fixed and unchanging units from which scientific inquiries and investigations can be based on and founded by. To be as explicit as possible, once these first units are pre-accepted as the originary features of reality, then they can act as the purchase or groundwork from which to establish the many assumptions, nomothetic concepts, and axiomatic conditions that are needed to found and guarantee the possibility, direction, and clarity of our subsequent scientific pursuits.

Moreover, as soon as these first, 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' units are imagined as entering into existing all at once and at the very beginning of time, this allows them to be imagined as the basic, first features which can always be found everywhere throughout the world. This in turn enables them to be identified as the a-historical, de-contextual, trans-cultural, and universal aspects of existence that ground our very reality. Thus, upon this unique particular and specific cosmological narrative, one which imagines that first entities exist as the basic, original, and initial ontological features of our existence, these initial units are also made to appear as the universal, singular, and necessary entities that all people must identify, recognize, and employ. In establishing our reality in this a-historical or a priori way, these culturally produced first, atomic, foundational units are easily elevated to a status where they appear to exist as unquestionable, necessary, and sacrosanct aspects of the universe, and so the basic pre-suppositions which all proper scientific analysis must be based on and derived from.

To end, once this particular ontology and its associated scientific regime are accepted as the basis of reality, an 'alpha-point' or first purchase has now been obtained, and with it a certain type of inquiry into the world can be authoritatively grounded and legitimately

embarked on, and a number of scientific assumptions can be founded and guaranteed. There are four methodological points we will highlight here. Firstly once these initial entities have been nominated as the first and most basic entities of reality they can be utilized as the fundamental criteria by which to classify, compare, value, or judge which phenomena should be selected (or excluded) for scientific comparison and classification. Secondly, they can act as the basic and ideal standards from which to critique all other possible ways of organizing and understanding the world. Thirdly, they serve as the benchmark from which to judge the merits or drawbacks of any particular cultural norm or idiosyncrasy. Fourthly, these first universal constants can be used as the baseline and organizing principle which allows us to implement an order, logic, rationality, and coherency onto our temporal sequences and historical events.

#### **D. The standard relational challenge offered against this traditional model**

Of course there have been many challenges offered to the 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' ontology described above. One complaint commonly shared by its critics, is that this particular conceptualization of reality is way too individuated, formalized, mechanistic, and reductive to make proper sense of our existence. An important line of critique wielded against this model argues that it is possibly more relevant and definitely more insightful to examine the various 'relations' that can be imagined as existing between the things we recognize as resident within (our) reality. According to this counter-model, a thorough account into the development, livelihood, continuation, or production of any

‘thing’ found within our cultural realm, would be one which not only investigated the various interactions that might occur between ‘things’, but would also focus on the many ‘relations’ envisioned as interconnecting, binding, and grouping these many ‘things’ together.

An even further strand of this critique would claim that the many ‘relations’ imagined as existing between ‘things’ found in (our) reality, should not only be cited as the major factor explaining their specific formation and development, but must also be imagined as the vital force responsible for all the possible growth, change, and modification that any singular ‘thing’ or group of them could ever undergo. On this further model, it is not just that ‘relations’ are cited as more efficacious in accounting for the existence and evolution of any ‘thing’, but rather that these ‘relations’ act as the basic motor driving forward the very life of these things, stimulating not only their transformation, but also the very cultural world within which they are embedded.

What we are trying to stress with these more ‘relational’ accounts is that our traditional schemata, one which begins its philosophical imagination with a world full of irreducible, ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’ ‘things’, only initiates a scientific methodology which tracks the ways these ‘things’ bounce, impact, or impinge upon each other. In counter, these more ‘relational’ models employ a philosophical mentality which conceptualizes that a number of ‘relations’ also exist between these ‘things’, and upon this alternate standpoint, scientific inquiries are commenced to investigate the ways these ‘things’ have interrelated together in order to produce the distinct cultural and social worlds we presently inhabit.

Hopefully, and only very broadly speaking, it is possible to recognize how this more relational model bares a familial resemblance to both Hegelian/Marxist<sup>25</sup> and Nietzschean<sup>26</sup> approaches to examine our existence. Other branches of thought which could be cited as accepting the equal importance of relations or a relationality are: Bergson and his philosophy of Vitalism; Whitehead and the notion of Process Philosophy; Weber and the idea of a Critical Historical Sociology; and Saussurian Structuralism. Today, Charles Taylor's Cultural Pluralism; Habermasian discussions focusing on Communicative Rationality; Buber's reflections on I and Thou; and Levinas's discussions of self and other, could all also be grouped as utilizing a more relational model in order to counter the traditional and prevalent way we are taught to imagine, reflect on, and examine our world.

### **E. A cursory description of an ontology which might be considered thoroughly 'Relational' and 'Dynamic'**

Although there is much to be celebrated in these more relational models, this thesis would like to claim (but not argue) that these philosophical worldviews still utilize and accept as their axiomatic starting point the 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' ontology discussed above. In other words, although this counter-model might seem to stress and

---

<sup>25</sup> This would entail beginning an inquiry accepting that first, primary, fundamental, and pre-registered units or 'termini' already pre-exist, and then basing oneself upon this purchase examining the many relations imagined as existing between them, in order to analyze how these primary units have changed and developed through time.

<sup>26</sup> Again we would begin with the same philosophical vision, but this time the analytical goal would be to examine how any of these entities produce itself through its own relations to itself, understood as practices, behaviors, evaluations, and insights.

even prioritize relations and relationality, the initial or basic impulse grounding their endeavor is still one which envisions that our basic, primary, original existence begins with, is fundamentally based upon, and is foremost inhabited with things. One could even claim that the metaphor of relations is only being introduced and utilized in order to better examine and understand the livelihood and existence of these already pre-assumed things. Thus, this thesis believes it would be unfair to nominate any of the above relational models as actually employing or fundamentally being grounded upon a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology.

At this point, this thesis would like to quickly outline what might be considered a fully ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model of ontology. Naturally, this perspective would be one which begins its philosophical vision with a completely relational worldview, and thus the mentality driving this ontological imagination would be one which conceives our basic reality as a first, initial, and primary under-gird of relationality, or in other words an originary residence which ‘houses’ a plurality of primitive ‘Relations’<sup>27</sup>. Second, it must be understood as completely ‘Dynamic’, and so never actually able to rest, stop, or freeze into any one specific pattern, structure, or shape.

To cast this portrayal of our existence into the language of MB Foster, the cosmology which is being offered through this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model is one which envisions our reality as continuously and always existing as a first relational dynamic or flux. As previously discussed, this cosmological narrative, one which imagines existence as inherently and fundamentally ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’, will in turn ground its own

---

<sup>27</sup> Of course this is very hard to both conceive and articulate. Obviously it is also somewhat contradictory: how could a first rubric of undifferentiated relationality exist, which can also be imagined as a continuum conceived of non, quasi, and potentially differentiated relational strands (and all of this at the same time)?

specific ontological expression. Here our ontology will be imagined as primarily ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’, first and foremost, at base and as origin.

Given this particular conceptualization of cosmology and ontology, it follows via Foster’s insights that a philosophical stance which nominates these prior, chthonic, dynamic, and immanent relations as the first aspect of our reality, will now be forced to use this purchase as the groundwork in order to explain how our cultural worlds have been formed into the particular ways it reveals and unique features it displays. Thus, methodologically speaking, once this dynamic relationality has been accepted as our basic ontology, from this point of view a cultural analytics can be inaugurated which situates its examinations upon the axiomatic purchase of these relations, and so will ask how the distinct things found in our cultural world have been imagined, produced, and transformed via these ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ and upon this under-girth of relationality.

In other words, as soon as this ontological model of (our) reality is granted or presupposed, then the methodological considerations which this schema engages with must also be altered. A methodology based upon this relational point of view will now direct its questions to how the specific cultural features, fixtures, structures, elements, units, things, entities, and categories which we witness and recognize as inhabiting our cultural worlds have been formulated, produced, and constituted. What specific logics, rationalities, and practices have been and are presently being used in order to structure, codify, and establish the things of our social reality in ways which make them appear as recognizable and distinguishable residents found within our cultural worlds?

Again our third chapter will discuss this relationally based methodology further, but for now we can briefly state that examinations based upon this relational account can be reduced to four overlapping types of investigation. From a cultural point of view, questions will be directed towards how this relationality was first characterized, and then intertwined in particular and distinct ways to produce the distinct cultural worlds and its associated social features in the unique ways they appear to us now. From an historical point of view, the life and development of any thing which has been culturally clarified to exist can be measured against the way it has been shaped and patterned over time by these different relations. Bearing a political lens, these same culturally defined things can be examined for the rationale of why they appear in the specific way they do at the distinct moment chose for analysis. Lastly, an ethical challenge can also be offered, since a world based on a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology insists that every single cultural feature clarified must be imagined as a contingent, provisional, malleable product constantly being manufactured, negotiated, and rearranged<sup>28</sup>. With this a discussion can be initiated as to how ‘we’ either as a group or as each individual do stand towards the forms and compositions presently existing today, and more importantly ‘we’ can ask ourselves how we would like to see these same things altered, changed, and modified.

In short, once an ontology is accepted which nominates that ‘Relations’, ‘Dynamics’ and an underlying relationality exist as the basic, first, and chief ground of reality, then

---

<sup>28</sup> Our later chapters, both for brevity and clarity, will collapse the ethical and political dimensions together. This is because this thesis accepts that this model of reality is one which must accept that ‘the political’ dictates ‘the ethical’. In other words, ‘the ethical’ only arises as a concern after the self or ‘individual’ is produced and modulated according to the cultural environ it is embedded within and indigenous to. This is NOT to say that ‘the political’ actually exists prior to ‘the ethical’, and in fact they should be imagined as equi-primordial and simultaneous. However and only analytically speaking, the self, at either the individual or group level, is first and foremost a political construct, and so something which has to be first produced in the cultural field, and thus prior to any consideration of ethics (the conscious and reflective relation of the self- whether individual or group- during self- constitution and transformation practices).

all aspects of cultural life will now be imagined as produced cultural artifacts or composed social constructions. Upon this stance all scientific investigations will now be forced to inaugurate their examinations from this relational point of view, and so inquire into: the distinct ways any specific feature or aspect of cultural existence is produced to appear in the specific form it does; according to what particular historical events has it changed; under what political rationality was it orchestrated to appear in the unique way it does; and how do we stand towards it, or to what extent can it be seen or made differently<sup>29</sup>?

**F. Three thinkers this thesis acknowledges as influenced by this ontological model of reality: B. Spinoza; M. Mauss; M. Foucault**

As shown by the sketchiness of the above section, trying to discuss an ontology is not a particularly easy task; moreover, it is even more challenging when the attempt is made to speak about it in ways other than as clarified by the academic community. In other words, to discuss a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model of (our) ontology, while still using the philosophical language we are taught to employ, means certain points of articulation will necessarily fail.

Adding to the difficulty as to the language we are forced to use to explicate this counter-ontological vision, is the fact that very few thinkers can be found in the

---

<sup>29</sup> To cut right to the chase: this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ worldview and its associated methodology appears to be much more capable in offering a cultural, historical, political, and ethical account of the production of our world and the social features found therein. This is because our traditional ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’ model of reality, as well as its associated scientific regime, initiate their account upon a universal, de-contextual, a-historical, a-political narrative, one which has already assured itself that it exists as the sole, singular, necessary, obligatory, and absolute way to understand the world.

philosophical tradition who have attempted to ground their thought and investigations upon such a model. In short, from Ancient times all the way through to Critical thought which is present today, there have not been many philosophers who have been willing to challenge or defy the claims about identity and dynamics first made famous by Aristotle.

It seems the conceptual limits of our philosophical community is very clear on this point: as soon as the world is conceived as beginning with necessary first units, features, or entities, then based on this pre-supposition, relations, dynamics, and relationality can only ever be imagined as derivative of these first originary things. Thus the normalized or 'governmentalized' way we are taught to imagine our world's ontology is one that demands we begin with a first recognition of things, a particular conceptual move which in turn obliges that relations, dynamics, and relationality must be given the status of secondary, provisional, and even parasitic to the things which have already been accepted as pre-established.

What this thesis proposes is simply the converse or opposite: instead it is the things which we normally imagine as the basic features of (our) reality which should be understood as the subsequent or produced features of our existence. This would be to conceptualize them as cultural artifacts that are constantly being manufactured, instituted, and transformed via, by, and through these under-arching, immanent, dynamic relations, and within an under-gird of relationality. In short, the claim being forwarded here is: an alternate way to imagine the production of our cultural existence is to nominate 'Relations', 'Dynamics', and relationality as the first, chief, and foremost aspects of (our) reality, and then based upon this different ontological mentality, envision how the things we recognize as inhabiting our social spaces have been produced as secondary,

derivative, contingent features of our cultural existence. This thesis does not doubt that the plausibility, cogency, and intelligibility of this counter-worldview is very tough to propose, let alone operationalize, given the dominant and entrenched way we view our universe.

Yet even though this relational mentality is not well canvassed by our philosophical tradition, this thesis recognizes three thinkers as employing a perspective which is roughly based on the pre-acceptance, priority, and importance of ‘Relations’, ‘Dynamics’, and relationality<sup>30</sup>. It is from these three that this thesis gains much of its direction, clarity, and inspiration<sup>31</sup>. The first thinker we will cite as operating upon a relational ontology is Benedict de Spinoza<sup>32</sup>, and specifically his work entitled *Ethics*<sup>33</sup>. Without entering into any genuine exposition of his thought, it can be safely claimed that a major notion grounding his work is his unique description of reality (or Substance)<sup>34</sup>. For Spinoza, the particular philosophical vision which frames his ontology and

---

<sup>30</sup> This grouping should not be considered as a ‘lost’ tradition of philosophy- they have neither been lost, nor are they a tradition. They all could be considered as sharing aspects which place them into a camp of many different forms of disqualified knowledge (SMBD: pp. 6- 11).

<sup>31</sup> Of course there are serious limitations if any attempt is made to understand these thinkers as fully representative of a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology. The main reason they are being offered here is to help explain the production of reality according to a fundamentally ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model. For example, this thesis rejects Spinoza’s characterization that nature solely operates in a mechanistic way; his retention of the possibility of objective knowledge and a universal purchase; the initiation of his description of reality as based upon a ‘first person’ perspective; his lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity; and his fundamental acceptance of Substance or any ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’ basis understood to under-gird all of human reality.

<sup>32</sup> An ‘out of step’ charter member of the philosophical movement known as Early Modern thought. It must be stated that, his ‘radical-ness’ should be understood in relation to other philosophical movements offered during this time, such as by Descartes, Malebranche, and Leibniz. To be fair and honest, the Cartesian way to conceive material is embedded within this description of Spinoza’s worldview, and definitely some important Leibnizian insights have been collapsed and considered ‘Spinozistic’. This is based on the need to remain brief.

<sup>33</sup> We will only consider the *On God*, or the first part.

<sup>34</sup> Again it must be emphatically made clear that this thesis is not accepting the mentality that a first, prior, or fundamental Substance under-girds all of cultural reality. Rather, we are using ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ as the groundwork, and it must be seen as only a nominal placeholder or analytical limit that enables the possibility of an exercise which can imagine how cultural production can be framed on a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model.

investigations is one which imagines (our) reality at the most basic or general level to reside as a first, primitive, unified continuum that under-girds or ‘houses’ all things together in a singular, communal residence<sup>35</sup>. Thus, for Spinoza the world at base is envisioned to exist as a nexus of under-arching relationality, and it is this which is imagined as supporting, producing, and altering the various things which we recognize as resident within it.

There are four points this thesis would like to stress about Spinoza’s model of (our) existence. Firstly and to reiterate, this philosophical mentality begins by envisioning that the most basic, fundamental, or elemental level of (our) existence is a relationality, here understood as primitive continuum of undifferentiated, interrelated, interconnections or relations imagined as able to be intertwined together in an infinite amount of different ways<sup>36</sup>.

Second, anything which is ever imagined or conceived to exist as a distinct aspect, feature, or thing of (our) reality, must be understood as immanently manufactured out of, from, and by this originary relational nexus<sup>37</sup>. In other words, every feature of existence which we envision as distinct, particular, or individuated, is itself a secondary, produced, constituted, and provisional aspect of reality, since it is fundamentally based on and has been solely developed by this first under-gird of relations, dynamics, and relationality. Moreover according to the vision of reality offered by Spinoza, this also means that no trenchant, fundamental, or necessary gap, space, or form can ever be imagined at the first grade or primary level of existence, which in turn demands that anything which is ever

---

<sup>35</sup> Propositions: 11-16; 20; 29.

<sup>36</sup> Propositions: 11-16; 20; 29.

<sup>37</sup> Propositions: 15; 18; 24-25; 28; 29.

clarified or distinguished as a particular, specific, defined, individuated article of our existence must be understood as a mode or ‘way of being’ that has been composed, manufactured, and produced as a secondary feature of reality.

Third, given the basic interrelatedness of Substance, everything must also be imagined as fundamentally linked together. This means the changes and alterations which occur to any one of the secondary, produced, imagined, and manufactured features of existence will necessarily produce mutual, syncopated, and reciprocal modifications in every thing else<sup>38</sup>. In short, since there are no natural distinctions or separations that can be found or imagined as existing between any thing, the transformations which happen to any one things will profoundly affect both the relational base which it resides upon, as well as every thing else which also being produced in, by, and through this immanent, relational under-gird.

Lastly, and very importantly Spinoza demands that it is impossible to know or completely understand this first relational nexus in and of itself<sup>39</sup>. This is because anything which is ever recognized as a feature of (our) reality is only known according to the divisions later introduced. Thus, a ‘True’ comprehension or completely philosophical account of either the under-arching relational dynamic of existence or any of the distinguished features subsequently produced, would be nothing more than a general, but specific articulation of how these particular, secondary features have been produced for us to imagine and recognize them in this already defined and specified way. In short, For Spinoza the only way the world can ever be comprehended is via the features produced by the under-arching relations and relationality, and these themselves can only be

---

<sup>38</sup> Propositions: 21-23; 26; 28-29.

<sup>39</sup> Propositions: 10; 12; 14-16; 18; 22; 29-31.

conceptualized according to the worldview that they are based on and already embedded within. To close, based on this assertion of a first ‘Relational’, ‘Dynamic’ ontology or Substance, reality can only ever be conceived in its wholeness and generality, something which would be impossible to completely ascertain as a composed, distinct, and imposed member of a particular milieu; or according to the manufactured specificity that reflects on this, and so already from a produced, particularized, secondary, contingent, and provisional perspective

The second thinker this thesis understands as operating upon this type of ontology vision or conceptual framework is the Cultural Anthropologist Marcel Mauss<sup>40</sup>, and especially his work entitled *The Gift*. In counter to Spinoza who attempted to articulate this model of reality purely through a rational or philosophical account, Mauss instead focuses empirically on how this relationality can be charted as the vital force which develops, builds, and alters all aspects of our unique and particular cultural worlds<sup>41</sup>. Thus, Mauss attempts to scientifically examine how a chthonic, relational dynamic flows throughout our social milieus, and by doing so forms, shapes, and transforms every single aspect found in our cultural reality<sup>42</sup>. In order to explain this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ phenomenon of cultural production and re-production, Mauss utilizes the notion of Mana or that which cannot be possessed and so must be constantly passed through

---

<sup>40</sup> Again language seems to elude Mauss at many points in this short piece. He still accepts the idea of that cultures could exist as ‘primitive’; discusses cultural levels of evolution; often can be found discussing this phenomena according to Liberal contractual language; and utilizes a first person perspective throughout his ethnographic studies.

<sup>41</sup> *Gift*: pp. 1, 2-4, 10-11, 63.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*: pp. 1, 3, 5, 10-11.

communities<sup>43</sup>. For Mauss, it is this reciprocal and continuous exchange of Mana which forms, sculpts, and modifies not only the exchangers and the exchanged, but the whole social and cultural world within which both are embedded<sup>44</sup>.

The last philosopher we will identify as working upon this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model is a contemporary thinker who this thesis accepts as utilizing both the philosophical worldview outlined by Spinoza and the empirical insights produced by Mauss- Michel Foucault. Of course, he naturally brings his own style to this exercise as well. Firstly, he adds what could be considered a physics and a logic in an attempt to further explicate how ‘Relations’, ‘Dynamics’ and a relationality can be imagined as able to form all the features found in our cultural worlds<sup>45</sup>; secondly he offers a methodology which he claims is useful for investigating how our distinct cultural features are produced by this first, relational continuum<sup>46</sup>; lastly he uses this counter-vision as a challenge which can test the features of our culture which have been presented to us in a necessary, singular, obligatory, or universal manner<sup>47</sup>.

Thus, like Spinoza, Foucault offers for us a developed rational philosophy based on this ontological stance. Like Mauss, he attempts to examine how a prior, immanent, dynamic relationality is able to produce and modify our entire cultural worlds. In addition however, he also uses this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ mentality as a critical tool

---

<sup>43</sup> He uses many metaphors from indigenous cultures to explain the production of worlds via a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ worldview.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid: pp. 2-3, 5, 10-11.

<sup>45</sup> UPL: pp. 3-7; Pref.: pp. 199- 204; WE: pp. 312- 319.

<sup>46</sup> Tech: p. 225; OGE: p. 277; Gros: pp. 524- 525; SP: pp. 326- 327; ST: pp. 87- 89.

<sup>47</sup> WE: p. 313; OGE: p. 261; WICP: p. 383.

to examine and criticize the way we organize our cultural reality today, and further to incite us to see our same world differently.

In finishing this chapter and moving to the next, this thesis now nominates Michel Foucault to take over as the chief explanatory figure in this discussion on a worldview based on a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology<sup>48</sup>. This seems acceptable since he is a well-known philosopher today, a veritable lingua franca of our time, and also because he offers a number of insights obtained by operating according to this counter-worldview<sup>49</sup>. Our next chapter then will be devoted to providing sufficient evidence that Foucault can be read as a working upon this 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' model of our ontology.

To conclude and summarize our first chapter: first we described the relation between Metaphysics and ontology. Second, via M. B. Foster ontology was explained as the mediating position which exists between particular cosmological accounts and specified methodological regimes. Third, we described the prevalent ontological stance this thesis attributes to academia- 'Foundational' and 'Atomic'. Fourth, we offered the possibility of a different ontological mentality, one which begins with and focuses on relationality, relations, and dynamics. Fifth, we offered three philosophers that this thesis understands as roughly working upon this model, and have decided to single out Michel Foucault as the spokesmen for the rest of our endeavors. This is because this thesis believes that he

---

<sup>48</sup> Again many problems arise if we are to totally understand him as a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontologist. He offers what could be considered the minimum tension for us this thesis to explain its worldview.

<sup>49</sup> Such as: Madness, Punishment, Knowledge, Power, the State, Sexuality, History, Reason, Morality, and the Self or Subject.

grounds his investigations upon this particular philosophical perspective, and also because he offers it as a challenge to the traditional way we view our cultural worlds. Thus, it has been decided that it is through M. Foucault that these different ontological positions can be best articulated and contrasted, and so he is now nominated as the main spokesman for the rest of this exercise.

## **Chapter 2: The extent to which M. Foucault can be read as operating upon a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology**

Summary of last chapter, goal of this one; A clarification; Four basic ways the work of M. Foucault has been characterized by the academic community; How this thesis will alternately consider Foucault: as utilizing a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology; The two criteria which must obtain if we are to read Foucault as operating upon a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology; Demonstration that Foucault can be read as a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist in SMBD (or the ‘Middle Period’); Demonstration that Foucault can be read as a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist in the ‘Later Period’; Three analytical models that attempt to explain how ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ form our cultural worlds: a micro-analysis, a macro-analysis, and a political analysis; Conclusion

### **A. Summary of last chapter, goal of this one**

The last lecture made five points. First, a particular way to understand the relation between ontology and metaphysics was outlined. Second, via the argument offered by M. B. Foster, it was shown that ontology can be imagined as holding a mediating position between the particular cosmologies or origin stories offered by distinct cultural worldviews, and the scientific regimes which are in turn developed by them to serve as the sanctioned methods to investigate nature and the appropriate ways to interact within the world. Third, the claim was made that in academia today a prevalent ontological position exists, one which grounds and propagates its own unique brand of a standardized

scientific regime. For the purposes of this thesis this ontological stance was named ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’. Fourth, a possible counter ontology was sketched, one which this thesis is calling ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’. Finally, after introducing a few thinkers who could be cited as operating upon to this alternate ontological stance, Michel Foucault was considered most exemplar in his use of a relational purchase in order to found and initiate his own style of cultural analysis and inquiry.

The purpose of this second chapter is two-fold. First, an attempt will be made to provide sufficient evidence that Foucault can be read as a relational thinker in this way. Thus, via textual evidence it will be demonstrated that it is plausible to conceptualize Foucault as employing a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology in order to ground his investigations. Second, this chapter will attempt to articulate three (of the many) models Foucault offers to help us imagine how this relational nexus is able to form, shape, and develop all aspects of our cultural reality.

Once this has been accomplished, we can turn to our next chapter which will discuss how this unique way of envisioning the world not only enables an interesting cultural, historical, political, ethical commentary about both the general cultural worlds we inhabit and the particular residents found therein, but also acts as a counter-weight to how ontology has been depicted and characterized by our academic authorities and their associated scientific regimes. In fact, it will be shown that this ontological comparison falls well within the parameters of Foucault’s basic challenge to all critical thinkers: to take what is given to us as unquestionable, necessary, universal, obligatory, singular, or absolute aspects of our world, and conversely imagine how this same thing can be

considered particular, historical, contingent, or otherwise<sup>50</sup>. Here the target to keep in mind is how the ontology we uncritically accept and utilize, and the methodologies it in turn propagates, can be understood differently

## **B. A clarification**

Again, we must begin with a clarification. First of all M. Foucault is not at all a philosopher or metaphysician of the usual or traditional kind. What is meant by this is that he explicitly states (in many different ways and at many different times) that he is not interested in participating in any project which tries to determine or discover once and for all the ‘Fundamental Truth’ which resides behind all of ‘Reality’<sup>51</sup>. He offers no philosophical searches for primary essences, pure origins, or absolute foundations, and his stated goal is not to determine the ‘what’ lying behind the social features found in our cultural milieus, but rather to investigate ‘how’ they came to be, ‘how’ they operate, and ‘how’ they are utilized, sanctioned, and reproduced<sup>52</sup>.

Yet, this is not to say that he completely shies away from all philosophical discussions. In fact often he is found contemplating and working through timeless themes such as: the

---

<sup>50</sup> WICP: pp. 383- 384. Cf., UPL: p. 5; ECSPPF: pp. 290, 294; PPP: 117- 119; Pref.: pp. 200- 201; WE: pp. 313, 315- 316; CT: pp. 257, 265; OGE: p. 261; Post: pp. 438- 445, 449; IA: pp. 394- 395, 398- 399; PE: pp. 375- 376; Gros: pp. 522- 526; Tech: p. 224; PT: 403- 404; SP: pp. 327- 328, 335- 336; FWL: pp. 135, 137, 139- 140; ST: pp. 87.

<sup>51</sup> SP: pp. 326- 327. Cf., UPL: pp. 4-6, 9; ECSPPF: pp. 282- 283, 289- 290, 294- 295; PPP: pp. 111- 114; Pref.: pp. 199- 201; AE: p. 50; MF: pp. 461- 463; Post: pp. 437- 445, 447- 450, 451- 452; PE: pp. 375- 376; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 460- 461; Gros: pp. 523- 526; SPPID: pp. 163- 164; Tech: p. 224; PT: pp. 403- 404; SP: pp. 330; SKP: pp. 356, 358; FWL: pp. 135, 139- 140; ST: p. 87.

<sup>52</sup> ST: p. 87; AE: p. 48. Cf., UPL: pp. 4-6, 10; ECSPPF: pp. 281- 282, 284, 286, 290- 291, 299; PPP: pp. 116- 117; Pref.: p. 202; CT: p. 258; RM: pp. 252- 253; Post: pp. 404- 405; Gros: p. 525; SCSA: pp. 154; SP: pp. 336- 337, 339- 348; SKP: p. 357; FWL: p. 139; OS: p. 325.

limits of Freedom and Determination<sup>53</sup>; the relation between Whole and the Part or the One and the Many<sup>54</sup>; what notions like Culture<sup>55</sup> may amount to; what Truth and Knowledge might consist of<sup>56</sup>; and most famously offering alternative considerations on basic concepts such as Power<sup>57</sup>, the Self<sup>58</sup>, and Ethics<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, one philosophical or metaphysical notion that he does frequently discuss is ontology<sup>60</sup>. In following Foucault then, the goal of this thesis will not be to determine ‘what’ his overall metaphysics or ontology may have amounted to (something he himself might not be very interested in), but rather ‘how’ Foucault understands, conceptualizes, and utilizes ontological matters, and ‘how’ this notion is useful for discussing and critiquing how we produce our cultural realities today<sup>61</sup>.

---

<sup>53</sup> ECSPPF: pp. 282- 284; ISR: pp. 122- 123; SP: pp. 339- 345. Cf., UPL: pp. 4-5; ECSPPF: pp. 286- 287, 292- 293, 298- 300; AE: p. 50; Post: p. 449; IA: p. 399; PE: pp. 378- 379; SCSA: pp. 147- 148; SPPID: pp. 167- 168; PT: pp. 403- 404; SKP: pp. 354- 356; OS: p. 324.

<sup>54</sup> AE: pp. 50- 51; Tech: p. 225; PT: pp. 403- 404. Cf., UPL: pp. 4-5; ECSPPF: pp. 291, 299- 300; CT: p. 258; OGE: p. 261; Pref.: pp. 202- 204; IA: p. 399; SCSA: pp. 142-43; SP: pp. 326- 327, 331; ST: pp. 87- 89.

<sup>55</sup> SCSA: pp. 147-48; SP: pp. 326- 327. Cf., UPL: pp. 3- 7; ECSPPF: pp. 286, 291, 294; Pref.: pp. 199- 204; AE: pp. 50- 51; RM: p. 249; OGE: pp. 254-56, 260- 267, 270-71, 277; IA: p. 398; HS: pp. 14- 19; SPPID: pp. 163- 164; PT: pp. 403- 404; SP: pp. 328- 329, 343, 345; FWL: pp. 138- 140; ST: pp. 87- 88; STSW: 157, 159- 160.

<sup>56</sup> AE: p. 51; CT: pp. 256- 257. Cf., UPL: pp. 3-7; ECSPPF: pp. 281- 282, 284- 285, 286- 287, 289- 290, 293, 294, 295- 299; PPP: pp. 111- 114, 116- 117; Pref.: p. 200; WE: pp. 315- 316, 318; CT: pp. 264- 265, 267; RM: p. 263; OGE: pp. 262, 271- 277, 278- 280; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 439- 448, 450- 451, 453, 455; HS: pp. 2-5, 14- 19, 25- 29, 189- 192, 460- 461; Gros: pp. 522- 523; HSS: pp. 93- 95; Tech: pp. 224- 225, 228; SP: p. 330; SKP: pp. 357- 358; FWL: p. 135; ST: pp. 87- 89.

<sup>57</sup> SPPID: pp. 167- 168; SP: pp. 326- 327; OS: p. 324. Cf., UPL: pp. 3-7; ECSPPF: 282- 284, 290- 293, 295, 298; PPP: pp. 116- 117; Pref.: 200, 202- 203; AE: p. 48; CT: pp. 264- 265; RM: p. 243; OGE: pp. 262- 263; IA: p. 400; RS: p. 372; SPPID: pp. 169- 170; Tech: p. 225; SP: pp. 327- 329, 336- 348; ST: p. 88.

<sup>58</sup> ECSPPF: pp. 281- 282, 289- 291. Cf., UPL: 3-7; PPP: pp. 116- 117; Pref.: pp. 199- 204; AE: p. 48; CT: p. 258; RM: pp. 243, 252- 253; OGE: 262- 266, 269- 271, 277, 278- 280; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 438- 439, 443- 445, 450- 452, 455; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 189- 192; Gros: pp. 522- 523, 524, 525; Tech: pp. 224- 225, 228; SPPID: pp. 163- 164, 166; SP: pp. 326- 327, 330- 331, 332, 336; ST: pp. 87- 89.

<sup>59</sup> UPL: pp. 5-32; PE: p. 377; AE: p. 49. Cf., ECSPPF: pp. 284, 286- 287, 294, 298- 300; PPP: pp. 116- 117; CT: pp. 259, 260, 263- 265; OGE: 254- 256, 261, 262- 267, 273; ISR: 130- 132; Tech: p. 228; ST: p. 89.

<sup>60</sup> ECSPPF: pp. 284, 287, 288; WE: pp. 315- 318; OGE: p. 262; PT: p. 403; SP: p. 330.

<sup>61</sup> Problematically for this exercise, Foucault never does explicitly state or defend any ontological or cosmological position. In fact he argues emphatically at times against the merits of such a project, and can even be found claiming to have absolutely no interest in the matter (SP: p. 336). It would appear that to

Secondly, Foucault did not leave behind any singular, canonic, or authoritative statement as to his own philosophy, something which could explicitly declare once and for all what his ontological vision was or where his philosophical project was leading<sup>62</sup>. Naturally, this success in failing to totalize or constrict his own thought allows for many different ways of interpreting his philosophy to appear. On the one hand this means that no single orthodox or catholic interpretation exists which all scholars must remain faithful to, and on the other that a number of opposing and even contradictory reflections have arisen regarding his work.

### **C. Four Basic Ways the work of M. Foucault has been characterized by the academic community**

---

argue for an ontological standpoint is to trap oneself in the very same hubris that constricts our traditional formula, that is: to make an ontological statement about reality is to envision the world as existing as a singular, necessary, and universal way. The mindset driving this ontological examination is different however, and is based on the idea that an ontological stance does not in fact have to be understood as a fundamental account or absolute declaration about our reality, and so should not be seen as a project to silence or exclude any other possible standpoint. Rather, each and every ontological expression could be considered as one of the many possible ways charter myths or origin stories have been philosophically formulated in order to make sense of a world already inhabited. Arguably, any specific way the world is ontologically described should not have its 'truth' or 'veracity' judged according to our own philosophical standards and 'self-validated' scientific schemes. The basic argument being offered in relation to Foucault and ontology is that: Foucault deploys a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology for two reasons. First, in order to interrogate the traditional way we imagine our existence, and second to act as the foundation or groundwork from which to understand how our culture is formed via the conceptions and practices which are indigenous to the group articulating them. In short, the notion of ontology is not offered here as an absolute or fundamental account of reality, but rather as a technique which allows us to question what appears most obvious to us about our world today and think differently about it (OGE: pp. 261).

<sup>62</sup> In many places, Foucault does chart a number of lines of philosophical allegiances and deviances. Post: pp. 436- 447, clearly explains Foucault's relation to the philosophical movements of Structuralism, Phenomenology, and Marxism (Cf., Pref.: p. 202; ECSPF: p. 290; Gros: pp. 524- 525; ISR: p. 125). In this article he also reflects on his relation to the thought of Nietzsche (Cf., Ibid; RM: pp. 250- 251; OGE: pp. 261- 262; SPK: pp. 359. For comments on other philosophical figures and traditions see, ECSPF: pp. 294, 298; WE: pp. 305- 306, 308- 309, 315; OGE: pp. 278- 280; MF: p. 459; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 27, 189- 192, 460- 461; Tech: p. 228; SP: 327, 335- 336; SPK: 357- 358; SMBD: pp. 13- 17, 28, 43- 46, 51, 59, 89- 99; SMBDS: pp. 59, 61- 63.

Prior to demonstrating how this thesis will read Foucault, it is important to canvass the usual ways he is considered by the academic community. This thesis believes that there are four basic ways that his works have been characterized; that these summations can be grouped into two sets of opposing reflections; and that each of these oppositional dyads can be imagined as a reflection on a different period or ‘stage’ of his work<sup>63</sup>. To begin with our first oppositional dyad, and also the most prevalent portrayal of his thought, Foucault is often described as a thinker who, if not completely obsessed with the notion of Power, is able to reduce every single possible cultural, historical, and social analysis to it<sup>64</sup>. In short, our first characterization of Foucault claims that the very important insight he brings to Philosophy and Critical Thought is his unique conceptualization about what Power amounts to and how it operates.

According to Foucault, Power can be imagined as an immanent, relational, and productive dynamic which operates within and throughout all cultural reality<sup>65</sup>. Power is imagined as what underpins, traverses, and courses behind, under, and through all aspects of our social existence, and is cited as the under-arching force which is understood as

---

<sup>63</sup> The prevalent way to organize Foucault’s work is to consider him as passing through three successive and cumulative stages of work (Davidson 1994a: pp. 221- 235). The idea is that each phase adds further insights in terms of what was previously investigated. The first stage focuses on the problem of knowledge, the second on the dynamic of power, and the last on the activity and constitution of the subject. If this reading is considered acceptable, then this thesis will only examine the latter two periods, or the ‘middle’ period on Power, followed by an interest in the Subject. Even though there is much evidence that Foucault himself understands his work as progressing in this way, at the same time this portrayal appears to this thesis as too evolutionary, triumphant, and developmental, a movement which finally culminates in the recognition of the Subject (UPL: p. 6; Pref.: pp. 202- 204; CT: p. 258; RM: p. 253).

<sup>64</sup> Usually the notion of Power which is imputed to Foucault is our traditional model which conceptualizes Power as a commodity which can be held, possessed, surrendered, alienated, exchanged, etc. Foucault not only critiques this idea incessantly, but offers his own counter-portrayal of power: a chthonic, productive relation which operates and traverses behind, through, and something which can not ever be captured or localized by any individual. Obviously, during any Foucauldian exercise these two viewpoints must be kept apart and never conflated (something his critics rarely care to do) (Cf., ECSPF: pp. 283, 291- 292, 299; Pref.: p. 203; Post: pp. 451- 452; PE: p. 380; SP: pp. 326, 336- 348; ST: p. 88; OS: p. 324; SMBD: 13- 17, 43- 46, 89- 99; SMBDS 59- 63).

<sup>65</sup> HSI: pp. 92- 102; SMBD: pp. 16- 17; 28- 47, 50, 53; SMBDS: pp. 59- 60.

completely responsible for the formation, consolidation, and reproduction of every single possible feature which might ever exist within our cultural world. Thus, our first characterization of Foucault is to represent him as a thinker who utilizes a model of reality which nominates Power-Dynamics as the basic feature of existence, making it not only the source and logic which establishes all the resident structures and features ever found inhabiting our cultural realities, but also acts as the basic motor or stimulating force responsible for all the changes, alterations, and renovations which any of these aspects could ever undergo.

Our second characterization of Foucault argues in response that a worldview based on Power is not only without any philosophical foundation, but dangerously attempts to flout all of our conventional social norms and acceptable political values. Our counter-portrayal can be summarized as completely opposed to the suggestion that Power could exist as a first, immanent, relational dynamic, and thus refuses to consider how a Power-dynamic could be imagined as a first, chthonic force responsible for producing all of cultural reality. Instead this position claims complete cognitive recalcitrance to the very conceptual possibility of this insight, and declares this model of existence to not only be intellectually unsuitable, but in fact hostile and antithetical to a shared and common existence.

As discussed previously in our last chapter, it is quite difficult to imagine a worldview where dynamics, relations, practices, and processes have been given complete precedence and total priority over things, solidities, or fully-formed entities. Even more difficult is to envision how this prior, basic, chthonic, immanent, productive, dynamic relationality

could exist as the very basis and foundation of all reality. Further, even if this ontology could be considered plausible, the question that directly follows is to ask how this first, under-gird or continuum of relational-dynamics can also be seen as the sole force responsible for establishing, rearranging, and reproducing every single feature recognized as resident within our cultural field. In short, once we have been intellectually disciplined into accepting our traditional ontological schemata, at first glance this counter-vision appears to offer nothing more than an effacement of the very foundational groundwork which we as a cultural take for granted; leaving nothing substantial in its place other than pure flux<sup>66</sup>. Obviously, why take this worldview seriously if it only undermines our historically ‘tried, tested, and true’ way of considering existence, and then offers only ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ instead<sup>67</sup>?

However, what appears even more threatening for our second camp than the cognitive limitations which intellectually appear once an attempt is made to consider existence upon this relational model is the specific way Foucault has portrayed this under-girth of force-dynamic- as Power. It is this description of reality which is cited by many of his critics as incredibly dangerous and outright hostile to our common philosophical projects and shared political goals<sup>68</sup>. It appears that once Power has been nominated as the relational base for all reality, and is cited as the sole force responsible for the production of our social existence, then obviously striking questions immediately arise. If

---

<sup>66</sup> In essence to claim that another lacks any sense of normative foundations, is to consider them a relativist, ‘anarchist’, or nihilist, and so has no basis upon which to evaluate itself or critique others. See, Fraser 1981: pp. 186- 188, 188- 189, 196, 201, 205, 207; Walzer 1982: 60- 61; Habermas 1984: p. 168; Taylor 1984: p. 69; Fraser 1985: pp. 18- 22, 25- 27, 32; Best 1991: pp. 63, 68, 70; Best 1995: pp. 89, 128, 184, 192- 193, 223; Sonbanmatsu 2004: 131, 139.

<sup>67</sup> Fraser 1981: 200- 205, 208; Taylor 1982: p. 84; Fraser 1985: pp. 25, 28, 32, 33; Best 1991: p. 69; Best 1995: p. 134; Sonbanmatsu 2004: 128- 137.

<sup>68</sup> Walzer 1982: p. 61; Fraser 1985: pp. 26- 27; Best 1991: pp. 64- 65; Best 1995: pp. 127, 184; Sonbanmatsu 2004: p. 130.

everything in the world is completely reducible to power-dynamics, force-relations, and domination<sup>69</sup>, where does this leave our normative commitments to universal standards such as Justice, Truth, and Ethics<sup>70</sup>? What becomes of the Subject or self given this power-based worldview; is it also nothing more than a product of Power<sup>71</sup>? In the Foucauldian universe is there absolutely no Freedom for the individual outside, prior to, or against the power dynamics within which they are totally embedded and completely formed by<sup>72</sup>? As argued by many critics of Foucault's work, once power has been declared to reside as the most basic and fundamental aspect of all reality, a host of philosophical questions and political problems immediately arise which this worldview is demanded to both acknowledge and respond to.

It did not take much time for Foucault to begin addressing the many charges delivered against the intelligibility and merit of his project. Citing his own capacity for reflexive self-analysis and criticism he too came to recognize the value of many of the complaints which could be easily way-laid against a model of reality grounded on Power-Relations<sup>73</sup>. Thus, he himself strove to re-think, alter, change, and revamp his own ideas in order to answer the objections raised against it, as well as challenge himself to move in

---

<sup>69</sup> Fraser 1981: p. 195; Walzer 1982: pp. 51, 58, 60; Fraser 1985: pp. 26- 27, 29; Best 1991: pp. 34, 65, 69; Best 1995: pp. 124, 184, 194; Allen 2004: p. 249; Sonbanmatsu 2004: pp. 130, 141.

<sup>70</sup> Fraser 1981: p. 195; Walzer 1982: pp. 62, 64; Taylor 1984: p. 70; Fraser 1985: pp. 21- 22, 30; Best 1995: pp. 124, 127, 184, 192; Sonbanmatsu 2004: 130, 141.

<sup>71</sup> Fraser 1981: pp. 193, 198; Fraser 1985: pp. 27- 29; Best 1995: p. 70; Allen 2004: p. 235; Sonbanmatsu 2004: pp. 138, 141.

<sup>72</sup> Fraser 1981: pp. 193, 198; Walzer 1982: pp. 58, 61, 63; Taylor 1984: p. 70; Fraser 1985: pp. 27, 29, 31; Best 1991: p. 70; Best 1995: p. 92; Allen 2004: p. 235.

<sup>73</sup> UPL: pp. 8- 9; PPP: pp. 111, 117- 119; Pref.: p. 205; AE: p. 48; CT: pp. 256, 258, 264- 265; Post: pp. 449, 454; WICP: p. 384; ISR: pp. 130- 131.

new directions<sup>74</sup>. Importantly, Foucault realized that Power alone cannot act as the relational groundwork, foundation, or framework from which to ground his investigations into how our cultural regimes and social structures are immanently and dynamically produced, fashioned, and altered<sup>75</sup>.

Based on this insight, our third characterization (and so also the first half of our second oppositional dyad) narrates him as having entered into a new stage in his thought, one which distances itself from the previous worldview which founded its analysis and inquiries solely on Power-Relations or Force-Dynamics, to one which now finds its investigations upon the recognition of the Subject, and the many relations it has with itself<sup>76</sup>. On this new model, the Subject will no longer be conceptualized as a totally derivative, fully manufactured, or completely determined product formed solely by the underlying power-relations it resides within; rather on this new schemata all inquiries will be founded and commence with the postulation that the Subject and its many forms of subjectivity already pre-exist and can in fact form themselves<sup>77</sup>. The Subject is now imagined as a distinct and personalized form, something which can be generally isolated and readily identified as an entity within the field of relations they operate in, and amidst

---

<sup>74</sup> UPL: pp. 4-6; ECSPF: pp. 281- 282, 289- 293, 299; CT: p. 258; RM: p. 243; PE: p. 380; ISR: pp. 130-131; ST: p. 88.

<sup>75</sup> UPL: pp. 4-6; ECSPF: p. 299; Pref.: p. 203; AE: p. 48; CT: p. 258; PE: p. 380; Tech: p. 225; PT: pp. 403- 404; SP: pp. 326- 327, 339; ST: p. 80.

<sup>76</sup> ECSPF: pp. 281- 282; Pref.: p. 202; WE: pp. 313- 319; AE: p. 48; CT: p. 259; RM: pp. 243, 253; OGE: p. 277; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: p. 444; HS: pp. 14- 9, 25- 29, 189- 192; Gros: pp. 522- 523; HSS: pp. 93- 101; SPPID: p. 163; Tech: pp. 224- 225; PT: pp. 403- 404; SP: pp. 326- 348; FWL: pp. 135, 137; ST: pp. 87- 89.

<sup>77</sup> UPL: p. 5; ECSPF: pp. 281- 282, 287, 289- 291; AE: pp. 50- 51; RM: pp. 243, 252- 253; OGE: pp. 261, 277; ISR: pp. 130- 132; PT: pp. 403- 404; SP: pp. 326- 348; ST: pp. 87- 89.

the under-arching relational nexus within which they are embedded, and as capable to both form itself and influence the formation practices of others<sup>78</sup>.

Thus our third characterization of Foucault's philosophical project uses the Subject as its starting-point, axiomatic root, or initial foundation, and then given this initial purchase, inquiries are grounded which can inquire into how both the self and its social life are produced and then transformed. To be very clear: this new Foucauldian paradigm asks our philosophical imagination to begin by accepting the existence of a Subject, and from this point, attempts are then initiated to understand how the Subject is able to form itself through its own self-fashioning practices, techniques, and exercises<sup>79</sup>. The goal now is to understand how the Subject is able to produce its self into the various styles it bears, while still embedded within and amidst an underlying sea of power and knowledge relations. This means that Ethics must become an integral discussion for this philosophy, and will now be idiosyncratically defined as the unique type of relation that one has with oneself, when they are fully conscious and reflective of their own role, practices, and actions during this self-fashioning process, since as one shapes ones own world, they simultaneously impact on the range and possibility for others to accomplish the same for themselves<sup>80</sup>.

---

<sup>78</sup> UPL: pp. 3- 7; ECSPPF: pp. 289- 291; Pref.: p. 202; PT: pp. 403- 404.

<sup>79</sup> This thesis finds this Foucauldian discussion on the Subject a very valuable inflection of Modern philosophical thought (and one which seems to follow Leibnizian thinking). However, from a cultural point of view, the claim that the Subject could pre-exist in the philosophical field not a declaration which this thesis finds stimulating at all (and does not seem to follow Spinozistic mentalities). In other words this new quasi-ontological status of the Subject is interesting only when investigating a cultural milieu which has already nominated itself as 'Modern', but not at all intellectually avant-garde if it considered a general and universal designation or axiom if talking about practices of other cultures.

<sup>80</sup> UPL: pp. 10, 25- 32; ECSPPF: pp. 284- 289; AE: pp. 48- 49; CT: pp. 259- 260, 263; RM: pp. 243, 253; OGE: pp. 254- 255, 261, 262- 266; ISR: pp. 130- 132; TECH: p. 228; PT: p. 404; ST: p. 89.

In sum our third model claims that Foucault can overcome the complaints waylaid against his previous model based on Power-Relations. First, Power will no longer be imagined as the sole 'Dynamic' cited as inhabiting a 'Relational' ontology. Second, now the immanent, dynamic under-gird within which all things are embedded does not have to be imagined as only able to manufacture our world in a completely determined, fully dominated, and fundamentally totalizing way. Third, this means that the Subject or self no longer must be envisioned as nothing more than a derivative, contingent, and provisional codification which has been completely produced and totally fashioned by these under-girding Power-Dynamics, and allows the possibility that the Subject and its self-formative relations to itself can be made the initial purchase for social and cultural investigations. Fourth and in turn, a most privileged site of discourse for this new model will be based on a consideration of the amount or extent of Freedom or Liberty any individual agent 'possesses' or can capitalize on in order to form themselves via their own self-constitutive processes. Finally fifth, Ethics will become a major political issue since our own personal self-formation practices directly impact on the capability of others being able to do the same, and so we should always be conscious and reflective of our practices and try to calibrate them in relation to the capacities of others attempting to do the same.

Through these fundamental changes Foucault can now be situated as a thinker who operates well within the limits sanctioned by traditional philosophical and political discourse. Supporters of Foucault can claim they are still employing on a Foucauldian inspired style of analysis as to our own practices, techniques, and exercise of cultural production, however: the starting point for these inquiries will begin with the existence

of Subjects and their subjectivities; the limits of these investigations will be to show how the self is relationally manufactured in relation to itself; and the main issue examined will be the type of ethics one has with itself during its own practices of self-stylization, given that they must be performed in agonistic conjunction with the Liberty of others also attempting to do the same.

Our fourth characterization of Foucault's work to close, and thus what also doubles as the foil to our third depiction, fundamentally challenges this new approach. Despite making the Subject the fundamental concern of a relational analysis into our practices of self formation, Foucault's project was once again delivered with serious criticism<sup>81</sup>. Once again the Subject has been nominated as the axiomatic unit which exists first and foremost within the philosophical field<sup>82</sup>, and one could even claim that the metaphor of 'Relations', 'Dynamics', and relationality is only employed as a way to better understand and protect the irreducibility of the individual as Subject. Moreover, given that Foucault's work now: begins with the pre-recognition of a Subject; seems to be limited to problems revolving around the Freedom, agency, and self-determination of the Subject; and strictly defines Ethics as the Subject's own relation to itself, then arguably this new Foucauldian model could be indicted as acting as nothing more than a nouveau spokesman for the Liberal regime and status quo. What was originally a fundamental attack on the primacy and sanctity of the Subject or individual at the ontological level can

---

<sup>81</sup> Best 1991: pp. 66- 68, 69; Best 1995: pp. 124, 127, 186; Hadot 1995: pp. 207, 211; Moss 1998: p. 11; Patton 1998: pp. 65, 70- 74; Smart 1998: pp. 80- 89; Allen 2004: pp. 236, 245, 246, 248-249, 250- 251; Sonbanmatsu 2004: p. 141.

<sup>82</sup> Even if it is now conceptualized as a relation onto itself.

now be revised, rearranged, and re-jigged into a new species of liberal humanism<sup>83</sup>. In fact some have even charged that this later version of Foucault's philosophy actually swings way too far in its revisionary response, portraying a Subject which is far too individualistic, and so making it appear totally socially irresponsible and purely aesthetically driven<sup>84</sup>.

Ironically, with this final complaint we come full circle. Features originally cited as serious oversights which made Foucault's model based on Power-Relations completely objectionable, have now become features which are denounced as too over-emphasized. Prior it was objected that the individual or Subject was depicted in a way which made it appear as completely powerless and totally determined by the over-arching cultural and social forces it finds itself embedded within; yet now the complaint is that the Subject has been given too much credence, ability, and empowerment to the neglect of its social and cultural relations<sup>85</sup>.

#### **D. How this thesis will alternately consider Foucault: as utilizing a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontologist**

Obviously it is difficult to pin down exactly what Foucault was working on during his philosophical enterprise, and rather than demonstrate that Foucault does 'in fact' fall into

---

<sup>83</sup> Patton 1998: pp. 70- 74.

<sup>84</sup> Best 1991; Best 1995; Hadot 1995: pp. 207, 211; Smart 1998; Allen 2004; Sanbonmatsu 2004.

<sup>85</sup> The single characteristic of Foucault which all camps seemed to agree on is that he is a confused, eclectic, and un-philosophical thinker. Fraser 1981: pp. 187, 199; Walzer 1982: p. 63; Habermas 1984: p. 108; Taylor 1984: pp. 84, 90; Fraser 1985: pp. 18, 27- 28, 30- 31; Best 1991: 36, 72; Davidson 1994b: p. 130; Best 1995: p. 127; Hindess 1998: 60.

one of these four categories, or can not be slotted because he is too confused and eclectic thinker, as previously stated this thesis is going to attempt a different tack to understand his work. Rather than accepting that at one time Foucault can be understood as working within a paradigm which fundamentally attacked the primacy of the individual, yet later can be read as a staunch defender of this position, Foucault will instead be imagined as operating according to a worldview which begins with and is grounded upon a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology. In other words, we will not accept a narrative which depicts him as moving from an ontology which begins with immanent, local, productive force-dynamics or power-relations, to one which later ontologically grounds itself upon the subject and its relations with itself, albeit embedded with a ‘sea of relations’. The alteration which Foucault makes to his system will now be explained as an attempt to deepen his model from one based on power-relations to one which commences with a completely ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology<sup>86</sup>. This also means that the above story which accept that the Subject has a ‘quasi-ontological’ status as a basic, and primal conglomeration will not at all be admitted; instead both the self or the Subject will still be conceptualized as products of this greater relationality, but this time

---

<sup>86</sup> The idea that Foucault can even be read as a ‘power-relationalist all- told’ is in the opinion of this thesis a very poor understanding of his endeavors in this ‘middle-period’, and it is one which attempts to fundamentally link him with Neitzchean thought. It should be stated that even in this ‘period’ which focuses on power-relations, he never did fully accept a worldview which is completely based on them. In SMBD, he states that the idea of examining the world as based on power-relations is offered only as tentative hypothesis, it is not a declaration by Foucault as to how the world must exist (SMBD: pp. 15- 17, 23, 27, 45- 48; SMBDS: p. 59- 60); second, even in this power-dominated worldview he still accepts that many other relations also exist, such as knowledge-relations (SMBD: pp. 24, 53); third he explicitly states in his later works that he left many other important relations in this study- such as relations to the self (UPL: pp. 4-6; Pref.: pp. 199-201; WC: pp. 51-52; CT: p. 264; ECSPF: pp. 289, 290, 296, 298; Post: pp. 444, 452; Tech: p. 225; SP: p. 330, 331), and also claims that he was too over-focused on power and domination in this inquiry (ECSPF 293, 296, 298; WC: pp. 59, 56; CT: p. 263; Post: p. 45; PE: p. 380; SPPID: p. 167; Tech: p. 225; SP: p. 339; SPK: p. 357); and lastly, he acknowledges that he never attempted to describe all relations of power, or the notion of power itself, but rather how one can understand power as a relation which produced cultural milieus and social spaces at specific moments in his historical analysis (WC: pp. 54-5; Post: p. 452; MF: p. 463; PE: p. 380; SP: p. 345).

not of power-relations per se, but of rather ‘Relations’, ‘Dynamics’, and relationality at large<sup>87</sup>.

Before moving on, to be crystal clear, and thus to reiterate the clarification offered at the beginning of this chapter: although we are discussing ontological notions found in the work of M Foucault, it must be emphatically stated that this thesis should not be seen as trying to saddle him with an authoritative rendition of his philosophy. In short, this ‘fifth model’ or our characterization is not to be seen as an attempt to articulate the hidden key lying behind all of Foucault’s work, and should not be seen as an antagonistic contest wielded against any other way his work can be read or conceptualized. The general goal here is to understand ‘how’ Foucault can be read as a theorist who utilizes a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology, and only in order to find a reasonable ground upon which to legitimize the methodology this thesis believes he operates with<sup>88</sup>. Thus, the thesis that he can be understood in this way is only offered as a possible counter-weight not only to how we have been taught to envision our reality at the ontological level, but also as a resistance towards the dominant way Foucault is traditionally considered. As stated, this thesis believes this type of endeavor lies well within the parameters of Foucault’s challenge to all critical thinkers: to take what is given to us as ‘universal, necessary, obligatory’ and see how it could be conceptualized otherwise<sup>89</sup>.

---

<sup>87</sup> Importantly however, the idea that the self or Subject has freedom or liberty to form, alter, and inflect itself within these under-arching process will still be retained. This will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Cultural Analytics’.

<sup>89</sup> See footnote 50.

### **E. The two criteria which must obtain if we are to read Foucault as operating upon a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology**

At this point the attempt will be made to demonstrate that Foucault can be read as utilizing a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology in order to ground his unique style of methodology. What will be shown is that Foucault operates according to a mentality which envisions the world, first and foremost, and at base and eternally to exist as an under-girth or nexus of immanent, productive, and ‘Dynamic’ ‘Relations’. There are two criteria which this thesis believes Foucault must meet if we are able to consider him in this way: first, ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ must be conceptualized as existing prior to and as taking precedence over ‘things’; second the resident features or ‘things’ which we find inhabiting our cultural worlds, must be understood as having been produced, manufactured, and composed via, by, upon, and through these prior and pre-postulated ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’. It is also the hope of this thesis to show that Foucault employs roughly this same relational worldview in both his ‘middle’<sup>90</sup> and ‘later’ stages<sup>91</sup>.

### **F. Demonstration that Foucault can be read as a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist in SMBD (or the ‘Middle Period’)**

---

<sup>90</sup> This thesis is only using the lecture at Sorbonne in ‘76 entitled SMBD as its source for this period.

<sup>91</sup> This thesis understands this ‘period’ as beginning in 1981 with his lectures at Sorbonne on the Subject and Truth, and ending with many interviews and essays offered until 1984. The texts this thesis is using to formulate its idea of this period are: 1984- UPL, ECSPF, PPP, Pref., WC, WE, AE, CT, RM; 1983- OGE, MF, Post, IA, WICP, RS, PE; 1982- HS, Gros, Han, HSS, ISR, SCSA, SPPID, Tech, PT, SP, SKP; 1980- FWL, ST, STSW.

### 1. Demonstration of Criteria #1

Although many interesting avenues of insight are opened up in these lectures, the most striking argument is Foucault's attempt to completely undermine the coherency, legitimacy, and authority of how Political Theory usually imagines and articulates the formation, establishment, and institution of the Modern State - via Liberal Social Contract Theory<sup>92</sup>. In contrast to our dominant narrative on the original constitution of the State and its Absolute Sovereignty, one which imagines that: the world erupted all at once; it began with a First State of Nature; this Original Homeland housed a number of already pre-assumed, pre-determined, primitive, existential constituents; and that this first space and its originary units can be used as the nomothetic or axiomatic purchase from which to trace the logical steps which must have transpired to lead us into the inevitable, necessary, and universal establishment of the Modern State; Foucault will instead discuss the production of this cultural phenomenon as based upon our aforementioned relational worldview. The State will now be explained as a provisional, nominal, secondary, and culturally manufactured political and social structure which was instituted by a particular group of people, at a distinct time, and for a specific political purpose<sup>93</sup>. Thus, on the one hand to challenge our traditionally envisioned universe which demands that the State must be conceptualized as a necessary upshot for proper human existence, and on the other to offer a different way that cultural features such as the State can be considered, Foucault utilizes our 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology<sup>94</sup>.

---

<sup>92</sup> SMBDS: pp. 59, 61-63; SMBD: pp. 13-14, 16-17, 26-28, 43-47, 89-99, 109-111, 156-157.

<sup>93</sup> SMBDS: pp. 61- 63; SMBD: pp. 16, 46, 50, 70.

<sup>94</sup> For this exercise to be considered possible four points must be kept in mind. First, power is to be understood as a relation (the Foucauldian sense) and not as a possession (the Hobbesian sense). Second, power-relations are to be imagined as only one species or kind of relationality. In the Foucauldian universe many other relations also co-exist with power-relations. Another relation Foucault often also analyzes is knowledge-relations, and importantly how these two relations relate to one another. This means knowledge

It must be stated upfront that contrary to how most cosmological accounts or charter myths are offered, Foucault gives us no compelling story as to why the world must exist in this unique and particular way<sup>95</sup>. In contrast to the many origin stories articulated by different worldviews, each one narrating how the world must have first began and so still exists at base, Foucault's perspective is one which is pretty much delivered by fiat and without rigid argument<sup>96</sup>. He states that he only offers this worldview as a device to allow us to think differently about our reality, and thus should not be viewed as an attempt to offer a fundamental, universal, or necessary declaration as to how our existence must be<sup>97</sup>.

In this lecture there are four places where Foucault can be found articulating a worldview where 'relations' are given ontological precedence over things. To begin, in the very first passages of the Course Summary to these lectures, he directly states that "[in] order to conduct a concrete analysis of Power-Relations, we must abandon the juridical model of sovereignty. That model in effect presupposes that the individual is a subject with natural rights or primitive powers; it sets itself the task of accounting for the ideal genesis of the State...[Instead] We should be trying to study power not on the basis

---

relations can not merely be reduced to a form of power- relations, and further that power-relations can not to be considered to cover all possible relations. Third, the type of power-relations discussed here are not to be considered as able to refer to all possible kinds or types of power-relations, and are only specifically relevant in terms of how they operate in conjunction with the constitution of the Modern State and its associated forms of Modern Subjectivity. Last and very important, power-relations should not immediately or necessarily be understood as war-relations. Instead, this should be seen as a tentative hypothesis which rests at the limits or 'maximum tension' on this possibility of power-relations (SMBDS: pp. 59-60; SMBD: pp. 15- 17, 23, 26-28, 34, 45-48; SMBDS: p. 59- 60). Please also cf. footnote 86.

<sup>95</sup> SMBD: p. 56.

<sup>96</sup> SMBD: pp. 156-158, 172.

<sup>97</sup> SMBD: p. 42

of primitive terms of the relationship, but on the basis of the relationship itself, to the extent that it is the relationship itself that determines the elements it bears...we have to look at how relations of subjugation can manufacture subjects.”<sup>98</sup>.

To translate this back into the language used in this thesis, Foucault demands that we stop initiating our analyses by pre-assuming the existence of a number of already pre-fabricated, pre-determined, and fully-established primitive notions, terms, or entities- like the Subject, Power, and Law- and then based solely on their presupposition, use them as the baseline, groundwork, or standard from which to derive the subsequent features of existence we find resident in our cultural milieus today- like the State. Instead, he asks us to initiate our analyses with the counter-assumption that the most prior or first element of reality is an under-arching relationality, and basing ourselves upon this purchase, inquire into the many processes, practices, and techniques which have operated in conjunction with each other to produce the things which we now consider and recognize as ‘the primitive terms of our reality’. This thesis believes this passage clearly shows Foucault articulating a reality where relationality is accepted as prior to any of the things we might culturally register as the ‘elementary features of our existence’.

These exact same sentiments are amplified on Jan 21, or in the third lecture of his 75-76 course<sup>99</sup>. Here he continues to investigate the theme that a relationality existentially precedes what we might consider first solidified residents of reality, and claims that the traditional worldview championed and utilized by academia today, is one which is pre-supposed, pre-ordained, and pre-assumed. Here he makes crystal clear what his general goal is in offering these lectures: “to release or emancipate [our] analysis of power from

---

<sup>98</sup> SMBDS: p. 59

<sup>99</sup> SMBD: p. 45.

three assumptions- of subject, unity, and law- and to [instead] bring out the basic elements of sovereignty, what I will call relations...”. He then goes on to state, “this means that rather than starting with the subject and elements that exist prior to the relationship and that can be localized, we begin with the [power] relationship itself....and see how that relationship itself determines the elements which it is applied...showing how the actual relations of subjugation manufacture subjects”.

On the following page he again reiterates this point, “Rather than looking at the three prerequisites...which make sovereignty... we have to adopt the point of view...that makes technologies of domination [read relations] the real fabric of both [power]-relations and great apparatuses of power. The manufacture of subjects rather than the genesis of sovereignty: that is our general theme”<sup>100</sup>. Given these statements it seems perfectly acceptable to envision Foucault as utilizing a perspective which gives priority to relations and a relationality before anything else which could ever be registered as a first or basic unit of reality.

A third place where this mentality is discussed again is in his third lecture of Jan 21. Here Foucault considers how this relational viewpoint will explain its discourse on history and idea of origins. Our relational discourse will be one which “develops completely within the historical dimension. It is deployed within a history that has no boundaries, no end, and no limits...it is interested in discovering beneath the stability of law or the truth, the indefiniteness of history.”<sup>101</sup> Again this suggests that no fundamental, basic, or first historical foundation can ever be imagined or appealed to as

---

<sup>100</sup> SMBD: p. 46.

<sup>101</sup> SMBD: p. 55.

the original starting place or initial purchase from which to ground our analyses and investigations<sup>102</sup>.

Finally, these exact same sentiments are reiterated on Feb 18 where once our traditional worldview is shown as beginning with a false foundation, and on Feb 25 counter-claims that a relational model is one which demands that any thing which ever appears as a cultural feature within our social reality must be recognized as having been produced within and by this eternal, historical immanent, dynamic relational continuum. In other words, every aspect, entity, or thing found residing within our cultural or social reality can be investigated as to how it was formed, developed, and shaped to appear in the specific way, form, or style it is now socially clarified as taking<sup>103</sup>. At this point, this thesis hopes it is credible to imagine that Foucault does operate during this period upon an ontology which always begins with and totally privileges relations over any first solidified units. It must be remembered however, that this worldview is not considered absolute or sacrosanct on its own, and is only offered in order to undermine the unchallenged notion that we must accept elementary, primitive, and initial atomic units as the first, basic, fixed, and foundational elements of our reality.

## **2. Criteria #2**

Now that it is plausible to imagine Foucault as operating upon and according to this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology, it can be shown that this first, prior, primitive, eternal, and continuous force relation also acts as the basis, foundation, logic, and source

---

<sup>102</sup> SMBD: p. 56. This is the basis of the distinction between Philosophical-Juridical and Political-Historical discourses on Sovereignty (SMBD: pp. 15- 19, 27, 43-50, 53, 57, 59, 69- 70, 89- 99, 110; SMBDS: pp. 59- 63).

<sup>103</sup> SMBD: pp. 155-158, 162-63, 165, 167-69, 172-73.

upon which, through, by, and via all the things ever found as social features resident in our cultural world are developed within, produced from, and established by<sup>104</sup>. There are four points that this thesis will make in relation to this claim. First, there should be no doubt that Foucault considers these relations to act as the basis and groundwork of the entire social body. On page 60 he definitively states that these reciprocal relations are what exist under, behind, beneath, through, and within all aspects of our cultural order and recognized social institutions<sup>105</sup>. According to Foucault then, it is these under-arching, immanent, dynamic, and continuous relations which underpin, traverse through, and acts as the anchor of all our social institutions such as the State and all of our intellectual notions like peace, right, law, and order<sup>106</sup>.

Second, for Foucault it is these primary relations which offer the logic, codification, and constituent character which informs the particular way any of the things found in our culture are distinctly structured<sup>107</sup>. The idea is that this general relationality can itself be imagined as housing a number of specific relations, where each of them can be roughly differentiated from one another in terms of idiosyncratic particularization<sup>108</sup>. Thus, it can be imagined that the features of our cultural existence are produced when these multiple and distinguished strands of relationality merge or come together in alternate ways<sup>109</sup>. According to Foucault, it is this process of interrelation, intersection, and reinforcement which produces the various things which we recognize as the many different, distinct,

---

<sup>104</sup> We will discuss the logic and the physic of this process of his later work on pp 63- 75 of this chapter.

<sup>105</sup> SMBDS: p. 59; SMBD: pp. 15-16, 18, 24, 46-47, 49, 50-51, 56.

<sup>106</sup> SMBDS: p. 61; SMBD: pp. 15-16, 24, 30, 38, 49, 50-51.

<sup>107</sup> SMBDS: p. 61; SMBD: pp. 16, 18, 24, 28, 47, 49, 51, 60.

<sup>108</sup> SMBDS: p. 59; SMBD: pp. 24, 28, 29-30, 43, 45.

<sup>109</sup> SMBDS: p. 59; SMBD: pp. 15, 24, 27, 28, 43, 45, 50-51.

and unique features found in our cultural environs<sup>110</sup>. Stated in another way, this multitude of differentiated relations, each embedded within the same under-arching relationality, are imagined as able to intertwine together in variety of distinct and particular ways, and it is this process of combination and concoction which produces the unique aspects which we recognize in our cultural worlds<sup>111</sup>. Thus it is that the alternate and distinct ways that this process is accomplished which in turn produces the various cultural worlds we inhabit, the myriad of specific things found within any single one of them, and the infinite ways any particular feature can be produced and so disclosed. Upon this model then, each culture and all social artifacts found therein should be seen as their own particularized expression of how these strands of relationality have been conceptualized and then sequenced, patterned, and interfaced together in different and idiosyncratic ways<sup>112</sup>.

Third, this relationality must also be considered to act as the motor, source, or force which is not only responsible for the production of all of our cultural features, but can also be cited as the ceaseless dynamic constantly working to change, alter, and renovate all of these particular cultural and social assemblages<sup>113</sup>. In other words, this relational productive force can also be imagined as the stimulating principle driving forward all aspects of cultural generation and reproduction. Thus, it can be envisioned as a continuous chain traversing through all aspects of our social network, and by doing so mutually inflecting and altering all things together in a syncopated reciprocal dynamic.

---

<sup>110</sup> SMBDS: pp. 59, 61, 62; SMBD: pp. 15-16, 18, 24, 28, 45-46, 49-51.

<sup>111</sup> One major problem this thesis isolates in regards to the 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' worldview being proposed in this lecture is the fact that he reduces infinite multiplicity to binary structures. This is not at all retained in his later work.

<sup>112</sup> SMBD: p. 24.

<sup>113</sup> SMBDS: p. 61; SMBD: pp. 15-16, 18, 24, 29-30, 47, 49-51, 60.

Moreover, given that at base all things are imagined as fundamentally attached, and since they are all conceptualized as caught up together within this singular, ceaseless, mutual force, then obviously the changes which one thing undergoes must naturally and reciprocally alter the formation and possible modifications that could happen to any thing else also co-existing in this relational nexus.

Lastly and by implication of the three previous points, given that all aspects of cultural and social life are developed by, via, and within these under-arching, chthonic, immanent, dynamic, productive, and continuous relations, then naturally nothing could ever be seen as free, removed from, or outside these first, primitive, and prior relations<sup>114</sup>. It should also be apparent that it would be impossible for any produced feature or subsequent structure to be imagined as ever able to possess, localize, capture, or contain this under-arching relationality, since it is this dynamic which is what produces all of these social and cultural artifacts<sup>115</sup>.

Putting these four points together, the ontology being attributed to Foucault here is one which initiates its philosophical imagination by nominating that a prior, previous, immanent, under-arching dynamic relationality exists as the basis of our reality. The basic argument being offered is that upon this specific ontological worldview, any and all social features ever found within our cultural reality must be considered to exist as manufactured artifacts, or as things which have been socially produced at a specific time, place, and under a distinct rationale to appear in the particular shape which that group of people which now witnesses and recognizes them to be. Thus, in complete opposition to the prevalent way we are taught to ontologically depict our world, this counter-model

---

<sup>114</sup> SMBD: p. 51.

<sup>115</sup> SMBDS: p. 61; SMBD: pp. 13, 16, 18, 24, 27, 28, 30, 43-45, 45-57, 60.

imagines that every possible cultural feature found in existence must be viewed as: a subsequent and secondary features of reality; a completely nominal, contingent, and culturally produced artifact; an historical entity always susceptible to change, alteration, and transformation; and as politically contestable structure, completely provisional, malleable, and challengeable<sup>116</sup>.

In sum, once this worldview has been accepted and engaged, a social feature such as the Modern State can no longer be articulated as a universal, singular, and obligatory aspect of our existence or as a necessary upshot of reality based on how the universe first emerged. Instead it can be regarded as a culturally composed structure, which was produced at a specific place, for a distinct group of people, at a particular time, and under a very distinct rationale<sup>117</sup>. Moreover, something like the self, usually depicted by our tradition as a ‘first entity of existence’ or as a ‘fundamental constituent of reality’, now must be envisioned as nothing more than a ‘first affect’ of these relations, something which has been indigenously produced and naturalized for a certain group of people via the way the prior, more primitive, immanent dynamics which under-gird their particular cultural realm have been imagined, interrelated, and converged<sup>118</sup>. For Foucault, it is this relational process of cultural formation which produces the particular depictions of ‘who we are’, cultural expressions which become manifest in the unique gestures, behaviors, vigor, and diets we as different groups recognize both about ourselves, and see embodied

---

<sup>116</sup> Admittedly this is an imputed reading. His major concern in this lecture how Subjects are manufactured by power-relations, and is offered in counter to the traditional story we learn as to the production of Sovereignty produced via a priori Subjects. This reading does however follow directly from his logic and is in concert with his later views.

<sup>117</sup> SMBDS: p. 61; SMBD: pp. 17, 27-28, 34, 46.

<sup>118</sup> SMBDS: p. 59, 61; SMBD: pp. 29-30, 34, 45-46, 52-53.

in others<sup>119</sup>. In closing, the ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model of ontology offered in SMBD, expresses a world where nothing can ever be considered to exist as an a-historical, fundamental, first, fixed, frozen, sacrosanct, unchallengeable, universal, necessary, or obligatory feature of either our cultural existence or our social reality.

## **G. Demonstration that Foucault can be read as a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist in the ‘Later Period’**

### **1. Criteria #1**

We will now show that Foucault continues to use a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology in order to ground his unique style of cultural analysis and criticism.

Afterwards we will articulate three (of the many) models which Foucault offers during this later period to aide our imagination in conceptualizing a reality where prior dynamic relations can be envisioned as able to form our cultural worlds.

First, it must be demonstrated that Foucault still conceptualizes reality in a way which nominates that ‘Relations’, ‘Dynamics’, and relationality take precedence over any first things, solidities, fixtures, or entities. Second, it must be shown that anything witnessed as a resident feature within our cultural realm is something which has been formed by, manufactured in, and produced through this previous and prior relational dynamic. At this point this thesis feels it should be sufficient to simply offer some of the more telling statements he makes about how he imagines our basic or fundamental existence<sup>120</sup>.

---

<sup>119</sup> SMBD: pp. 16, 24, 46-47, 51-52, 60.

<sup>120</sup> There is also some interesting hermeneutic or anecdotal evidence which can also be marshaled to show that he is fully-committed to understanding cultural production via a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology: a

In the 1982 interview entitled SPK Foucault is asked what he might find fundamental to any analysis of culture or society. His reply is, “Nothing is fundamental. That is what is interesting in the analysis of society. That is why nothing irritates me as much as these inquiries...on the foundation of power in society or the self-institution of a society, and so on. These are not fundamental phenomena. There are only reciprocal relations, and the perpetual gaps between intentions in relation to one another.”<sup>121</sup>

In conjunction with this statement about what he does and does not consider a fundamental aspect of reality, his Essay SP<sup>122</sup>, as well as the interview named ECSPF<sup>123</sup> both explicitly state that existence is grounded upon these under-arching relations, and so they cannot be considered to reside as merely a ‘supplementary structure that exists over and above society’. Rather they are ‘something which should be considered as rooted deep within the social nexus’, are a ‘necessary and fundamental aspect of all human life’, and that ‘a society devoid of it must be considered nothing more than a utopian abstraction’.

A third place in this later literature where he discusses this relational worldview is found in the STSW. Here he argues “we live in a relational world that institutions have

---

recourse to Aristotelian metaphors of change to explain ethical transformation (UPL: pp. 25-28; OGE: pp. 262-65); the idea that discussion does not reduce merely to polemics, based on War and Power (a Political-Historical discourse) or Justice and Right (Philosophical- Juridical discourse) (PPP: pp. 111-114; Pref.: p. 203; SKP: p. 342; SP: pp. 340- 342); that only through reciprocal discussion can one elucidate cultural experience, transformation, and changes of oneself (PPP: p. 111); the necessity of a relation with the ‘other’ in order to practice self-formation (HSS: p. 97); a contrast between Spirituality and Philosophy as alternate ways of experiencing knowledge (ECSPF: p. 294; OGE: pp. 278-280; HS: pp. 15-19); and finally a full frontal attack on the intelligibility and stakes of accepting a philosophy which declares that the Subject can exist as distinct and unified personality residing outside, prior, or before the field of cultural experience (SP: pp. 330- 332, 335- 336) .

<sup>121</sup> SKP: p. 356. This implies that relations are the first features of reality, and that they subsists the first, basic aspect in the field of our cultural experience.

<sup>122</sup> SP: pp. 342-343, 345, 347.

<sup>123</sup> ECSPF: pp. 283, 291- 93, 298. Again relations are imagined as what is first, prior, necessary, and basic for the possibility of any cultural existence and experience.

considerably impoverished. Society and the institutions which frame it have limited the possibility of relationships because a rich relational world would be very complex to manage. We should fight against the impoverishment of the relational fabric.”<sup>124</sup> The last passage we will cite is found in FWL where he states that, “we have to dig deeply to show how things have been historically contingent for such and such a reason, intelligible and not necessary. We must make the intelligible appear against a background of emptiness [relations] and deny its necessity. We must think that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces.”<sup>125</sup> Hopefully via these four statements, we can assume that Foucault continues to operate upon a philosophical vision that is grounded upon a relational ontology, or minimally that he imagines ‘relations’ as taking precedence over ‘things’.

## **2. Criteria #2**<sup>126</sup>

It can also be shown that Foucault retains the notion that the things we recognize as existent within our cultural worlds are fundamentally based on the prior, immanent, dynamic relations. In other words, he does not waver from his idea that these basic, primitive, vital, productive force relations are fundamentally responsible for the formation, composition, establishment, and alteration of any and all of the features found

---

<sup>124</sup> STSW: pp. 158-160. Again, this reveals that relations exist prior to any cultural institutions present now within our cultural environ. Institutions use these relations as which the bedrock, grounds, or framework to be constructed or established. Cf., SPPID: pp. 168- 170.

<sup>125</sup> Friendship 139-140. Again this suggests that if we begin with relations then we can explain the particular cultural and historical structures formed by the people experiencing and residing within them.

<sup>126</sup> Our next section which offers three analytical models for how ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ produce our cultural worlds, should be read as an extension of this demonstration. We are here only showing that he accepts the criteria on principle, the next will explain how this operates.

within our cultural existence. Again, this will be demonstrated via statements made by Foucault during this period.

First of all, there should be no doubt that Foucault still conceives these relations as completely responsible for the manufacture of all the things found in our cultural worlds. In Post he states that “these relations exert on each other through the whole social world, being what in fact constitutes what we consider to exist as the fundamental and determining elements”.<sup>127</sup> This statement should be considered in association with his argument in SP where he demands that we begin our cultural analyses not from the point of view of institutions which might already exist, but rather and conversely to inquire from the perspective of these primitive relations so that we can understand how these seemingly elemental institutions might have been first formed and developed.”<sup>128</sup> Lastly in WC he explains that he is “fundamentally opposed to an investigation which begins with a first, ideal, and a-historic genesis, and rather he wants to investigate how our cultural worlds are born as effects given these primary relations”.<sup>129</sup> Hopefully these statements are strong enough on their own to allow us to move to our next section, which will attempt to articulate three of the (many) models Foucault offers during this later period to explain how this prior, relational dynamic can be understood as completely responsible for the total production of all of our cultural reality.

---

<sup>127</sup> Post: pp. 444, 451.

<sup>128</sup> SP: pp. 327, 329, 343, 345.

<sup>129</sup> WC: p. 57. Cf., WE: 317- 318.

## H. Three analytical models that attempt to explain how ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ form our cultural worlds<sup>130</sup>

We have shown that it is plausible to read Foucault as utilizing a worldview which accepts our first claim: that relations exist as the first and foremost principle of reality; and our second claim: that these relations act as the foundational base, the elementary logic, and the transformative dynamic which operates behind, through, and amidst all aspects of cultural existence. Now we can turn to three of the (many) models which Foucault offers during this period to aide our imagination in trying to conceptualize how this particular form of cultural production might operate. Very importantly, it is during this later period that he further clarifies what he envisions these primitive, multiple relations might consist of, and in turn offers a number of models which by themselves and in conjunction with each other aide in explaining how a world first inhabited by ‘Relations’, ‘Dynamics’, and a relationality can be imagined as able to produce the things which we find resident within our cultural realities. This chapter will conclude with three models articulated by Foucault to account for this process of cultural production: a micro-analysis which identifies the differential types of relations that intertwine together in

---

<sup>130</sup> Two other important models M. Foucault offers to explain this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model of cultural production are the ‘Techniques of the Self’ (OGE: p. 253; Post: p. 442; Gros: p. 523; Tech: pp. 224, 228; PT: pp. 403- 404; ST: pp. 87- 89) and the ‘Processes of Governmentality’ (ECSPF: pp. 284, 298- 300; Pref.: pp. 203- 204; SCSA pp. 147- 148; SPPID: pp. 167- 169; Tech: p. 224; SP: pp. 340- 348; ST: p. 88. The reason this thesis has not used either model in this demonstration is because they both employ a Foucauldian notion of the self, and this philosophical account will not be discussed until our fourth chapter. At this point we are still trying to cast the ‘metaphysics’ of Foucault in order to understand what a self or any other thing might consist of or amount to given a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ world. The hope by doing this is to attempt not to import the normalized depiction of ‘who we are’- the Subject- into his model. In short it is to follow Foucault’s own lead in reference to the importance of analyzing the knowledge/power relations of a field in order to better to be able to situate the practices of the self in its relation to itself, to others, and in terms of the culture of truth it is embedded in, produced by, inflect, and transform, ECSPF: p. 290. In sum, it is necessary to first explain the culturally modulated relational undergirth that frames and forms structures like the self, in order to second explain how the self is able to participate in this process of cultural or general self-constitution, as well as inflection, modulation, and transformation.

order to produce the various and distinct things found in our social reality; a macro-analysis which discusses our under-arching, relational world as a constant dynamic of mutually constituting subjectivation and objectivation processes; and finally a political analysis which couches these practices of cultural production via the concepts of Freedom, Domination, and Resistance.

### **1. A micro-analysis**

Our first model, one which Foucault formulates in a variety of different ways throughout his later works, is a micro-analysis which attempts to explain the distinct way that any feature found in our cultural world has been specifically constituted and clarified. Foucault asks us to conceptualize this first relationality as falling into, housing, or being analytically reducible to three basic types or relational patterns: relations of knowledge, relations of power, and relations of the self<sup>131</sup>.

The idea is that each offers, but necessarily only in conjunction and in interrelation with others, the basic content (knowledge/logic), the structure or definition (power/physics), and the contextual stance (self/ethic) which any feature or aspect of cultural reality may bear, express, or represent. For Foucault, it is these three differentiated relational strands which are conceptualized as the relational elements which intertwine together in order to produce on the one hand the ‘fields of experience’ that

---

<sup>131</sup> Foucault explains the production of the world via these three relational categories in many places in his later work: UPL: pp. 3-6; ECSPF: pp. 289-290, 296; PPP: pp. 116-117; Pref.: pp. 199-201; WC: pp. 32, 47, 52; WE: p. 318; AE: p. 248; CT: pp. 250, 265; RM: p. 243; Post: pp. 444, 452; Gros: p. 523; Tech: p. 225; PT: p. 404; SP: pp. 326-327; ST: p. 88.

attempt to make sense of the worlds they inhabit, and the specific ‘objects of knowledge’ which are in turn recognized as the distinct features found within that cultural realm<sup>132</sup>.

To restate this a little differently, this relational under-gird imagined as running beneath, behind, and through all things, can be isolated as three distinct sets or species of differentiated relations operating together. These three relational forms are envisioned as coming together and combining in multiple, particular ways, and it is via this process that the distinct, unique, and specific style of self-identity, awareness, and constitution that any group of people or individual utilizes as the basic cognitive framework from which to imagine how their cultural world is produced, as well as the idiosyncratic structures envisioned as the basic features, fixtures, or units found amidst this existence<sup>133</sup>.

Before moving on to sketch out our next model, this thesis would like to make clear that these basic relational types should not be considered Foucault’s *nouveau*, replacement, a-historical, foundational elements upon which everything else will be solidly built. This cannot be so for three reasons. First, these strands of relational reality must be understood as relations unto themselves (and so not as fundamentally solidified unities), second they can only ever be understood in relation to each other (and so not as independent entities), and last they are only utilized by Foucault as nominal or provisional markers in order to make sense of how things are produced and altered in our cultural world given a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ worldview. In short, they must not be conceptualized as anything other than the working operators or contingent relational axes

---

<sup>132</sup> UPL 3-7 these relations form experiences such as of the subject; in SP: pp. 326- 327 these relations form the objects of our world; and in ECSPF: p. 300, Pref.: p. 203; and WE: p. 317 able to produce both sides together.

<sup>133</sup> This will be sketched with a little more detail in our third model, see pp. 72- 75.

from which Foucault will attempt to analyze the specific way the things within our particular cultural world has been produced and developed<sup>134</sup>.

## 2. A macro-analysis

Foucault also offers a more macro or holistic account to explain how an under-arching relationality can be imagined as responsible for the formation of both ourselves and our cultural worlds. According to this schema, all cultural reality can be envisioned as contained within a singular, mutually constituting, reciprocal dynamic, which constantly works to re-produce and rearrange all features of society. Foucault names this all-inclusive system of syncopated cultural production ‘the dual processes of subjectivation and objectivation’<sup>135</sup>.

The most developed discussion of this macro-account occurs in his self-written dictionary entry under the pseudo-nom Maurice Florence<sup>136</sup>. Here Foucault summarizes his philosophical enterprise as an inflection of the Kantian critical project, although one which will instead attempt to “analyze the conditions in which certain relations between

---

<sup>134</sup> In other words, these three aspects should be seen as nominal and provisional descriptions of these relations, and should also be understood as an account which is indigenous to the mentality of M. Foucault himself as he was embedded within the relations which made up the cultural, historical, and political reality which existed for a French academic in the 70’s. These three relations then, by no means should be envisioned as universal markers which can authoritatively explain cultural production as it occurs in all worlds.

<sup>135</sup> Obviously this is a model which accepts the existence of ‘Subjects’ and ‘Objects’, and so accepts Modern language, Modern mentalities, and Modern structures. Of course this is not a culturally sensitive description of how these dual and mutual dynamics might operate for other groups throughout the world. Yet, the idea of ‘selfivation’ processes does not capture on its own the importance of what might be considered for our thought two sides of the same equation both operating in perfect unison and syncopated reciprocity. We will retain this description and language for this exercise, but emphatically state that it is not a model which truly occurs anywhere else but within cultures which recognize themselves as Modern, and are constituted by a ‘Subject/Object’ distinction and opposition.

<sup>136</sup> MF: pp. 459- 463. See also UPL: p. 13; ECSPF: pp. 281- 282, 290- 291, 294; PPP: pp. 116- 117; WE: pp. 315- 316; AE: p. 50; CT: p. 258; RM: p. 243; OGE: pp. 261, 274- 280; Post: pp. 443- 445; IA: pp. 399; HS: pp. 14-19, 25- 29, 189- 192; Gros: p. 522; Han: pp. 176-178, 205; Tech: p. 225; PT: pp. 403- 404; ST: p. 87.

subject and object as they form and modify each other to be constitutive of a type of knowledge, or in other words to trace the historical relations between the processes of subjectivation and objectivation.”<sup>137</sup>. In other words he hopes to employ a methodology whereby he can “analyze the conditions under which subject and object are formed and modify each other”, on the one hand “determining what the subject must be”, and on the other “determining under what conditions something can be considered an object of knowledge”.<sup>138</sup> Thus, his self-stated goal is to open up an analysis so that we can understand how the “subject and object form and transform themselves in relation to each other and are constituted under simultaneous conditions, and since both are constantly modified in relation to each other, the whole field of experience is modified as well”.<sup>139</sup>

The important point to stress with this macro-model is that these processes of “objectivation and subjectivation are not independent of each other but in fact mutually develop each other through their fundamental interconnection.... and develop in reciprocal relation to the changes of the other”<sup>140</sup>. Thus from this macro-perspective, the world can be imagined as a singular mobile dynamic and as a total relational interconnection, which in turn demands that every single cultural feature, or in other words both the ‘objects of knowledge’ and the ‘subjects which strive to know’, must be understood as constantly inflecting, modifying, and transforming not only each other, but also everything else altogether within a perfect and complete syncopation. In short and again, this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model demonstrates that the whole field of

---

<sup>137</sup> This is considered by Foucault to be a search for the conditions of the historical a priori, but (of course) not the transcendental a priori (Han: pp. 176; WE: p. 315).

<sup>138</sup> MF: pp. 459- 460.

<sup>139</sup> Han: p. 205.

<sup>140</sup> Han: p. 177.

possible experiences, as well as the entire cultural world which we inhabit, are constantly being altered and rearranged in an isomorphic proportion to the changes which are occurring to everything else.

This thesis believes that there are two important implications which arise given the acceptance of a worldview based on the complete mutuality of these dual, dynamic processes. First, any attempt to frame any investigation which privileges one side of these conjoined processes as paramount over the other must be seen as biased and myopic<sup>141</sup>. Second, given that no moment of rest, gap, or separation could ever be understood to obtain given this always changing, mobile dynamic, then it also follows that no first fixed point, pre-established existential feature, or basic axiomatic purchase could ever be found which could serve as the assured, fundamental, or standardized fount from which to embark on any authoritative investigation into our (or any other) cultural existence or any other feature found in our social world<sup>142</sup>.

### **3. A political analysis**

So far we have shown that Foucault utilizes a worldview which prioritizes and gives precedence to ‘Dynamics’ and ‘Relations’ before registering the existence of any consolidated, solidified, or clarified units or thing. We have also articulated two models

---

<sup>141</sup> Importantly this model demands that any analysis which begins with an epistemological stance, the prevalent way to couch political discussions, is a philosophical approach which devalues, hides, erases, and occludes the metaphysical contextualization that allows these epistemological issues to even arise, be acknowledged, or be considered meaningful. Of course this does not mean that we should instead begin our conversations with an over-arching metaphysical account. Rather both sides should be seen as working in concert to produce the problems and conditions of each other, but in a dual, syncopated, and reciprocal dynamic.

<sup>142</sup> Hopefully with this model, it can already be seen the importance that notion ‘Governmentality’ brings with it if all sides of our cultural equation are mutually constituting and transforming everything else in relation to the changes that are occurring with, to, and via all others. Again, we must leave this model to the side until the notion of the self in the Foucauldian world is introduced, so as not to wrongfully apply the notion of the Subject to this worldview of cultural production and its practices of self-awareness and constitution.

offered by Foucault which can aid us in imagining how these ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ can be conceptualized as responsible for the formation of ‘ourselves’ and the ‘things’ we recognize as resident within our cultural worlds. Still, two considerations linger: first, is a demand for more explanation as to the physics (and not just the logic) pertaining to this model of cultural production; and second some discussion should be offered as to the extent to which the cultural or individual self plays a role in this process of cultural production, especially if they are understood as secondary, provisional, and manufactured artifacts, or just like anything else found within our social world. This thesis believes our third model is very useful for exploring both these issues since it frames this under-arching relational dynamic through a political voice utilizing concepts such as Freedom, Resistance, and Domination. Thus, our last model will directly address the physics involved in this relational style of cultural production, and it is this model which should be kept in mind in our fourth chapter which will explain how the self, whether at the cultural or individual level, does act as an important, integral, and necessary feature in this cultural practice of relational self, group, and social constitution.

So, if we accept that it is both plausible and intelligible to initiate our ontological imagination with an acceptance that our cultural existence is based on and constituted by under-arching, immanent, dynamic relations<sup>143</sup>, then we can show how notions like

---

<sup>143</sup> This would entail accepting that existence can begin with, operate through, and exist within this under-girth of relationality. Relations can not be considered something merely supplemental to society, and instead must be conceptualized as rooted deep within the very nexus of cultural and social life. Relations must be seen as flowing throughout all of social reality, interrelating and interconnecting all things together.

We must also take seriously Foucault’s immanently charged micro-analysis which explains that all the features found residing within our (any?) cultural world are manufactured and produced into the specified forms we recognize via the particular way the three previously spoken differentiated relational types are intertwined, weaved together and consolidated. All \ features ever found in our (any?) cultural milieu are

Freedom, Resistance, and States of Domination can be included in this particular discussion about cultural formation and re-production. We have already discussed that this under-arching relationality must be envisioned as naturally dynamic, flexible, and transformable. Now, in accordance with the prevailing logic about physics offered by our culture, anything which is conceptualized as able to function, operate, or transform is something which requires 'Freedom' in order to do so. By implication, our 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology also needs Freedom as a necessary and fundamental ingredient for the very possibility that any change, mobility, or alteration could ever occur upon this model of our cultural reality. Foucault is very explicit on this point: Freedom acts as the ontological basis, permanent support, and very precondition for both the existence and usage of relations in our cultural world<sup>144</sup>. In short and to be crystal clear, this dynamic, relational under-gird requires Freedom at the ontological level in order to be able to form and shape our cultural worlds.

Yet, for Foucault this requirement of Freedom for the operation of our relationality or relations must at the same time be understood as a limiting condition. What is meant by this is that for Foucault it would be absolutely impossible for any cultural system to exist which could be imagined as operating in a way that could be considered completely open

---

now understood as idiosyncratic expressions which have concocted and consolidated due to the unique way these three basic relational strands have been combined or composed.

Lastly, our macro-analysis must also be admitted, one which imagines all of cultural reality as a singular, ceaseless, reciprocal, mutually constituting relational dynamic, a process which constantly inflects, rearranges, and redistributes both the 'objective' and 'subjective' aspects of our cultural fields in perfect syncopation. These relations must be seen as a continuous, mobile, reversible, fluid, supple, modifiable, never fixed, transformable field of dynamics, something which constantly inter-connects, interweaves, and interrelates things together in a conjoined, but seamless process. To accept the 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology this thesis is imputing to Foucault would imagine that every aspect found residing within our (any?) cultural world is, on the one hand fundamentally based on and produced by this prior relationality and its relations, and on the other caught up within a constant, mutual, syncopated, reciprocal dynamic where the changes one thing undergoes completely and totally affects and transforms everything else.

<sup>144</sup> ECSPF: pp. 283- 284, 292- 293, 298- 300; SPPID: pp. 167; OS: p. 324. Cf., IA: pp. 397, 399; Post: p. 449; HS: p. 424; SP: pp. 340, 342- 343, 346; SPK: p. 355.

or totally free<sup>145</sup>. This is because a ‘Purely Free’ relational world would be one where no cultural forms have yet been produced or established. In other words, in a reality of complete flux and total dynamics no social features would yet have been constituted, or clarified, or distinguished. To state this differently, a cultural reality subsisting in this way would be one where nothing has yet been defined or differentiated, and so without, on the one hand any entities attempting to understand the field in which they inhabit, and on the other any cultural furniture for them to recognize and reflect upon.

This thesis needs to quickly emphasize two key implications about culture which are enabled given this reflection on the impossibility of a completely open or ‘Purely Free’ ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology. First of all the usual political demand that we strive to eradicate every single possible type of cultural domination or social restriction in order to enter into a world of Pure Freedom and perfect liberty on this model appears to be a naïve, misguided, idealistic, and potentially dangerous call to instill into reality an impossible philosophical utopia<sup>146</sup>. Such a traditional political agenda is one which completely avoids the question of how we as a culture use our Freedom to manufacture our social worlds<sup>147</sup>, and instead offers a final solution which is based on a predetermined optimistic vision which will only necessitate its own guaranteed futility. Second, Freedom (and so also relations) must now be envisioned as the basic substratum upon which all cultural aspects and social structures are based on. Thus, in complete and total

---

<sup>145</sup> ECSPF: pp. 283- 284; PE: pp. 378- 379; ISR: pp. 122- 123; SCSA: pp. 147- 148. Cf., ECSPF: pp. 291- 293, 298- 299; IA: p. 399; SPPID: pp. 167- 170; SP: 341- 343; STSW: 158- 160.

<sup>146</sup> Thus to think that Power and Freedom exist in opposition- that more Power = less Freedom and that more Freedom = less Power- is fundamentally missing the philosophical point of this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model. ECSPF: p. 298; SP: p. 343; SPPID: p. 167. See also, ECSPF: 283- 284, 291, 292; SCSA: pp. 147- 148; Tech: p. 225.

<sup>147</sup> SPPID: pp. 167- 168; SCSA: 147- 148. Cf., ECSPF: pp. 282- 284, 292; Post: pp. 450- 452; IA: p. 399; RS: p. 372; SP: pp. 338; STSW: p. 158.

inversion to the way we normally conceptualize our reality, Freedom no longer is imagined as a possession which is held, taken away, or alienated by individuals or things, but instead Freedom (and so also relations) is nominated as the basis or groundwork upon which all things reside. In short, all cultural features must now be envisioned as a mode or property of Freedom and relations<sup>148</sup>.

Thus, if it can be granted that: this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology can be considered philosophically acceptable; a world of Pure Freedom or completely open relations is understood as untenable; we do perceive (at least according to our normalized imagination) a number of different types of cultural worlds amidst our reality; we recognize many particular social structures, aspects, and features as resident within any one of them, then it is possible that all these aspects of cultural production can be attributed to the disparate ways that these different, multiple, specific ways relations and our basic relationality have been first conceptualized, and then used, intertwined, and manipulated together in order to form our cultural worlds<sup>149</sup>. If it is also admitted that no singular-set of relational patterns must pre-exist which all cultures must display or follow, then it also follows that is completely possible to assert that the many differences existing within and between cultures can be attributed to the particular ways which the various relations underpinning social life have been culturally conceived, arranged, patterned, organized, and structured by those people<sup>150</sup>. Therefore, based solely upon this

---

<sup>148</sup> ECSPF: pp. 282- 284, 291, 293; POST: p. 450; SP: pp. 342, 343, 345.

<sup>149</sup> See the first and second models, pp. 64- 69.

<sup>150</sup> This worldview can not accept any a-historical historical trajectory or ideal evolutionary sequence. This is because there is no initial, first purchase to embark from or final, eschatological point to move towards (WE: p. 304- 305; Pref.: pp. 201- 202; Post: pp. 438- 439, 442- 443, 445; IA: pp. 397, 399; RS: p. 368; Gros: pp. 525- 526; SCSA: p. 154.

relational perspective, the distinct and particular ways cultures are formed; the idiosyncratic features, notions, institutions, and facts produced inside any one of them; and the differentiated and distinguished units or things recognized as socially existent, can all be imagined as having been manufactured and specifically altered according to how the dynamic relations underpinning cultural life have been first imagined and then intertwined and consolidated. First we will reintroduce the relational logic which Foucault offers to explain this unique style of cultural production in terms of the notions relations of knowledge, power, and the self, and the concept of simultaneous and syncopated reciprocal and mutually influencing ‘subjectivation’ and ‘objectivation dynamics’<sup>151</sup>. We will then use the same relational metaphors and elements to explain the physics of this Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model.

So to quickly recap, according to Foucault social formations found in our cultural worlds can be conceptualized as produced or manufactured when the inherently unfixed, undifferentiated, mobile, and modifiable relationality and its many quasi-differentiated relational strands begins to be intertwined, conjoined, and fixed together<sup>152</sup>. This is explained by Foucault as a dual process, where on the one hand the content which any of these single relational strands individually bares, starts to be transmitted, shared, and reinforced in relation with the others which have also been selected for mutual cultural assemblage. It is this which practice of associative relational patterning which produces the basic, elemental, and provisional structures that we recognize as distinct forms of quasi-codified cultural reality (Knowledge/Logic). However and simultaneously, as this

---

<sup>151</sup> Again admittedly we have not canvassed the notion of relations to the self. This will be explored in our fourth chapter. A more in depth reading would explain how knowledge and power relations act as a foothold, instrument, or technique from which to study the relation between the self and truth (or general cultural formation and reproduction) in a clearer fashion (ECSPF: p. 290). Cf. pp. 64- 69.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

same constellation of knowledge-relations nominated for mutual cultural structuration becomes more intertwined, consolidated, and collectively constrained, much of the dynamic, capacity, or power for future change, transformation, or rearrangement is also diminished and removed (Power/Physic). We also know that this occurs to all things at once in concert with the movement of everything else (subjectivation/objectivation).

Eventually these relations of Knowledge/Power become relatively immobilized, consolidated, and frozen together via this process of intra-fusion, something which crystallizes these relations into more or less delimited ‘blocks’ of relationality<sup>153</sup>. As this process continues further they begin to become more and more stabilized into calibrated equilibriums of mutual, relational adjustments, which in turn structures and clarifies them into the distinct and unique forms, aspects, and structures we come to identify and celebrate as the social features inhabiting our cultural reality. Upon this model of reality, it is this syncopated cultural practice of relational conceptualization, assemblage, and calibration, whereby relations of Knowledge and relations of Power are interrelated together in such particular, rigid, solidified and consolidated ways that social features are produced to appear as the existent entities inhabiting our particular cultural and social reality<sup>154</sup>.

---

<sup>153</sup> ECSPF: pp. 283- 284; 348; SP: pp. 338- 339; STSW: pp. 158- 160; UPL: pp. 4-6; ECSPF: pp. 292- 293; Pref.: p. 203; IA: p. 399; SPPID: pp. 167, 169; SP: p. 348; SPK: p. 361.

<sup>154</sup> To rephrase: from a content point of view, these relations are understood to interconnect together in various ways, which allows them to share, exchange, transmit, and transfer the information each one carries to one another. This process of assemblage works to propel, reinforce, and support some combinations together, while at the same time repelling, annulling, canceling, eradicating, and interfering the possible conjunction of others. It is this selection mechanism which produces the distinct combinations of loosely codified knowledge we understand as our cultural logic structures. At the same time, and now viewing this from a dynamic angle: the same relations selected to take part in these knowledge constellations also have their mobility delimited, forcing them to coalesce together into more obvious and distinguished patterns, sequences, or blocks.

In other words, this cultural practice of intertwining, calibrating, and stabilizing Power/Knowledge relations in order to form the features found in our cultural worlds can also be explained in terms of the different ways Freedom is utilized<sup>155</sup>. As stated, cultural production situated upon this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model is one which privileges Freedom as the main modulator as to how these relations will be arranged into the specific patterns and distinct, consolidated forms which any culture discloses. In other words, the cultural practice of relational constraint and solidification can also be explained as the process of delimiting the amount of ‘Freedom’ or ‘play’ existing within the relational system at large; within each particularized and denoted relational strand; and amongst the relations which have been mutual interrelated with one another. In short, by restricting the Freedom underpinning our cultural realities, our relationality is consolidated, intertwined, and immobilized into defined, equilibrated, and adjusted relational patterns which in turn produce our cultural worlds and its associated social features. Thus, this process of relational solidification and crystallization to produce the particular, distinctive, unique cultural worlds which we realize, recognize, and inhabit, can also be understood as the restriction of our Freedom in distinct and defined ways.

Now, according to Foucault, it is even possible to imagine that over time these relational inter-combinations or restrictions of Freedom can turn into ‘rigid strongholds’ residing over large parts of our relational fabric or cultural world<sup>156</sup>. This is understood to occur if all of the dynamism and mobility which was initially allocated to the relational/cultural system in general or to any of the relational strands form any distinct

---

<sup>155</sup> See footnote 147.

<sup>156</sup> ECSPF: pp. 292- 293; PPP: pp. 112- 113, 116- 117; SCSA: pp. 147- 148; SPPID: pp. 169- 170; SP: pp. 346- 348; STSW: pp. 158- 160.

social feature have been completely dissipated. On the one hand this process produces clearly decanted and fully articulated cultural regimes with its many associated solidified features, aspects, practices, and disciplines; yet on the other hand it also makes any future changes, alterations, or transformations for these now completely immobilized relational-assemblages almost impossible. For Foucault this relational or Freedom end-point is where we reach our other limit condition called ‘States of Domination’<sup>157</sup>.

According to Foucault a ‘State of Domination’ would obtain in our relationality or Freedom if the inherently open, fluid, free, and dynamic interplay which exists within the system at large or amongst any of the relational strands in relation to themselves and others, has become completely fixed, blocked, and structured. According to Foucault, ‘States of Domination’ are what work to close off all possibilities, make things passive, and force, bend, and break things<sup>158</sup>, and that “to exist in an exhaustive State of Domination is to exist in slavery or determination”<sup>159</sup>. Thus, when social features are produced in this completely restricted way, the price paid for this type of composition is that the very relationality or Freedom which is imagined to underpin our cultural reality becomes completely undermined, totally destroyed, and easily forgotten<sup>160</sup>. In short, if all the freedom initially offered our relationality was ever totally eradicated, then according to this story the structures which would arise in our social worlds would appear as totally solidified, calcified, and concretized units of existence, things with little to no

---

<sup>157</sup> ECSPF: pp. 283- 284, 292- 293, 299; WE: pp. 315- 316; PE: p. 378; SPPID: pp. 167- 170; SP: pp. 340- 343; 346; SPKP: p. 354; OS: p. 324.

<sup>158</sup> ECSPF: p. 292; SP: pp. 340- 342.

<sup>159</sup> ECSPF: pp. 292; SP: p. 342; OS: p. 324.

<sup>160</sup> ECSPF: p. 292; PE: p. 378; SP: pp. 342; 347- 348; STSW: p. 158; OS: p. 324.

capacity for any future modifications, transformations, or developments<sup>161</sup>. Foucault even claims that these States of Domination can be imagined as gripping the very relational fabric of our society, and so appearing as long-standing structures, institutions, concepts, and facts which seem completely impervious to any and all change<sup>162</sup>.

Yet, according to Foucault, no cultural world, nor any of the social features ever found within it, could ever actually be imagined as having totally entered into a state where the dynamic or Freedom within any or all of the relations has become completely and permanently closed, frozen, or eviscerated<sup>163</sup>. Absolutely speaking, it would not be possible for a 'State of Domination' to ever be fully produced or culturally sustained for very long, which is why 'States of Domination' must also be conceived of as limit conditions. Even in what might appear as the most determined or limited of cultural situations there will still always remain open and available the possibility of multiple strategies and options to change one's situation<sup>164</sup>. There is no escape from these structures, yet there is always the possibility for transformation.

Now addition to the idea that 'States of Domination' can not ever be fully achieved or realized in cultural reality since they reside as the unreachable limit-conditions framing one pole or axis of this relational and dynamic system, is the idea Foucault puts forward that Resistance must be imagined as a necessary property of Freedom (and thus of

---

<sup>161</sup> ECSPF: pp. 283, 292; PE: p. 378; SP: pp. 340- 342, 345, 347.

<sup>162</sup> SP: pp. 347- 348.

<sup>163</sup> ECSPF: pp. 283- 284, 292- 293, 300; IA: pp. 398- 399; SPPID: p. 167; SP: pp. 341- 342, 343, 346- 347; STSW: p. 160; OS: p. 324.

<sup>164</sup> ECSPF: pp. 292- 293; IA: p. 397; RS: p. 372; SCSA: pp. 147- 148, 154; SPPID: pp. 167- 168; SP: pp. 342, 346, 347; SPK: pp. 354; FWL: p. 137; STSW: pp. 158, 160.

Relations) at the ontological level<sup>165</sup>. For Foucault, resistance must not be envisioned as a feature added on as a supplementary consideration, but instead should be imagined as a fundamental requirement for any model which attempts to explain cultural production via the restriction of Freedom or the intertwining and solidification of relations and dynamics. Resistance here is characterized as a feature which ‘bears a total recalcitrance’ against the immobilization of the relationality found within this system (again naturally ruling out the absolute production of any ‘States of Domination’ within our cultural world). Resistance then must be imagined as the basic stimuli which constantly works to excite, induce, and provoke the under-arching relational dynamic to always remain susceptible to change, and so according to Foucault, Resistance must be understood as the very key to the possibility of this worldview, since it is the feature which guarantees the constant mobility of this under-riding relational dynamic and the exercise of Freedom<sup>166</sup>.

Therefore, although it may appear as if these relations are being fused and structured together in such a way that they could be imagined as constantly being driven towards realizing ‘States of Domination’; at the same time and naturally built into this system is an adequate counter-weight called Resistance which ensures that no cultural aspect could ever be fundamentally structured into this immobilized end-point. Obviously, this ontological feature can now be cited as the main principle which explains: why different cultural groups have not all been perfectly disciplined to appear exactly in the same way; why differences obtain between similar features found in alternate cultural worlds; and

---

<sup>165</sup> SP: p. 342. Cf., ECSPF: pp. 292; WE: pp. 315- 316; IA: p. 397; SCSA: pp. 147- 148; SPPID: pp. 167- 168; SP: p. 341, 345, 347; SPK: p. 354; STSW: p. 158; OS: p. 324.

<sup>166</sup> SPPID: pp. 167- 168; SP: pp. 342, 346.

why a complete uniformity never encodes itself completely for the same things found within any single one of them.

We will end by offering a quick summary of this third model that attempts to explain the practices of cultural formation and re-production basing itself on a Foucauldian or ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology and using political terms such as Freedom, Resistance, and ‘States of Domination’. This model claims Freedom is a necessary ingredient for the very possibility that this relational dynamic could operate, or that any of the relational strands contained within it could ever be intertwined and conjoined together to form our cultural realities. However, it also argues that a world of completely open relational dynamics or a ‘Purely Free’ cultural is untenable and only exists as a limit, pole, or axis which frames one side of this model. Cultures are understood as formed and produced through the restriction of Freedom which has been described as the specific style of solidification which has been introduced into our backdrop of under-arching dynamic relations and relationality<sup>167</sup>. The opposing structural limitation for this world are titled ‘States of Domination’, and they are imagined as what would emerge in our cultural world if the Freedom within the system, within any of the relations themselves, or within any aspect subsequently produced, was completely eradicated, formalized, or dissipated.

Therefore, a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology can be explained as a singular, under-arching, continuum which places absolute or ‘Pure Freedom’ as one impossible axis or extreme and structures ‘States of Domination’ as the other untenable counterpoint.

---

<sup>167</sup> Again, for this worldview the importance of the a notion like Governmentality cannot be understated (ECSPF: pp. 400).

Thus, different cultural worlds and their always changing social features are produced through the delimitation of the relations or restriction of Freedom existing along this continuum from almost unstructured cultural aspects (pure Freedom or open dynamic relationality) to completely immobilized, solidified forms and institutions (unchangeable States of Domination).

Freedom can be explained as existent within a culture to the extent that the relations which coalesce or consolidate together to produce the things we find in that environ are able to retain their fluidity, vibrancy, and openness for change; States of Domination are conceptualized as having been achieved if or when these structures which have been produced retain little to no Freedom or capacity for further change or alteration. Thus, it is the under-arching relationality and its relations which are to be considered as having Freedom (remaining fluid and open for change) or achieving States of Domination (fixed, frozen, and immobilized relational and dynamic states), and it is the amount, extent, and range of Freedom within the system which can be cited as the major factor which determines the direction, possibilities, and scope for all subsequent and further change, transformation, modification, and reproduction which could occur within our general cultural worlds or any particular social feature found therein.

Finally, Resistance has been cited as an aspect which necessarily exists within this system, acting as the dynamic feature which guarantees the constant and continuous mobility of these relations under-pinning our entire cultural world. It is this force which permanently provokes our general relationality, the relational strands, and the features produced by it, to remain as open, free, fluid as possible. In short, resistance is what ensures that these relational strands or our under-arching relationality can never be

intertwined, consolidated, or concretized together in such a totalized way that an absolute State of Domination could fundamentally emerge within any aspect of our cultural world.

In closing then, a political reading of this Foucauldian or 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' world is one which explains that our cultural world is produced through the restriction of Freedom or the delimitation and consolidation of relations and dynamics. Thus, cultures and the distinct features they exhibit are formed and established as the unique structures via three restrictions of our relational Freedom: firstly, in regards to the particular variety of relations available within any cultural realm or milieu; secondly due to the unique way any of the strands are composed and imagined as relations unto themselves; and lastly the specific way they are intertwined, interwoven, and interrelated together to form our social structures, entities, and things. As stated, when this process of selective solidification occurs, it is because the relations chosen to be involved begin to lose their impetus, and so the amount of play in the relationality or overall freedom in the system becomes downgraded and diminished. It is this process of cultural and relational restriction which patterns, solidifies, immobilizes, and establishes the various things in our worlds to appear as the distinct entities recognized in the specific ways that they are.

In sum, given a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology, one possible way to understand the relation between Freedom and Culture is as: the alternate ways the relations underpinning our cultural worlds have been first imagined and then limited, lessened, frozen, and constrained in relation to themselves and in conjunction with each other. It is

these restrictions which produce the cultural worlds we inhabit, as well as every single social feature which could ever be found therein<sup>168</sup>.

## I. Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to show that Foucault can be conceptualized as operating upon and within a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology, and that despite the many changes he makes to it, he can be seen as roughly employing the same worldview in both what is considered his middle and later periods. First, we canvassed the prevalent ways Foucault is conventionally understood in academic literature. Next, a fifth or our approach was offered. In turn, the two criteria this thesis believes Foucault must accept if he is to be recognized as employing this worldview were given and demonstrated. Lastly, three analytical models were articulated in order to explain how a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology can be imagined as responsible for producing, manufacturing, and transforming every aspect found in our cultural worlds.

The goal behind this endeavor which attempted to show that Foucault does utilize a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology, is to make the methodology which he uses to investigate our cultural milieus and its social features appear much more plausible, coherent, and also as able to deliver a powerful attack upon the traditional and normalized way we envision our basic reality. This discussion sets the agenda for our

---

<sup>168</sup> To repeat, cultural worlds are formed by the restriction of Freedom which exists within the under-girding relational field, within each relational strand, and in their interweaving of themselves in consociation with each other. It is the different ways they Freedom and Restriction of these ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ which forms what we imagine as our specific, particular, unique, distinct, differentiated, defined, and idiosyncratic cultural world; the social structures found within it; and the individual entities understood as its resident inhabitants.

next chapter, one which will discuss the different methodological insights made possible by either of our previously outlined ontological accounts.

## Chapter 3: From Ontology to Methodology

Introduction; Recap of the relationship previously outlined between cosmology, ontology, and methodology; Reconstruction of our ‘Foundational’ and ‘Atomic’ ontology, and the methodology enabled by this worldview; Reconstruction of our ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology, and the methodology enabled by this alternate or ‘Foucauldian’ worldview

### A. Introduction

This chapter has two basic goals it hopes to accomplish. The first is to further explicate the unilateral relationship which inheres between basic ontological positions and the methodologies or scientific regimes which are subsequently founded by them. As previously argued in chapter one, every single philosophical worldview must express an ontological standpoint, or in other words offer a statement about what will be considered to exist as a basic, preliminary, or elemental aspect of reality<sup>169</sup>. In turn, the authorized ways to garner knowledge, as well as the legitimate practices of interacting with the world, will both be completely based on and fully delineated by the particular way that the ontological field has been imagined and articulated.

Second, this chapter will attempt to show that the scientific regimes enabled by the two ontological visions previously outlined are not only very different models, but stand in

---

<sup>169</sup> As discussed in the first chapter, see pp. 8- 15.

antagonistic opposition towards each other<sup>170</sup>. Our first ontological schema, named here as a 'Foundational' and 'Atomic', initiates its philosophical imagination by declaring that a number of original, pre-defined, unified, self-contained entities, units, or things reside as the first and most basic elements of our cultural existence. Based on this distinct way of portraying reality, these primary, foundational, atomic units are nominated as the very first or initial features of all reality. Upon the acceptance of this, they can be considered universal, trans-cultural, de-contextual, a-historical axioms for investigation, and thus the guaranteed purchase from which to derive knowledge about the world.

Our counter-vision is obtained via a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology. Here every aspect of reality will be conceptualized as having been produced by, through, via, and within a prior, immanent, mobile relationality. This worldview enables a practitioner to imagine that any thing ever found within any cultural milieu exists as a secondary, manufactured, and constituted feature of existence, and so something which has been produced out of and by this under-arching relational dynamic. In turn and upon this stance, all aspects of cultural existence will now be envisioned as social and historical artifacts, and so as things which were developed by a distinct group of people, at a specific time and place, and for a very particular political purpose. It should be clear that these two methodological approaches stand in fundamental opposition towards each other. It should also be realized that these two alternate ways to imagine and investigate

---

<sup>170</sup> Usually Foucauldian thought tries to stress the agonistic relations between competing ideas, notions, or practices (Tech: p. 228; HS: pp. 2- 19, 189- 192; Gros: pp. 522- 523; SP: p. 32). This would describe the ideas as in 'contest' with each other, accentuating how either motivates itself and the other, through the reciprocal relation each has with itself and the other, in order to test their own limits to change and develop themselves. However, this thesis sees the relation between these two ways of envisioning our existence, as well as their associated methodologies as actually locked in a more antagonistic struggle. This is because neither hopes to push themselves or the other to find errors within their own discourses in order to improve themselves; rather each fundamentally attacks the logic, possibility, and intelligibility of the others very ability to coherently ground and articulate their vision of reality (PPP: pp. 111- 114).

our cultural reality are each considered possible, coherent, and legitimate only after the ontological worldview within which they are developed out of has first been accepted.

## **B. Recap of the relationship previously outlined between cosmology, ontology, and methodology**

We will begin by offering a quick summary of what has been previously discussed in order to couch the general theme of this third chapter. Our first chapter discussed the relation between Cosmology, Ontology, and Methodology<sup>171</sup>. In this thesis, Cosmology is understood as the story or narrative offered by any culture to describe how reality is conceptualized as having been originally established and ordered. Ontology in turn refers to the first and most basic existential constituents of such a reality, as well as the value any of the primary entities are given over secondary or derivative features of existence subsequently formed by them. Methodology attempts to capture in a word the particular practices, techniques, and standards which will be sanctioned as the legitimate and appropriate ways to interact within that world.

The first chapter also showed that a unidirectional relationship inheres between these three concepts, one in which the former creates the conditions which enable the very possibility and intelligibility of the latter. In other words, any particular cosmological account will produce, articulate, and establish a specific ontology. Again, given the specific ontology that this particular cosmology expresses, distinct and idiosyncratic scientific methodologies will be developed that will be seen to perfectly align with the

---

<sup>171</sup> Again, refer to pp. 8- 15.

way the world has already been conceived. Thus, once the world has been declared as existing in a certain way, this depiction will in turn direct and incline how scientific questions, problems, and assumptions will be framed, and naturally these will be perfectly coordinated to be completely congruent with the particular way reality has already been envisioned. In short, once a distinct ontology or worldview has been accepted as the groundwork for cultural reality, idiosyncratic scientific regimes will in turn be developed to act as the legitimate, authorized, and obligatory ways to garner knowledge and live in social relations. It is the latter relationship- the one between ontology and methodology- which this third chapter hopes to make clearer.

### **C. Reconstruction of our 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' ontology, and the methodology enabled by this worldview**

Our first chapter also discussed two alternate worldviews, each with very different cosmological, ontological, and methodological commitments. The first was described as a 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' ontology, and it was claimed that this is the prevalent way we understand the world in the academic disciplines of Philosophy and Political Science. The cosmology grounding this worldview is one which imagines the universe or (our) reality as having commenced all at once, at a one singular moment, and in a first, fundamental moment of eruption. According to this worldview it is impossible to

imagine a moment, space, time, or beginning that could ever be seen as existing prior to this first and exclusive alpha point<sup>172</sup>.

The ontology born out of this first emergence is one which recognizes reality as already and completely furnished with a number of fully-formed, pre-established things. On the one hand, each of these must be conceptualized as an original root or an initial constant, something which is imagined as residing in the very foundation or firmament of existence (Foundational). On the other, each of these first units of existence are also envisioned as a pre-determined, pre-individuated, fully defined, completely distinguished, self-contained, self-sufficient, atomized unit (Atomic)<sup>173</sup>.

Turning to method, obviously given that a ‘Foundational’ and ‘Atomic’ worldview is one where nothing is imagined to have existed prior to this first, eruptive moment that ushered into existence these many first, pre-fabricated, originary entities, then obviously it becomes both impossible and unintelligible to embark on any investigation which would inquire into: how (or why) these first entities were formulated in this unique way; what previous elements may have commingled together in order to concoct and produce this specific consolidation; and what other possibilities might have been available other than these first nominated unities.

Yet importantly, once these atomic, individuated units are considered to exist as the very first features or units of reality- and so as a-historical, foundational, fundamental,

---

<sup>172</sup> Upon this vision, space or ‘being’ is assumed to be the very first entity which enters into existence, immediately creates the philosophical impression that this thesis finds very problematic. If space is considered to enter into the world prior to relations, then this means that relations will only ever be recognized as a secondary or derivative feature of existence (and usually solely linked to temporal thinking). Second, ‘Being’ will now also be registered as pre-existing any notion of ‘Becoming’. This again will create the conditions for a hegemonic dialectic, one that this time demands that the world must be understood as either in a state of ‘Being’ or ‘Becoming’, again disqualifying the possibility of beginning with a first relationality.

<sup>173</sup> One could argue that this cosmology as a macro-ontological metaphor, for how ontology, since it is also imagined as a singular, self-contained, unique, pre-defined, individuated thing.

necessary, universal entities, residing without any origin- then these basic, chief, and elemental unities can be safely nominated as the fixed and grounded purchase upon which investigations into our world can be founded and guaranteed<sup>174</sup>. In other words, once these first aspects are postulated as the primary, necessary, and pre-ordained givens of (our) reality, then based solely on their pre-assertion and pre-acceptance, analyses can be inaugurated into what has transpired in the world since their introduction. Not only does this allow them to act as the organizing principles to implement an order, logic, rationality, and coherency onto our history<sup>175</sup>, but as soon as these entities are imagined to exist in this first, fixed, and universal way they can also be safely imagined as: the fundamental criteria by which to judge what phenomena should be selected (or excluded) for scientific comparison and classification; the ideal standard from which to critique all other possible ways of organizing and understanding the world<sup>176</sup>; the basic benchmark from which to judge the merits or drawbacks of any particular cultural norm or idiosyncrasy<sup>177</sup>.

Now, once this ontological vision has been thoroughly accepted, two methodological avenues are enabled that this worldview deems as most appropriate, accurate, and authoritative for investigating (our) existence. The first operates in imitation to the methods found in geometry, which argues that as soon as any first, axiomatic, or universal principles have been obtained, then upon this firm ground and fixed purchase

---

<sup>174</sup> UPL: pp. 4-6; ECSPF: pp. 289- 291; Pref.: pp. 200- 201; WE: pp. 313- 314, 315, 316- 318; AE: p. 51; OGE: 278- 280; MF: pp. 459- 461; Post: pp. 443, 451- 452; PE: p. 375; HS: 14- 19, 25- 29, 189- 192, 460- 461; Gros: pp. 522, 526; ST 87; Tech: p. 228; ST: p. 87.

<sup>175</sup> UPL: pp. 4- 6; Pref.: p. 200- 201; WE: pp. 304, 315- 316, 318; Post: pp. 434, 438- 439, 441, 445; RS: p. 368; Gros: pp. 523, 524- 525; PT: p. 402.

<sup>176</sup> WE: pp. 313- 314; OGE: p. 259.

<sup>177</sup> UPL: p. 21.

subsequent attempts can be made to discover what other latent truths may also be deduced from these first primitives or a prioris<sup>178</sup>. The logic of this method states that if the first principles or axioms are known to be universal, and if the steps moving from these first principles to the subsequently discovered things are themselves only necessary or mandatory derivations, then the things which are deduced from these prior, first axioms in this manner must also be considered universal as well. In short, once a worldview declares that first entities exist in this fixed, a-historical, and universal way, then solely by following the methods offered by geometry a practitioner can attempt to realize what also resides as a universal, absolute, and obligatory ramification of this first condition<sup>179</sup>.

The second path of discovery utilized by this worldview would be to follow these same preliminary steps (assume that these things are coherent, distinct, self-contained, first principles) but this time only investigate them in order to see what possible, contingent, and conditional knowledge can be derived given their supposition<sup>180</sup>. Again these necessary, axiomatic, first principles will be accepted as universal, obligatory, and fundamental, but this time instead of deducing the necessary implications which absolutely follow given their pre-existence, they will now be investigated only in order to discover what probable knowledge could be garnered given their pre-acceptance.

---

<sup>178</sup> UPL: pp. 28- 31; WE: p. 315; MF: p. 462; Tech: p. 224; HS: pp. 14- 19; 25- 289; 189- 192; 460- 462; SMBD: pp. 6-11, 27, 45- 46, 57, 110; SMBDS: pp. 59- 60.

<sup>179</sup> For example, once Descartes has established the veracity of the Cogito (Modern Subject of thought) he is able to prove the existence of God (!), as well as use this as the ground to deduce further guaranteed truth and knowledge about reality; similarly as soon as Hobbes initiates an account based on the 'First State of Nature' as the 'Original Homeland for Man', he is now able to deduce all the necessary steps required in order to enter into the conditions of Modern State Sovereignty, that sole political institution which can guarantee Security, Liberty, Order, Right, Justice, and Commonwealth for all.

<sup>180</sup> Post: pp. 429- 443; HS: pp. 14- 19, 460; SMBD: pp. 6-11, 27, 45- 46, 57, 110; SMBDS 59, 61- 63.

Once these two methods of discovery are coupled together, then a universal science can be founded, one which can declare: what aspects and facts of reality must be considered necessary and basic for all; what are only possible, yet still truthful features of the world, since they are based on the original axioms of existence, but do not necessarily directly follow directly from them; and finally what are obviously doubtable or ‘false’ claims to knowledge and experience, since they are considerations which are not at all based on this universal way of envisioning reality, and so by no means follow from this original position.

At this juncture, this thesis feels it must be stressed that the universal science discussed above is only made possible or considered acceptable after a Foundational, Atomic ontology has already been pre-supposed and pre-authorized as the basis of our reality. In other words, this particular methodology, one which we as a scientific community recognize as the most authoritative, intelligible and legitimate way to investigate and inquiry into our reality, is itself completely based on, totally enabled by, and thoroughly fabricated by the distinct cosmological narrative and unique ontological account which we have already pre-accepted.

Now before moving on to discuss the methodological implications offered by our counter or relational model, it is also important to make two notes about the rationality which is delivered via this traditional worldview and its account. First of all, we will discuss the a-historical, a-political, and a-cultural nature of this universal, foundational, and atomized account of our origins. Second, we will mention how this worldview

operates as a hegemonic and assimilative tool within our own cultural milieu, as well as how it can be cited as an instrument of colonialism when imposed on others.

We have already discussed how this specific type of origin story hides or occludes its own origins. As stated, there is no recognition of any time previous to this first, universal eruption, and so there is no need to inquire or discuss into other possibilities or realities other than explanation as to how the universe initially originated. Obviously this means that the type of history offered by this account is one which must be seen as 'idealized' or a-historical. To make this as plain as possible, although many historical insights might be discovered upon such a model, it is one which begins with a number of first, a-historical originary entities, and it is only based on these original primitives that any history is reflected upon and approached. In short, the only history that can be realized upon this model is the story of how these original units have interacted with each other over time. There is no ability to historicize or temporally examine the history of these first, initial units, since all of history originates and is inaugurated with them

Turning to the a-political nature of this story, once again as soon as a first, foundational, original moment is nominated for all of reality, then there can be no critical examination of the political rationale as to why the world has been declared to have been produced in this particular way. There is no discussion as to how any of the first entities could be recognized or imagined differently, nor is there any inquiry into why the world was manufactured in this pre-determined fashion. Of course there is much political discussion to be canvassed after these first, original entities have already been pre-

accepted<sup>181</sup>, however and again this is only after the first features have been pronounced. In short, politics only arises after the ‘political’ stage has been set, and so there is no political voice whatsoever as to why this initial condition was presented to us in this way—a major aspect for any serious consideration on the ‘Politics of Origins’ which does not merely reduce into a science of what has already been isolated as ‘The Political’.

Finally this worldview is inherently a-cultural even though it can be easily shown to be a narrative which is situated amongst a particular group of people at a specific moment in time. This is because this origin story offers a rational and philosophical account of what life must have universally been like prior to any existence of culture, society, or politics. It explains that all of reality arose all at once, and began with a number of pre-established, pre-individuated, atomic unities, each imagined as completely separated and totally distinguished from one another. Given this radical stance of parsed discretion, the issue to be explained is how these individuals were ever able to come together to form any semblance of culture or community. What must be stressed is that this a-cultural account of our origins is considered to be the universal story for ‘Mankind’, since this narrative attempts to discuss what the world was like in its origin or nascence, but not just for its own cultural community, but in fact for all of humanity. Yet and at the same time, this unique account completely masks its own cultural pretences, by arguing that it only strives to depict what life was like prior to any production of culture (especially its own!). In short, this account claims that culture is an upshot or secondary condition of this original moment, even though it is absolutely deeply rooted within the considerations on origins and possibilities of a particular and already instantiated culture.

---

<sup>181</sup> Such as what life was like in the State of Nature; How we leave this totalizing existential quagmire; how a Social Compact can be struck in this first situation; How much power the Sovereign gains at the expense of his Subjects; and whether we have the right to rebel against the State.

Secondly and as shown, there is great Power in capturing any aspect of reality under a universal formula. Once any phenomenon is realized in this highest and most overarching way, it must be recognized as something which is not only equally discernable and understandable for all people, but must be fundamentally applicable to each and to all. In other words, anything identified in this universal way must be considered an aspect of existence which all of humanity must recognize, implement, and comply with. In short, once something is articulated via this universal logic, then it quickly becomes a singular, obligatory, and necessary dictate for all people and at all times, allowing absolutely no lee-way for any personal idiosyncrasies or cultural variations on that matter.

Immediately the danger inherent to this particular way of imagining our existence should be recognized, and again it follows from the assumption of this universalized, a-historical, first starting-point. Even though a universal, a-historical, trans-cultural, and de-contextual first purchase would be one which has worked to overcome every single initial, preliminary, or original difference, it is only able to accomplish this by silencing and eradicating every other possible way that our world could be imagined. This is because this narrative claims that it has understood, captured, and articulated what the world was actually like at its first, alpha, or initial position. Thus, once this narrative is able to authoritatively claim that it has ascertained what reality was actually like in 'the beginning', then it can easily demand that every single inquiry and investigation must remain perfectly consistent with its universal and foundational vision.

Thus, once a universal narrative is declared as the sole account for all reality, logic dictates that it not only must be accepted by all, but that any other viewpoint must be

disqualified as antithetical to the proper way to view existence and the advancement of universal science and knowledge. Thus, this narrative and its associated methodology must be indicted as a hegemonic tool and as an assimilative technique to discipline our own community to envision reality in this singular and uniform way. Further, if this type of story is extended to the world community at large, given that this official version of reality is considered universal, then any detractors immediately reveal that they have not yet left their own cultural idiosyncrasies behind in order to rationally examine and conceptualize reality in a proper and 'scientific' manner.

In closing, although there is both great promise and danger in terms of the logic and rationality that such a philosophical project proposes, since on the one hand it allows for a universal vision under which a true, absolute, and definitive purchase for the advancement of knowledge can be obtained; yet on the other there is grave danger since it completely discounts any other way of seeing and examining our existence as irrational, inconsistent, and ungrounded ways to investigate and interact with reality. It does this by first demanding that it is the sole, singular, necessary, obligatory, and sacrosanct way to depict reality, and second by producing a number of existential features which are then nominated as the first, universal, a-historical, trans-cultural, de-contextual, foundational, atomic entities of existence. In turn, these are then utilized as the fixed, constant axioms upon which: latent truths can be deduced; further knowledge can be garnered; cultural standards can be universalized; and history can be imputed with a logical and linear procession. In short, it produces worldview which makes features of our culture appear as universal, singular, obligatory, and necessary, which in turn works

to disqualify, downgrade, and obliterate any other attempt to understand the world other than this way it is being described<sup>182</sup>.

#### **D. Reconstruction of our ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology, and the methodology enabled by this alternate or ‘Foucauldian’ worldview**

The first chapter also outlined a worldview which this thesis envisions as operating in complete opposition to the prevalent way we conceptualize, imagine, and represent our world. In this thesis it has been called a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology. To symmetrically mirror our last section, a relational cosmology would be one which imagines that our existence has always and eternally operated within, via, and through an under-arching, immanent, dynamic, pre-culturally defined relationality<sup>183</sup>. Thus, in contrast to a depiction of reality which portrays it as having commenced all at once in a first, singular, originary moment that ushered into existence all space and with it all time;

---

<sup>182</sup> A specific example of how this unique ontology enables a distinct scientific framework, one which is able to arrogate itself to make the claim that it is the sole, legitimate, way of understanding the world will be offered in the fourth chapter which discusses the notion of ‘Man’ which is captured by either worldview. However, a perfect example of this relation between ontology and methodology can be observed in Political Science and its use of ‘The State of Nature’ as the alpha and most primitive ontological purchase, from which to shows the necessity of a Social Contract agreed upon by the original inhabitants of this space in order to usher in both the possibility and actuality of the institution of the Modern State. By utilizing a ‘Foundational’ and ‘Atomic’ ontology, and by basing itself solely upon the characters and features offered in the initial set-up, a unique scientific regime is enabled to solve a particular and produced political problem. From this what is realized as the original condition of ‘Man’- that the ‘State of Nature’ is a ‘State of War’- a sole, singular, necessary, and universal solution can be offered to escape this first and basic existential quagmire- the formation of the ‘Modern State’. It should be seen that both the problem which is produced and the solution which is considered obligatory are both based on a fundamental acceptance of this ‘Foundational’ and ‘Atomic’ ontology.

<sup>183</sup> It is not quite universal itself though, since it is always understood differently by different groups of people, and is idiosyncratically modulated by any of the practitioners existing within one. In short, it is a nominal, provisional universalism or in other words a ‘limiting concept’ that allows us to imagine how culture could be produced via under-girding, immanent, localized, chthonic ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’.

this counter model conceptualizes the fount, basis, and origin of all cultural existence to rest upon and be produced by a never-beginning, never-ending, constantly shifting, always relational, first mobility, something which is understood as having always and continuously flowed from no first designated, pre-established, fixed, or initial starting point.

Armed with this counter-account of our cosmos (that it is based on immanent and dynamic relations; and that this has always existed), it is possible to envision what might be considered a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology. Obviously given the above cosmological account, this worldview will imagine that our ontology exists at the most basic level, and first and foremost, as a singular, under-girth of dynamic relationality. Further, this relational nexus should be seen as the most primordial, primitive, and simplest feature of reality, and so can be imagined as the raw materials which will intertwine together in order to concoct the various objects we witness and recognize as resident within our cultural realms. Lastly, given that these relations are conceptualized as constantly shifting as a ceaseless mobility or flux, then from an ontological perspective this also means that every aspect of cultural reality should be imagined as totally caught-up within this always operating dynamic, and so never able to stop or rest at any specific moment or on any fundamental or particularly solidified shape or form.

Putting these three ontological points altogether, this under-arching relationality can be ontologically imagined as: the initial groundwork upon which all cultural products are framed, grounded, and structured; the basic ingredients or leavening agents which nourish, develop, formulate, and establish all the features ever found within our social worlds; and as the force or dynamic which constantly works to alter, change, and modify

the things which have previously been sculpted, organized, and molded. To be very clear here, it is these relations and this under-arching relationality which are being asserted as the fundamental ontology or basic purchase for this worldview, and this is being characterized as: the very basic foundation of reality; the first elements upon which everything else is built; and as a constant and ceaseless force which works to produce, transform, and rearrange all things.

Now, before going on to reintroduce the methodology enabled by this commitment to relationality at the ontological level, it must be mentioned that our second chapter was devoted to showing that it is both possible and demonstrable to read M. Foucault as grounding his investigations upon this worldview. Foucault can be understood as employing a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ cosmology/ontology based on two previously demonstrated criteria: that he envisions relations as the first and initial aspect of reality, and thus serve as the foundation, firmament, or groundwork upon which all else is rests; and that any thing which could ever be discerned to exist as a possible or distinct feature of our cultural reality, is itself composed from nothing other than these relational features<sup>184</sup>.

Thus, to claim that Foucault employs a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology is to stress the fact that for any entity, concept, or thing to be recognized as a possible, virtual, or actual aspect of our cultural reality: firstly, a number of already existing relational forces underling the distinct social structure being investigated must be presupposed; and secondly this basic relational nexus must be imagined as able to solidly frame, thoroughly

---

<sup>184</sup>How Foucault could be considered as utilizing a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology to ground his methodology, despite the fact he states this is not his interest is discussed in the previous chapter. Please see pp. 47- 82.

produce, and constantly alter this specific feature solely through the juxtaposition, correlation and rearrangement of the relational strands which have been selected and constrained to compose it. In short, to call Foucault a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist is to claim that it is only via the interweaving of relations, and solely amidst and within the dynamic of a larger relational under-grid that any entity, being, notion, or structure can ever be imagined as formalized, consolidated, or developed within our cultural milieu. It is in this way that Foucault is being read by as a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontologist: a theorist who ontologically privileges and champions relations and relationality, and sees them as the basic firmament upon which all cultural existence rests; the primitive elements for all cultural production; and as the creative source by which all things are constantly being changed and continuously nourished.

Obviously, the methodology associated with this Foucauldian or ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology is markedly different from how traditional research is normally conducted. In fact, Foucault explicitly states that this counter-approach has been developed as an attempt to turn around the conventional way we think philosophically, argue politically, and inquire scientifically. Simply stated, this relational approach will not initiate its investigations by assuming or asserting the prior existence of any pre-defined or pre-determined, primary, original, constants, or any thing else which can be envisioned as standing outside all historical and cultural processes<sup>185</sup>. Moreover, the general goal behind this style of research will not be to offer a singular, authoritative, and overall account of anything, and by doing so attempting to “close down all possible lines

---

<sup>185</sup> UPL: pp. 4-6, 28- 31; ECSPF: pp. 289- 290; PPP: p. 118; Pref.: pp. 200- 201; WE: pp. 312- 313; 315, 318RM: p. 249; OGE: pp. 259, 261, 271, 278- 280; MF: pp. 461- 463; Post: pp. 438- 439, 441- 443; RS: p. 368; PE: p. 375; Tech: pp. 224, 228; PT: p. 403.

of analysis except the sole, valid, definitive one that all must accept as the singular account for that phenomena”<sup>186</sup>. Instead, given that it has been accepted that any structure, entity, concept, or thing ever clarified or recognized as an existent and resident feature within a particular cultural group at a specific moment in time has not only been based on this under-arching nexus of immanent relationality, but has also been produced via this rubric of relations, practices, processes, and dynamics, then three very important insights obtain which can be used as provisional maxims for conducting our investigations<sup>187</sup>.

First, anything produced via these fluid relations and within this dynamic relationality must be understood to exist as nothing more than a secondary, subsequent, provisional, and nominal aspect of existence<sup>188</sup>. Second, anything which has been manufactured in this way must be understood to exist as an immanently produced cultural artifact, and so something which has had both its possible forms modulated and actual shapes modified by immanent group and individual practices<sup>189</sup>. Lastly, everything formed upon this relational purchase must be understood to exist as an inherently modifiable, mobile, flexible structure that constantly strives for further change and transformation<sup>190</sup>. It is

---

<sup>186</sup>UPL: pp. 4-6, 13; PPP: pp. 112- 113; WE: pp. 312- 313, 314- 315, 316- 317; AE: p. 50; Post: pp. 445, 451- 452; PE: pp. 375- 376; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29; 189- 192; 460- 462; ST: p. 87.

<sup>187</sup> This would only be a tentative, provisional, nominal, modifiable cultural model to produce specific insights, not a universal grid capable of slotting all cultural features and practices.

<sup>188</sup> UPL: pp. 4- 5, 13, 28- 31; PPP: pp. 116- 117; Pref.: pp. 199- 204; WE: pp. 310, 312- 315; RM: p. 243; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post 445, 451- 452.

<sup>189</sup> Of course these are necessarily shared between ‘groups’ of ‘other people or cultures’. In this thesis we are not accepting the idea that cultures (or individuals) exist as pre-established, pre-defined, already individuated units or that culture begins upon a singular cultural base and then spread to all others in a universal, linear, and evolutionary fashion. This will be discussed further at the end of our fourth chapter, see pp. 129- 136. Cf., PPP: pp. 116- 117; Pref.: pp. 199- 204; AE: p. 48; IA: p. 399.

<sup>190</sup> In other words this means that anything produced in the world has been modulated in and by culture (space), modulated by and through history (time), and always based a specific rationale (politics). Cf., Pref.: p. 203; AE: p. 48; RM: p. 253; IA: pp. 397- 399.

these insights based on a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology which in turn inaugurates three interrelated forms of methodological inquiry as to how our cultural worlds have been produced: a cultural analytic, an historical account, and a political challenge<sup>191</sup>.

From a cultural angle, inquiries can now investigate the particular ways that our relationality and its relational elements have been patterned, consolidated, and intertwined in order to produce the distinct objects found residing within our cultural worlds<sup>192</sup>. There are three aspects to this endeavor which should be explicitly made clear. First, an account can be offered as to the specific ways that these relational elements have initially been defined, conceptualized, and organized by any specific group of people<sup>193</sup>. Second, given that the distinct social features which are produced within these cultural milieus are themselves composed and structured via this under-arching relationality, then one can compare the ways that groups have differentially developed their relational

---

<sup>191</sup> At this point we have completely dropped the ethical dimension of this methodology. This is firstly for brevity, but secondly and more importantly because prior to discussing ethical issues, we must first articulate the political issue of how cultural regimes are produced and instantiated, something which in turn discloses how the self is formulated as well as the ethical relations it has to itself during these processes of self and cultural-fashioning. As will be explained in the next chapter, the ‘self’ only occurs as a cultural feature within the practices of cultural production. In short, until the political issues of producing cultural reality are explained, one cannot speak of the ethics of the self, since it is something produced and located within it. PPP: pp. 117- 118; WE: pp. 313, 316, 318, 319; AE: p. 48; CT: pp. 256- 257; HS: pp. 524- 525; SPK: p. 356; ST: p. 87; STSW: pp. 158- 159.

<sup>192</sup> UPL: pp. 4-6, 28- 31; ECSPF: pp. 281- 282, 289- 290; PPP: pp. 116, 117; Pref.: pp. 199- 205; WE: pp. 318; AE: p. 48, 50; CT: pp. 256- 257, 264- 265; RM: p. 243; OGE: pp. 254, 260, 261, 262- 266, 277; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 442- 445; IA: p. 399; Gros: pp. 525- 526; SCSA: pp. 147- 148; SPPID: p. 164; Tech: p. 224; FWL: pp. 137- 138; STSW: p. 158; ST 87- 89.

<sup>193</sup> What practices, processes, patterns, and techniques are developed by any group of people to produce the features found within their worlds (including the self)? How is their ‘Art of Life’ imagined, practiced, and orchestrated within their cultural structure or habitus? UPL: pp. 4-6, 28- 31; ECSPF: pp. 289- 290, 291; PPP: pp. 116- 117; WE: pp. 313, 315, 318; AE: pp. 48, 50; RM: p. 243; OGE: pp. 255, 260, 261, 262- 266, 277, 280; MF: 459- 463; Post: pp. 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 457; IA: p. 399; HS: pp. 6, 14- 19, 25- 29, 46- 48, 189- 192, 230; Gros: pp. 525- 526; HSS: p. 101; ISR: p. 132; Tech: pp. 224, 225, 226, 228, 234; FWL: pp. 137- 138; ST: pp. 87- 89.

worlds<sup>194</sup>. Lastly, since these differences also obtain within any particular cultural environ, then one can also examine the various and idiosyncratic ways that specific practitioners found within any one of them have utilized this relationality in order to personally inflect and produce themselves within their communal and shared, localized fields<sup>195</sup>.

In short, once the responsibility for cultural production is placed upon this relational under-gird and the many relations it houses, then a cultural analysis can be formulated which can reveal: the different ways that these relations have been initially imagined for any group of people; how the distinct cultural artifacts recognized and witnessed by any particular group have been composed relationally and in relation to each other; and the specific ways that these relations have been modulated by individual practitioners within the cultural space they reside. Upon this model then, cultural comparisons and contrasts can be formulated as to how features have been produced in different cultural milieus, as well as how unique inflections have been delivered to the specific things found within any single one of them.

Second and in complete conjunction with the above cultural inquiry, an historical analysis can also be offered that attempts to observe how these relations, practices,

---

<sup>194</sup> UPL: pp. 10- 13, 21, 28- 31; ECSPF: pp. 284- 286, 294, 299; PPP: p. 118; AE: p. 51; CT: p. 261; RM: pp. 249, 253; OGE: pp. 255, 256, 259, 260, 261, 266- 271; 277; Post: pp. 440, 443; IA: p. 399; HS 11, 14- 19, 25- 29, 46- 48, 50, 189- 192, 460- 462; Gros: p. 522; ISR: p. 122; Tech: p. 226; STSW: p. 159; ST: pp. 87- 89.

<sup>195</sup> What is the extent, range, and scope of variations, modifications, and inflections for the cultural objects found within any of these realms? How do these stylizations respond to the cultural standards which suggest, proscribe, induce, or impose that these structures are to be developed in specific ways? What is the extent to which any individual or group can alter or change these recommendations or out-right reject them? UPL: pp. 4-6, 13; ECSPF: p. 291; WE: pp. 313, 315, 318; AE: p. 50; OGE: pp. 255, 260, 261, 262- 266, 277; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 443, 444, 445; HS: p. 424; Gros: pp. 525- 526; ISR: pp. 123, 132; SPPID: p. 166; Tech: p. 226; FWL: pp. 137- 138; ST: pp. 87- 89.

techniques, structures, and individuals have been modified and changed over time<sup>196</sup>. As stated no attempt whatsoever will be made to herald an original moment or first entities in order to reconstruct the inevitable historical and evolutionary processes which must have transpired in order to create the world as we know it today<sup>197</sup>. Instead, a contemporary structure, practice, notion, or entity will be isolated as the main subject of inquiry, and from our present situation investigations will be made to understand the many relations, dynamics, and processes which went into forming the unique features we culturally recognize as existing right now<sup>198</sup>.

In short, given that nothing in this world can be imagined as an inherently solid, immobilized, or fixed entity, and since everything is understood to constantly and reciprocally be re-arranged within this under-arching dynamic flux in relation to everything else, then by examining the particular relational processes which went into formation of anything, the tentative ‘historical a priori’, the provisional ‘temporal and material pre-conditions’, and the contingent ‘immanent logic’ which was utilized for that specific thing to be produced in the distinct and particular way it now is culturally and

---

<sup>196</sup> UPL: pp. 3-7, 29- 33; ECSPF: p. 295; PPP: pp. 117- 119; Pref.: pp. 199- 204; WE: pp. 303- 305, 313- 319; CT: pp. 256- 257; RM: pp. 243, 252- 253; OGE: pp. 255- 256, 259, 262- 267, 277; IA: pp. 397- 399; ISR: pp. 139 -140; SCSA: p. 154; Tech: pp. 224- 225; SP: pp. 326- 327, 335; PT: pp. 403- 404; SPK: pp. 357- 359; FWL: pp. 139- 140; ST: pp. 87- 89.

<sup>197</sup> UPL: pp. 4- 6, 10- 13; ECSPF: pp. 290- 291; Pref.: pp. 201- 202; WE: pp. 315- 316, 318- 319; RM: p. 249; OGE: pp. 259- 261; MF: pp. 461- 463; Post: pp. 434, 438- 439, 439- 443, 445, 451, 452; RS: p. 368; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 460- 462; Gros: pp. 524- 525; SKP: p. 359; ST: p. 87.

<sup>198</sup> No universal history is accepted upon this model. Thus, there is no first, universal, fixed moment which can serve as the baseline or benchmark for this historical analysis, or any final teleological point that all are moving towards. All changes which occur to any culture must be mapped and charted according to a provisional, contingent, and nominal trajectory that allows that specific group of people their notions of historical understandings. How does any group formulate their notions of space and time, or imagine change, motion, and duration based on their own and techniques of ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ self-formation. Cf., UPL: p. 10; ECSPF: pp. 286, 291, 294; PPP: pp.116- 118; Pref.: p. 202; WE: pp. 304, 305, 309- 312, 312- 315; CT: pp. 256- 257; OGE: p. 254; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: p. 450.

historically clarified to appear as can be uncovered<sup>199</sup>. In sum, this relational methodology is one which allows for a practitioner to make sense of the many changes ceaselessly occurring to the things found within our culture right now, as well as understand how our reality was constituted to exist in the particular way it is presently recognized as exhibiting.

Thus, according to Foucault this methodology is one which enables a cultural and historical analysis that can help to decipher the distinct way an experience or particular feature has been produced, introduced, and established in our cultural milieu today<sup>200</sup>.

Yet, to only discuss the cultural and historical realizations obtained via this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model would be to ignore possibly the most important aspect of this methodology: the very political engagement it enables. Foucault is quite explicit that he believes that this type of investigation is one which can marry a theoretically grounded analysis of ‘who we are today’, which at the same time functions as a critical inquiry of ‘what we have become’ and a robust challenge to ‘become as we never were’<sup>201</sup>.

Although there are many features that this political insight brings to bear, we will highlight only three major aspects:

The first political consideration that this methodology brings to bear is that it is always directed at the present, and so works to criticize cultural features which are prominent

---

<sup>199</sup> UPL: pp. 4- 6; PPP: p. 118; Pref.: pp. 199- 204; WE: pp. 312- 315, 316- 318; OGE: p. 277; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 444; IA: pp. 397- 399; Gros 524- 525; SCSA: p. 154; Tech: p. 225; PT: pp. 403- 404; SPK: p. 359; FWL: pp. 139- 140; ST: p. 88.

<sup>200</sup> This methodology does not accept any type of history that accepts universal constants as subsisting outside the cultural and existential field, nor does it begin with a first, substantial core which acts as the originary point from which a ‘cancer-like’ history spread (for example, as is done with Histories of Rationality, which imagine thought and culture emanating from the freedom and genius of a first, a priori Subject). Cf., Tech: p. 224; SP: p. 326; ST: p. 87.

<sup>201</sup> WE: pp. 315- 316; Post: pp. 449- 450; Gros: p. 526.

within our world today. In other words, the critical impulse for this model will be directed towards how ‘we’ as a culture are currently imagining, forming, and reproducing our social realities, and so the political reflection will be one which places its analytical focus squarely onto those structures, processes, techniques, and practices which are currently being manifested within our cultural fields right now<sup>202</sup>. Questions leading such an investigation will inquire into: how are we utilizing our basic relational undergirth to produce our cultures; and what relations, processes, and dynamics have been privileged (or ignored) and compressed (or dissipated) in order to produce the cultures we recognize, codify, and inhabit as our social reality today?

The second political feature unveiled as soon as our cultural world is imagined as a constantly changing, historical formation, is that none of the structures presently being manufactured in our worldviews can be considered either necessary or sacrosanct. This is because all social features must be understood as provisional constitutions, which are particular to the specific time, place, and group within which they are developed. Thus it follows that they should be imagined as nothing more than momentary and fleeting cultural episodes. With this we can begin to reveal not only their fragile, precarious, and nominal nature, but can also begin to envision other ways that these same features have been, can be, and might become different<sup>203</sup>.

In other words, once all of our cultural reality is conceptualized as constantly being formed through the continuous interplay of dynamic relations, then it follows that if we have the political courage and the requisite freedom we can actually challenge the

---

<sup>202</sup> UPL: pp. 8- 13, 21; PPP: p. 118; WE: pp. 309- 312, 312- 315, 315- 317, 318- 319; CT: pp. 262, 265; OGE: pp. 255- 256, 261, 262- 265; Post: p. 449; IA : pp. 397- 399; PE: pp. 375- 376; Gros: p. 526; SPPID: p. 164; SPK: p. 359; PT: p. 403; FWL: pp. 136- 137.

<sup>203</sup> UPL: pp. 10- 13; WE: pp. 311, 39- 312, 312- 315, 316- 317, 318- 319; CT: p. 265; OGE: pp. 262- 265; Post 449, 457; IA: pp. 398- 399; PE: p. 376; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29; Gros: p. 526; FWL: pp. 136- 137.

cultural forms existing today in order to change our present conditions<sup>204</sup>. Thus, this critical reflection on today based on a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ mentality is one which immediately brings with it an impetus to imagine our world differently, something which in turn stimulates a creative process which allows us to rethink our cultural and social systems as active, conscious, and deliberate members within it<sup>205</sup>. As Foucault states, if we can know how things were made, then we can figure out how they can be unmade, and since they are always changing anyway then there is no rationale to merely accept or respect the ‘necessity’ of reality as it is presented right now<sup>206</sup>.

Lastly, this direct examination on our present reality is always on guard for any entity, concept structure, or thing which has been culturally asserted, argued, or clarified as a universal, necessary, and obligatory feature of existence. As shown, once reality and existence is understood from this relational perspective, then how could anything ever be presented to us in a universal, unchanging manner<sup>207</sup>? Upon this relational perspective, a hyper-critical stance must always be offered towards any social formation which has been culturally asserted, sanctified, or arrogated to exist as a feature of our world in this way<sup>208</sup>. These must be tested, analyzed, and interrogated: How could something exist

---

<sup>204</sup> Of course to accomplish this we need a self which is not considered fully determined and dominated by this under-girth of relationality or the ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ it is imagined to house. This is discussed in our next chapter, see pp. 129- 136.

<sup>205</sup> UPL: pp. 8- 9; WE: pp. 312- 315; OGE: pp. 260- 261; Post: pp. 449, 451, 457; IA: pp. 397- 399; Gros: p. 523; HSS: p. 97; ISR: p. 132; SPPID: p. 167- 168; FWL: pp. 139- 140.

<sup>206</sup> Post: p. 450.

<sup>207</sup> We are not discussing anti-universalism in this thesis. Rather, universals are not accepted as pre-existing cultural existence as first, a priori, necessary constants subsisting outside human reality. The important point being made is to isolate how these are constituted, used, and clarified within our cultural worlds. How are they produced and played as ‘Games of Truth’. We are in fact using a nominal universalism (a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology) to make possible our worldview. Cf., Pref.: pp. 200- 201; WE: pp. 312, 315, 316, 318; AE: p. 50; CT: p. 265; OGE: pp. 259, 278- 280; MF: pp. 461- 463; Post: pp. 439- 443, 448; PE: p. 375; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 460- 462; Gros: p. 526; SPKP: p. 355.

<sup>208</sup> WE: pp. 315- 316.

like this, impervious to any of the relations that compose it or to the relationality within which it is embedded? How was it produced to be considered in this way, and are there any other ways to understand the same phenomena? What are the costs and implications of envisioning this aspect of reality like this, or in any other? Obviously, if something on the one hand is characterized as a universal aspect of all reality, and yet upon a relational examination it can be shown to have been produced by a specific culture at a particular time in their history, then it can easily be criticized as a false and possibly dispensable way to understand our existence.

In sum, based on the cultural, historical, and political insights of this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model, we can declare that we are: not locked into our present understanding of cultural reality; not trapped within a singular account of universal history; and not caged or restricted by the social structures, features, and aspects existent today. Instead it reveals that nothing inhabiting our cultural reality today should be recognized as the product of a universal, a-historical, de-contextual, trans-cultural, fundamentally determined, linear system<sup>209</sup>. Rather and upon this schema, examinations can canvass the particular way we as a culture have weaved and patterned our relationality in order to produce the world as it presently appears, something which must always be compared and contrasted with other possible ways that this same reality could have been and can still be assembled differently<sup>210</sup>.

---

<sup>209</sup> UPL: pp. 8- 13; Pref.: p. 20; WE: pp. 312- 315, 315- 316; AE: p. 50; OGE: p. 261; MF: pp. 459- 463; IA 397- 399; SPPID: pp. 167- 168.

<sup>210</sup> See footnote 50.

To close, the methodology enabled by a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology acts as a ‘diagnosis of today’, and so will not just focus on how the cultural structures, features, and aspects which we exist within today were formulated, established, and reproduced, but will always do so with an interest in seeing how these same things could be changed, altered, and modified<sup>211</sup>. This methodology can not be understood as merely a passive, observational endeavor, and instead must be recognized as an active, political engagement, one which attempts to understand how it is that the world we live in right now could both be envisioned differently and cajoled or transformed into other possible forms. In sum, this cultural, historical, and political analysis is not interested in only understanding how we entered into the cultural structures which we inhabit today, but more importantly hopes that by examining the dynamics, techniques, practices, and processes in operation right now, we can discern what other possibilities might exist to change, alter, renovate, cross-over, transform, or even extinguish aspects of our cultural reality, as well as the prices, cost, and benefits of such maneuvers<sup>212</sup>. Thus, according to Foucault it is exactly this type of examination which produces the virtual fractures within our cultural imagination, which in turn opens up the space for possible social transformation, and by doing so gives further impetus to our Freedom<sup>213</sup>.

In concluding this section, and moving onto our next chapter, one which will provide a contrastive example of these two worldviews, this thesis must state that it recognizes Foucault as naming this particular methodology very differently over the course of his

---

<sup>211</sup> WE: pp. 316- 317, 319; OGE: p. 261; Post: pp. 449- 450; PE: p. 375.

<sup>212</sup> SPPID: p. 167.

<sup>213</sup> Post: p. 449

intellectual career, as: genealogy, political-historical discourse, problematization, historical-critical ontology, post-structuralism, and so on. What this thesis is trying to argue that it is possible to understand Foucault as employing the same ontology throughout his works to ground these methodologies, one which is based on a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ worldview<sup>214</sup>. Always this relational way of envisioning the world is first invoked, and then given this ontological purchase Foucault’s turns his analysis towards a feature of our cultural existence which we have socially accepted as a universal, necessary, singular, and obligatory aspect of our reality. As soon as it is recognized that this feature has been socially clarified and culturally ‘governmentalized’ into appearing in this rigorous, calcified, and fixed way, then a relational reconstruction is offered for this same concept. This counter-vision in turn begins the transformative process that works to erode the apparent coherency, authority, and legitimacy of the feature which has been reified to appear as universal, necessary, obligatory, and singular. Whether it is the notion of Power, the State, the Subject, Truth, Morality, Sexuality, History, Reason and Rationality, Punishment, Madness, etc, Foucault utilizes this same ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology in order to attack and undermine the sanctity of the way that value has been traditionally disclosed<sup>215</sup>.

---

<sup>214</sup> Or where this thesis has nominally initiated its study

<sup>215</sup> Three things that do change in his writings from the 70’s to the 80’s are: how he understands these ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ as practices and techniques of cultures; how he downplays power-relations and emphasizes relations to the self; and showing how the self or Subject can now act as an agent in both its ethical relations to the self and governmental practices with others despite the fact that it is embedded in and constituted by a under-girding field of relationality, ‘Relations’, and ‘Dynamics’.

## **Chapter 4: An example to show the contrast between these two worldviews: The self as Subject and Foucault's relationally, self-constitutive version**

Preliminaries; 3 reasons to turn to the self; Foucault on the self vs. the Subject- 3 Quotes;  
 The way the self has been traditionally portrayed: the Modern Subject- 3 Points;  
 Foucault's relationally, self-constitutive version of the self- 7 points; Summary; A first  
 glance response to the problems of Agency/Structure or Freedom/Determination given  
 this 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' model

### **A. Preliminaries**

So far this thesis has been very philosophical, and the question could arise: what exactly is the point of this cosmological, ontological, and methodological exercise? Where exactly does this difference 'hit the ground'? What exactly is the main sight of analysis for this critical endeavor?

We will now use the contrast and foil developed so far in order to examine an integral aspect which grounds both Modern philosophy and Modern political theory- the notion of the self as Modern Subject. According to Foucault, both disciplines still utilize this sense of the self (the Modern Subject of Thought and Power respectively) to found the possibility, intelligibility, and direction of their respective enterprises<sup>216</sup>. In response, this

---

<sup>216</sup> Descartes: ECSPF: p. 294; Pref.: p. 202; RM: pp. 250 -252; OGE: pp. 262, 278- 280; Post: pp. 436-439, 440- 445, 451; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 27, 189- 192, 460- 461; Gros: pp. 523- 525; ISR: p. 125; SP: p. 335. Hobbes: ECSPF: p. 294; SP: p. 327; SMBD: pp. 13- 17, 28, 43- 46, 51, 59, 89- 99; SMBDS: pp. 59, 61- 63.

particular way of portraying the self will be contrasted against Foucault's own notion of 'who we are', something which fundamentally opposes the way the self is portrayed by either discourse<sup>217</sup>.

### **B. 3 Reasons to turn to the self**

This thesis would like to now turn its attention towards the notion of the self imagined, articulated, and utilized by each mode of thought. This is for three reasons. The first is because Foucault explicitly makes the notion of the self the central focus of his later analyses. He even claims during this later period that the way the self is organized and produced in various cultural and social spaces and at particular historical moments can be understood as 'a guiding thread operating behind his entire work'<sup>218</sup>. In short, although many other topics could have been singled out for comparison, the different ways that the self is depicted and deployed by either of these worldviews could be considered a privileged site for Foucauldian analysis<sup>219</sup>.

Second, although the second chapter attempted to demonstrate that Foucault can be read as a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontologist, it failed to show how the self, either at the cultural or individual level, can be shown to be an important, integral, and

---

<sup>217</sup> In the same vein, this chapter could also be read as an attack or 'problematization' of the notion of Man or Humanity used by the discipline of Anthropology. Once again the self is depicted as Subject, something which is imagined as universally residing first and foremost within the existential field. The question becomes how do various 'Men', in differing environments, and with disparate technology, make unique cultures?

<sup>218</sup> Importantly he states that the relations between the self (Subject) and Truth are his main objects of analysis, and that he only employs the relations between relations of Power and relations of Knowledge as an instrument in order to investigate this other relation (ECSPF: p. 290).

<sup>219</sup> RM: p. 243; OGE: pp. 260- 262, 263, 277; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 444-45, 447; HS: pp. 14-19, 25-29, 289- 192, 460- 462; Gros: pp. 522, 526; Tech: pp. 224-225; ST: p. 87.

deliberative actor which operates within and through these cultural processes. In fact, it would appear as if the self has no control over these under-girding ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’, and ought to be considered the same as any other resident cultural artifact- a secondary, derivative, manufactured feature of existence, which has had its form, shape, and possibilities completely determined by these deeper relational processes<sup>220</sup>. This issue will be touched on briefly at the conclusion of this chapter.

Lastly, this thesis imagines that way the self is depicted by either worldview is on its own able to serve as a micro example as to how either imagines our basic ontology. In other words, a comparison as to how the self has been captured and portrayed by either philosophical stance can allow this micro-debate to be seen as nested within our larger ontological contrast<sup>221</sup>. In short, the disparate ways of imagining ‘who we are’ is sufficient itself to expose the fundamental incommensurability which exists between these two models. The idea that they both cannot both be formulated as our reality at one and the same time is an argument which will be discussed in our conclusion where the political stakes of accepting and employing either worldview as the basic logic ‘governing’ our cultural reality will be reflected upon.

To quickly state the mentality of this chapter: we will show that the traditional depiction of the self (Modern Subject) captures ‘who we are’ in a way which makes it

---

<sup>220</sup> ECSPF: pp. 281- 282, 294; WE: pp. 306- 309, 312- 313, 315- 316, 317- 319; CT: p. 258; RM: pp. 252- 253; Post: pp. 442- 445; IA: pp. 397, 399; HS: pp. 460-61; Tech: p. 225; PT: pp. 403- 404.

<sup>221</sup> Thus, this chapter would like to make the claim that the specific depiction of the self found in either of these worldviews both perfectly reflects and exactly replicates how the cosmos has already been envisioned. For this reason it can serve as an exemplar for how features in general will be imagined, organized, coordinated, and recognize by either of our worldviews previously outlined. This is to say that the notion of the self (or Subject) portrayed by either of them should be understood as a perfect instantiation of the logic and rationality of the ontology and cosmology already specific to it.

appear as a basic ontological feature of reality (pre-established, a-historical, foundational); as fundamentally individuated and distinct (discrete, atomic, unitary); and as the sole, singular conceptualization of ‘who we are’ (universal, necessary, obligatory, as well as trans-cultural and de-contextual). The Foucauldian counter-vision will instead imagine the self as having been idiosyncratically produced within, by, via, and through the particular, local, and immanent relations, practices, processes, and techniques it is embedded in and indigenous to. This in turn would make it a thoroughly cultural, historical, political product, one with the ability to utilize these ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ in order to help sculpt their cultural environs, yet only in inter-relation with all others (and everything else). Thus, our counter-model will work to attack and undermine our prevalent depiction of ‘who we are’ by showing that the traditional way of portraying the self, as well as the narrative which grounds and lends credence to it, are only one culturally particular way we can be conceptualized, sanctioned, and reproduced<sup>222</sup>.

This contrast will be initiated with three statements made by Foucault in his final interviews.

### **C. Foucault on the self vs. the Subject- 3 Quotes: A/B/C**

---

<sup>222</sup> UPL: pp. 4-5; ECSPPF: pp. 281- 282, 291; Pref.: pp. 199-204; WE: pp. 312- 313, 315- 316, 317, 318, 319; AE: pp. 48, 50; RM: pp. 252- 253; OGE: pp. 259- 262, 277, 278- 280; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 436- 439, 442, 447; IA: p. 399; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 189- 192, 460- 462; Gros: pp. 522- 526; FWL: pp. 135- 137; ST: p. 87.

### 1. Return of Morality<sup>223</sup>:

Q: “Is the Subject for you the condition of the possibility of experience?”

F: “Absolutely not. It is an experience which itself is the rationalization of a process, itself provisional, which results in a subject, or rather, subjects. I will call subjectivization the procedure by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more precisely, of a subjectivity which is of course only one of the given possibilities of organization of a self-consciousness.”

### 2. These exact sentiments are amplified in the interview ECSPF<sup>224</sup>

Q: “But you have always “forbidden” people to talk about the Subject in general?”

F: “No, I have not “forbidden” them. Perhaps I did not explain myself adequately. What I rejected is starting out with a theory of the subject- as is done, for example, in phenomenology and existentialism- and, on the basis of this theory, asking how a form of knowledge was possible. What I wanted to show was how the subject constituted itself, in one specific form or another, as a mad or a healthy subject, as a delinquent or non-delinquent subject, through certain practices that were also games of truth, practices of power, and so on. 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...it is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself...it is precisely the historical constitution of these various forms of the subject in relation to games of truth which interest me.”

### 3. And finally made even more forcefully in Aesthetics of Existence<sup>225</sup>

Q: “Your opposition to the phenomenological and psychological subject is well known...it will come as a surprise to no one that people said several times: there is no subject in Foucault’s work. The subjects are always subjected, they are the point of application of normative techniques and disciplines, but they are never sovereign subjects.”

F: A distinction must be made here. In the first place, I do indeed believe there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of the subject to be found everywhere. I am very skeptical of this view of the subject and very hostile to it. I believe, on the contrary, that the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more

---

<sup>223</sup> RM: p. 253.

<sup>224</sup> ECSPF: pp. 290-291.

<sup>225</sup> AE: p. 50.

autonomous way, through practices of liberty, as in Antiquity, on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in cultural environment.<sup>226</sup>

Even in these brief exchanges, a stark contrast can immediately be made as to how Foucault conceptualizes the self and the way he believes this notion is rendered by our academic disciplines<sup>227</sup>.

#### **D. The way the self has been traditionally portrayed: the Modern Subject- 3 Points**

The specific form of the self Foucault targets throughout his work is its portrayal as Modern Subject; a depiction which he believes has become thoroughly dominant and entrenched within philosophical and political discourse<sup>228</sup>. Two philosophers Foucault singles out for criticism on this point are Hobbes, discussed in his lectures of 75-76, and Descartes in turn problematized in 81-82. He charges each of them with utilizing ‘the notion of Man’ delineated by our traditional ontology in order to ground disciplines of Modern Political Science and Modern Philosophy<sup>229</sup>. In other words, he accuses both of

---

<sup>226</sup> Cf., UPL: pp. 4-6; ECSPF: p. 291; WE: pp. 306- 309, 312- 313, 315- 316, 317, 318, 319; RM: p. 243; OGE: pp. 259- 262, 263- 266, 278- 280; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 438- 439, 442- 444, 445, 447; IA: pp. 397, 399; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 189- 192, 460- 462; Gros: pp. 522- 526.

<sup>227</sup> Admittedly, the above passages focus on the sense of the self that Foucault is trying to promote, and thus do not offer either a direct or positive account of the particular way Modern Thought has envisioned it; he does at the same time clearly explicate some of its unique qualities, whereas others can be easily inferred as those aspects of the self which Foucault fundamentally rejects in formulating his own conceptualization

<sup>228</sup> See footnote 215.

<sup>229</sup> This is hardly a stretch considering each explicitly claim in their own words that if they can only realize a first, axiomatic purchase or groundwork for their respective sciences, then the validity of their inquiries will not only be assured, but the social and scientific value of their findings will be guaranteed (Ariew (2000): pp. 54- 56, 102; Tuck: p. 28). It must also be stated that Hobbes was greatly interested in Cartesian problems. This thesis believes Kant collapses Cartesian and Hobbesian worldview together. Although we are not specifically focusing our attention on this ‘Master Philosopher’, this thesis imagines Kant as

them of relying on a particular notion of the self- the Modern Subject- as the basic ontological unit upon which to ground their enterprises. In order, to institute the discipline of Philosophy, understood as the perennial quest for further Knowledge based on the grounds of a ‘universal truth’, Descartes grounds his investigations on the necessity, fundamentality, and universality Modern Subject of Truth (the Cogito). Similarly, and in order to constitute the same values for the ‘Leviathan, the sole legitimate, authoritative, and universal basis for Right(s), Justice, and Law’, Hobbes begins his argument upon the prior, presumed, and unexplained existence of the a plurality of ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’ Modern Subject(s) of Power<sup>230</sup>. It must also be stated that although Foucault singles out the architects of each discipline, he always points out where he believes the academic community still utilizes this way of imagining ourselves as the basic starting-point for their inquiries and arguments<sup>231</sup>. Although this may appear as an anachronistic exercise for some, for Foucault in order to properly examine many of our theorists today, it is first necessary to trace the trajectory of their thought back to the major architects which founded either discipline.

---

accepting the transcendental limits offered by Descartes (the Subject of Truth) and conjoining this with the existential groundwork articulated by Hobbes (the Subject of Power). In addition he offers his own account of ‘Man Itself’ (Anthropology) and Teleology (A Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent), and it is these four limits which square us into the ‘Iron Cage’ or ‘Philosophical Box’ which has been incredibly difficult to think outside of, transform, or pose new possibilities towards. It so for this reason we have begun our analysis upon the alternate ‘Modern’ expression of reality offered by Spinoza, a thinker who fundamentally challenges Cartesian transcendental thought and Hobbesian existential thought (even if their political ideas appear quite consonant), in order to bypass the worldviews declared as necessary by Kant.

<sup>230</sup> To be clear about this first form of founding, it is one that seeks to begin by first establishing a fixed, and constant universal point or principle, and from here deduce all valid points of knowledge. It also is able to act as the scientific standard or paradigm against which to compare and classify all other possible aspects of phenomena. Due to its universality it is equally known to all and at the same time equally applicable to everyone. Further, all its claims should be understood as completely authoritative, and so any phenomena encapsulated within its domain should be understood as absolutely obligated to submit to its general formulas and necessary rules. A commonly accepted paradigm or example of this form of beginning or founding is found in rational languages like mathematics. However, in Philosophy and Political Theory, this method is often employed to establish the universal grounds for Truth, Knowledge, Right, Power, Morality, and especially our sense of the self (the Subject) in this same universal manner.

<sup>231</sup> Again, see footnote 215.

This thesis would like to turn its analytical attention to three points made in the above passages which are important for how Foucault will portray the Modern Subject. Firstly, the Modern Subject is depicted as something which acts as the very condition or founding principle for having any cultural experiences<sup>232</sup>. Stated slightly differently, on this model the self as Subject is conceptualized as the obligatory medium upon which and through which any and all possible cultural experiences could ever be realized<sup>233</sup>. To be short, once the self is presumed to exist as a fundamental feature of our very reality or in other words as the first, possible experience, then it easily can be claimed that this style of self-constitution is absolutely required for all people and at all times, and necessarily would even still exist if attempting to imagine other cultural ways the self could be understood or experienced.

Either academic community cited above, uses a different argument in order to produce its own a priori depiction of ‘who we are’<sup>234</sup>. Philosophy argues that if anyone actually

---

<sup>232</sup> Cf., UPL: pp. 4-6; ECSPF: pp. 291, 294; Pref.: p. 200; WE: pp. 313- 316, 318; OGE: pp. 259, 261- 262, 278- 280; MF: pp. 460- 463; Post: pp. 436- 437, 438- 445, 447; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 189- 192, 460- 462; Gros: pp. 522- 526; Tech: p. 228; SPK: p. 356; ST: p. 87; SMBD: p. 44.

<sup>233</sup> Obviously this is both a very strong claim and manifestly untrue. There is no doubt that cultural experiences are obtained by a person or group even if they have not structured themselves as a Subject or Subjects- to exist is to have experiences, and so every single human that exists has human experiences. However, these cultural experiences can not be assured or validated by any models we understand as legitimate or standardized. Thus these experiences are not seen as bearing any scientific and philosophical value or having any political and legal standing. Rather, this specific articulation of the self- the Modern Subject- instead acts as the benchmark for appropriate forms of cultural experiences (something which can easily be realized by canvassing the mission directive of the United Nations). Essentially the broad claim being made here is that although it might be possible to have experiential awareness without having first organized oneself into the structure of Modern Subjectivity, these will not be considered first-rate, scientifically valuable, or universally intelligible experiences. Those that have not captured themselves in this way must be considered either scientific rebels or too primitive to have embraced the proper model of universal subjectivity.

<sup>234</sup> The first accomplishes this by demonstrating that the self as Subject is a necessary condition for the very possibility of our own self-reflection and consciousness (isolating it as an a priori fact about existence); the latter asserts that this unique form of the self has existed as a basic feature of reality since time immemorial (simply asserting its existence as axiomatic).

makes the earnest effort to truly reflect on themselves in a perfectly rational manner, they will immediately discern that one feature about reality which is absolutely indubitable is the fact that they exist first and foremost as a thinking thing (or as the Cogito- the Modern Subject of Thought). Naturally, as soon as this state of self-structurization and self-awareness has been realized, the self as Subject is immediately recognized as: a universal feature of our existence; a basic, veridical fact about the world; a first a priori truth grounding all knowledge; and something which should be identified by any rational agent anywhere and at anytime<sup>235</sup>.

Political Theory in contrast grounds the self as Subject by simply asserting that we necessarily must begin our existence according to this model. In order to defend this a priori and naturalist claim, we are asked to consider what life must have been for the 'Original Subject of Power and Primal Right' in the first 'State of Nature'. Of course, considering ourselves to have always existed in this way since the very first moments of human history is to again make it a universal category and an unchallengeable fact about our existence. The self as Subject again realized in this axiomatic way, gains not only all the same characteristics described above, but now as a historical feature can be used as the primary purchase from which to produce authoritative accounts on the inevitable historical and evolutionary sequences which must have transpired in order to lead us into the cultural and social structures we inhabit today<sup>236</sup>.

---

<sup>235</sup> This specific conception of the self is best linked with the Modern Philosophical tradition, usually understood to begin with Descartes announcement of a new method, and his declaration of the universal and a priori subject of thought- the Cogito. According to Foucault this basis acts as the groundwork for the entire phenomenological tradition, which he understands as a philosophical enterprise beginning with Descartes and continuing to Husserl.

<sup>236</sup> This particular depiction of the self is best articulated by Hobbes in Political Theory, where the self is presupposed to exist as one of the first and most basic features of the world based on this first, existential entity. This would make him the patriarch of Liberal 'Social Contract' endeavors all the way to Rawls.

The second general point to be made about this portrayal of ‘who we are’ is that Foucault considers it as a Sovereign notion, and so as the ruling condition or general standard which governs all other possible descriptions of the self<sup>237</sup>. To cut this argument as short as possible, to declare that the Subject exists as a first, foundational, necessary, and universal aspect of reality, is to claim that it stands as the greatest, most synoptic, and highest possible account which could ever be offered on the matter, the sole and necessary model which necessarily captures everyone, everywhere<sup>238</sup>. To recognize the self in this way, is to envision it: as more fundamental than any of the actual entities it organizes; as existing upon a purchase resting above, outside, and prior to the things it directs; and as always having the right to enforce compliance upon anything which can be snugly encapsulated within its parameters. It is in this way that the Subject can be considered a sovereign notion.

The last point to make is that according to Foucault this rendering of the self- as Subject- is one which demands that each ‘material instantiation’ of it should be imagined as its possessing its own unique form of a common, general substance<sup>239</sup>. Very quickly

---

<sup>237</sup> UPL: pp. 4-6, 29- 31; ECSPF: p. 294; WE: pp. 313- 316, 318; OGE: pp. 259, 278- 280; MF: pp. 460- 462; Post: pp. 438- 445.

<sup>238</sup> For example that the number two could somehow demand or make a case that it is really not part of the set of all even numbers.

<sup>239</sup> UPL: pp. 4-5; ECSPF: pp. 282- 284, 294; WE: pp. 312- 313; OGE: pp. 262, 278- 280; SP: pp. 330- 336; SPPID: pp. 163- 166; FWL: pp. 135- 137. In ECSPF 290 Foucault claims that his notion of the subject is also a form. This is not to say that Foucault conceives that the self is necessarily as a form; but rather that if he is trying to capture the sense of self that has been established according to the ‘Games of Truth’ found in the Western Philosophical tradition and specifically codified by Modern Philosophy, and so forced to recognize it as a form; however, his depiction of the self as a form is not the standard account. The self as Subject is usually conceptualized as a singular, unified and atomic substance or in other words an overarching form unto itself; the Foucauldian Modern Subject in contrast is imagined as made up of a number of disparate and even contradictory forms, each one representing a different cultural or social role,

speaking, to accept this depiction of ‘who we are’ is to claim that every single particular person will now be imagined as its own form, or as residing within its own space, a separated, unique, discrete, fully bounded, totally defined, completely isolate, and self-contained sphere. This would demand that all of humanity, first and foremost exists as its own distinct and totally distinguished atom, fully removed from ‘Nature’ and completely separated from everyone else. Given this existential process of individuation we now learn to envision ourselves as unique entities who each enjoy their own private space of Freedom, ritualized as an internalized place where we possess our own authentic personality, personal power, and particular consciousness. This internal space, is in turn codified as our own personal resource, intensional principle of private property, and a fundamental homeland which must be protected against all others, at all times.

To conclude, the major points this thesis learns from Foucault’s depiction of the self-the Modern Subject- is that it can be imagined as: the sole, singular way to understand, organize, and depict ‘who we are’; a timeless, universal, and necessary notion capturing everyone; a completely legitimate representation for any person, in any place, and at any time; a basic, first truth from which derive further knowledge; an priori existential feature which through its own individual genius produced our cultural and social worlds; and something which doubles as our own particular expression of self-hood, and so envisioned as fundamentally distinct from everyone, and as thoroughly removed from

---

and based on the many interactions we have with both ourselves and with others. One must envision it as a conglomerate constituent made up of many forms, where each one of these forms is understood as a distinct and unique relation to the self. If there could be a guiding metaphor possibly one could use Leibniz’ understanding of the self as a collection of monads being led by one that governs it; in Foucault’s case the leading Form/monad forms would be the ethical form. In short, one cannot reduce Foucault’s understanding of the self to the Subject, nor can one reduce Foucault’s Modern Subject to the formalized depiction in standard Modern philosophical and political discourse.

what is considered the ‘external world’. Foucault will now in turn invite us to think of the self as different from this prominent and dominant model one which has captured it as: universal, foundational, and necessary; as a-historical, trans-cultural, and de-contextual; as sovereign, singular, and absolute; and as fundamentally individuated, atomized, and separated.

### **E. Foucault’s relationally, self-constitutive version of the self- 7 points**

Foucault clearly states that his research does not use or accept a portrayal of the self as characterized above. There are seven points this thesis will make about this counter-model of the self. Turning to our first quote (1) Foucault explicitly states that he recognizes, conceptualizes, and understands the self as something which is produced through ‘processes of rationalization’<sup>240</sup>. On this model, the self is not to be conceived as a first, static, or transcendent entity standing outside, prior, or before any of our cultural experiences; rather it will be imagined as a result or after-effect produced and manufactured within, by, via, and through the sequencing and interface of immanent cultural dynamics, processes, practices, and techniques. The self will not be envisioned as a ‘first thing of the world’, or as the prior and necessary condition upon which all cultural life and its many social interrelations can be understood or experienced; instead

---

<sup>240</sup> Cf.: UPL: pp. 4- 6, 11- 13, 30- 31; Pref.: pp. 199- 204; WE: pp. 309- 312, 313, 315- 316, 318- 319; AE: pp. 48, 50; RM: pp. 243, 252- 253; OGE: pp. 260- 262, 263- 266, 270, 271, 277- 280; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 438- 439, 442- 445, 449- 450, 457; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 189- 192, 230, 462; Gros: pp. 522- 526; Tech: pp. 224- 228; SPK: p. 358; ST: pp. 87- 89.

and conversely the self now will be imagined as something which emerges out of and is formed by prior and already pre-existing cultural processes<sup>241</sup>.

Second, these processes which form the self must be considered dynamic, ceaseless, never-ending, and thoroughly reciprocal<sup>242</sup>. In other words, the notion of the self which is constituted and assembled via these prior cultural processes can never be considered to reside as a fully-completed, wholly-formed, or totally-finished product, and further it must always be imagined as susceptible to further modification and transformation.

Upon this worldview, the self, both conceptually and existentially, will be understood as subsisting in a semi-codified form, and within constant and dynamic flux. On the one hand, this makes the self something which can never be fundamentally fixed into one distinct, clarified, and formalized notion; completely established as a singular, stable, coherent, and individuated form; or frozen into one specified and concretized, foundational entity, and on the other also demands that any notion of the self, conceived at any particular moment, and within any distinct is itself a cultural artifact which will always remain susceptible to further delineation, inflection, and modulation.

Third, Foucault states that these processes must be considered completely provisional<sup>243</sup>. No longer can it be possible to accept a history of the self which argues that it navigates a singular, universal, or necessary pathway of production, consciousness, or rationalization. Further, given that these processes must themselves be recognized as

---

<sup>241</sup> This thesis reads practices, processes, and techniques as relations and dynamics. That they are linked will be explained in our fifth point.

<sup>242</sup> Cf., UPL: pp. 23, 30- 31; WE: pp. 310, 312, 315- 316; Pref.: p. 203; AE: p. 48; RM: p. 252; OGE: p. 262; MF: pp. 459- 463; PE: p. 375; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29.

<sup>243</sup> UPL: pp. 4- 5, 27, 29- 31; ECSFPF: pp. 289- 291; Pref.: pp. 201- 202; WE: p. 318; AE: p. 52; CT: p. 261; RM: p. 243; OGE: pp. 259, 261- 263, 263- 266, 270- 271, 277; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 434, 442, 446, 448- 450, 457; IA: p. 399; PE: p. 374; HS: p. 462; Gros: pp. 524- 525; Tech: pp. 224- 228; FWL: pp. 139- 140; ST: pp. 87- 89.

completely provisional, and since the notion of the self is something which they produce, it follows that the distinct articulation of the self which any cultural milieu exhibits must be considered even more nominal and contingent. Not only can there be no singular, necessary, or legitimate direction which any of these cultural processes of self-formation must traverse, but the form of the self or style of subjectivity naturalized by any particular group, is not something that even the people within it must begin with, identify, or realize. Each and every depiction of ‘who we are’ is derived from and completely based on already operating, provisional, prior, and contingent cultural dynamics that are specific, particular, and indigenous to that local, cultural domain.

Fourth, (and importantly since it is a point which is often overlooked in Foucauldian literature<sup>244</sup>), the Modern Subject, the depiction of the self found within ‘Modern’ culture, must be understood as only one possible way that the self can be organized, manufactured, and identified as a mode of consciousness, organization, and awareness<sup>245</sup>. The Subject is nothing more than a specific and provisional constitution and imposition of ‘who we are’, a unique and distinct portrayal based on the cultural practices it is embedded within and the domain of rationalization processes it is produced by. In other words, it is nothing more than a particular experience, a very culturally specific one, and is something that can only be socially identified with or legitimately scientifically applied

---

<sup>244</sup> This cultural sensitivity was not displayed or made explicitly clear until the final interviews conducted in 1984. Even in 1982 Foucault can be found conflating the idea of a Subject with the notion of the self. Obviously, since Foucault is mostly a philosopher and political historian of ‘Modern’ culture naturally he mostly discusses Subjects and Subjectivities. However, for many followers, critics, and commentators of Foucault this in turn becomes a license to speak about the self as Subject in all cultural spheres. Foucault rightly points out in his later work that this is not a universal constant; is only found within the domain it is indigenous and embedded to; and to illustrate this point explicitly states that the Subject did not exist in Greek or Roman cultural contexts since there was no search for this form of self-awareness or any problematization of ourselves in this way (RM: p. 253).

<sup>245</sup> Cf.: UPL: pp. 5-6; AE: p. 50; RM: pp. 252- 253; OGE: p. 277; Post: pp. 444- 445, 462; HS: p. 230; Gros: pp. 524- 26; ST: p. 87.

within the local, immanent cultural domain which made it possible and manufactured it thereby. To put this differently: the many ways that the self can be depicted is much richer than the various ways that the Subject can be modulated, since the Subject is only one particular way that the self can be organized, shaped, and deployed. In short, the Subject must be seen as a sub-set or distinct constitutionalization of the self.

Moving to our second quote (2) and fifth point, Foucault again discusses how the self can be envisioned differently, and as something which has been constituted by more prior and more primary features of reality. This passage also clarifies ‘the processes of rationalization that constitute the self’, as these social and cultural practices are now named the Games of Truth, (Techniques of) Power, (and Relations to the Self)<sup>246</sup>. It is these processes which are imagined as the provisional, malleable, and local dynamics that constitute the different and specific forms that the self takes on at a general or cultural level, or the particular forms of ‘subjectivity’ produced in ‘Modern’ culture. It is the changes offered to any of these three dynamics which produce the various idiosyncratic modulations, modifications, and inflections as to how the self at large or the Subject in the narrow will be processed by a culture and so perceived by that ‘individual’ and the ‘community’. As previously explained, the style the self exhibits or the particular form of Subjectivity which then emerges, will be totally based on and bear the markings of the local character of the way these three immanent processes have been inter-composed and correlated.

---

<sup>246</sup> Cf., micro-analysis in Chapter 2, pp. 64- 66, 72- 77.

Our last quote (3) makes our two final points. First, these ‘processes of rationalization’, or the three dynamics which are woven together in order to produce the particular sense of the self we cultural exhibit or the type of ‘subjectivity’ we socially bear, must themselves be imagined as working simultaneously in two opposing directions at once<sup>247</sup>. On the one hand drive the ‘Practices of Subjectification’, under-arching cultural processes which are envisioned as being imposed upon the ‘selves’ in order to form, codify, and render them into the distinct patterns of self or ‘subjectivity’ they have been socially determined to be recognized as<sup>248</sup>. Often (and especially for critics of Foucault), this dynamic is isolated as the sole process of self-constitution, allowing the easy complaint that this model of social reality only explains self-formation and cultural reproduction as a ceaseless and constant process of socially codified subjectification, and only manufactures, delineates, and orchestrates people in a completely disciplined and totalitarian manner.

Foucault clearly states in this passage that a second dynamic always operates in conjunction and ‘against’ this ‘over-determined’ process of cultural and self-constitution- ‘Practices of Freedom’<sup>249</sup>. It is this counter-dynamic which allows these same sel(f)ves, imagined as completely manufactured and socially coordinated by these ‘totalizing forces of imposition’, to counter this force with their own practices of self-formation or

---

<sup>247</sup> CF., macro- analysis in Chapter 2, pp. 66-69. Again, this must be remembered to only exist as an analytical distinction. These dynamics are never actually separated, opposed, or dueling, they are in actuality the same singular, under-arching, dynamic, relation process examined from opposing directions. In terms of the lack of cultural sensitivity of using these terms, please see footnote 135.

<sup>248</sup> ECSPF: pp. 281- 82; AE: p. 50; MF: pp. 459- 463; Tech: p. 225; PT: p. 404; ST: pp. 87- 88.

<sup>249</sup> UPL: pp. 4- 5, 8, 11, 21, 31- 31; ECSPF: pp. 281- 282, 291; Pref.: pp. 203- 204; WE: pp. 306- 309, 309- 312, 313- 316, 317, 318- 319; OGE: pp. 260- 262; 263- 266; 270- 271; MF: pp. 459- 463; Post: pp. 438- 439, 442- 443, 444, 445, 449- 450; IA: pp. 397, 399; RS: p 368; PE 374- 376; HS: pp. 14- 19, 25- 29, 230, 424, 460- 462; Gros: pp. 523- 526; SPID : pp. 163- 164; Tech: p. 225; PT: pp. 403- 404; FWL: pp. 135- 137; ST: pp. 87- 88.

subjectivization. This counter-practice enables them, both as individuals and as groups, to be able to change, alter, modify, resist, and even reject the way that the self, either specifically or generally, has been or is being determined. It is through these self-fashioning practices then, that the dynamics of cultural imposition can be criticized, challenged, and opposed, and what allows for these sel(f)ves to decide for (them)itsel(f)ves<sup>250</sup> how they would like to be fashioned, recognized, and organized within their own local environment, and via their own liberty, freedom, and choice<sup>251</sup>.

It must be noted that the priority of these dynamics are understood to move from the constituted to constituting. This is because we first must need the existence of cultural impositions in order to have something to realize, reflect upon, fundamentally challenge, and then critically modify. Yet, it also must be clearly stated that the responsibility and key to this dynamic process of self-formation and cultural re-production must be seen as moving in the opposite direction, since a political need, requisite courage, and modicum of liberty must all first exist in order to be able to challenge any of our current cultural determinations. Lastly, the weight given to any of the cultural artifacts formed via these two-way dynamics is not necessarily equal at any time, and that the present shape any of these things are laden with at any moment, itself expresses the amount and degree of possible change which they could immediately be subjected to

---

<sup>250</sup> Of course this only occurs in conjunction with the practices of everyone and everything else, and in relation to the culturally possibilities made available for such transformations.

<sup>251</sup> This is the very important addition offered in his later work. The idea that these two processes occur mutually and simultaneously, is an attempt to overcome the binary distinction claimed as necessary by Liberal political thought which opposes a free, transcendent, 'outside', authentic Subject (considered positive) with a totally dominated, imposed, socially determined Subject (considered negative). Foucault's alternate or third understanding, based on a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Our last point is that Foucault clearly believes that these practices, dynamics, techniques, and processes exist and can be found within *every single* cultural domain, appearing as the local rules, styles, patterns, practices, and techniques inherent to each group<sup>252</sup>. These dynamics must now be accepted as the a priori and immanent processes which must necessarily exist within in all cultural or social milieu, and further due to this each cultural environ has within itself the capabilities to develop, produce, and articulate their own sense of the self, albeit in different and distinct ways, each specific to its own locale. Thus, for Foucault not only do all cultures have the material from which to build a rich notion of society and community, but each is able to develop how they would like to express, portray, and represent themselves in their own idiosyncratic way. To reiterate, each of these depictions must be seen as absolutely legitimate and perfectly coherent of ‘who they are’, but only within the immanent realm and particular cultural setting they are embedded within and indigenous too<sup>253</sup>.

## F. Summary

By this point, it should be readily obvious that Foucault’s conception of the self has been intentionally developed as a complete counter-point to the way it has been depicted

---

<sup>252</sup> Cf., UPL: pp. 4-5, 10, 13, 21; ECSPF: pp. 281- 282; 291; Pref.: pp. 199- 202; AE: p. 52; CT: pp. 256- 257; 261; RM: p. 252; OGE: pp. 258- 261, 266, 270, 277, 280; MF: p. 460- 463; Post: pp. 442- 43, 444- 445, 450; IA: p. 399; HS: pp. 46- 48, 50, 189- 192, 230; Gros: p. 523; ISR: pp. 122- 123; SPPID: pp. 163- 164, 167- 168; Tech: pp. 224, 226, 227- 228; ST: pp. 87- 88. This is a frontal attack on Anthropology a discipline which imagines that individuals and even cultures can actually exist in pre-socialized, proto-political structures.

<sup>253</sup> We will discuss how the self is actually a double-entendre, something which refers both to the designated cultural group at large, as well as to the parsed units (what our culture designates as individuals) found within. This will be in this chapter in the section following the next.

by traditional scholarship. According to Foucault, our first notion of the self, the one he claims is the depiction which is entrenched and dominant within our traditional academic discourses, is envisioned as a universal, necessary, and obligatory category of existence, and so something which can not fail to be realized in any possible human context.

Second, it is claimed to reside as the foundational, necessary, and basic medium through which legitimate and meaningful possible human, cultural, and social experiences can be realized. Third, it is considered to serve as a sovereign notion or universal standard for human self-constitution, making it a necessary categorization which all people throughout the world must fundamentally identify and comply with. Last, this conceptualization of 'who we are', as well as the material instantiations it is imagined to represent, must be recognized in a way which makes them appear as individuated, divided, isolated, unified, bounded, distinguished atom, existing unto-itself and prior to any social context or cultural reality.

Our second conceptualization of the self, this time made from a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' or Foucauldian perspective imagines it as a cultural product or human artifact, and so something which exists as a 'complex' or 'bricolage' which has been socially produced via prior and more basic forces, processes, practices, and techniques. This mentality demands that the way the self is imagined or appears within any particular cultural milieu is nothing more than a secondary and produced feature of existence that has been modulated or inflected in various ways according to the different cultural, social, and historical relations it is embedded within. Further, the self must now be seen as an always dynamic, flexible, provisional thing, and so no first or last instantiation of it ever existed which all groups must begin with or develop towards. This also demands

that on the one hand the self is a dynamic concept and artifact, something which can always be changed, challenged, and provoked to become other than it is, and on the other that it can never be stabilized, isolated, or fundamentally individuated into one singular form residing within these under-arching relational processes. In short, we form our notions of ‘who we are’ completely in conjunction with the cultural and social processes that are constantly forming us<sup>254</sup>.

### **G. A first glance response to problems of Agency vs. Structure or Freedom vs. Determination given this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ or ‘Foucauldian’ model**

Before leaving this chapter and offering a final reflection as to the existential stakes involved in accepting and then deploying either of these worldviews, it is important to quickly highlight the role which ‘the self’ plays in this model of cultural production based on prior, basic, or more ‘primitive’ relational dynamics. First we must put to the side the

---

<sup>254</sup> Again, this Foucauldian portrayal ought to be seen as a more complex meditation on how ‘we’ form our cultural worlds, while simultaneously having ‘our’ cultural worlds produce ‘us’. According to Traditional Liberal analysis there are only two options to understand this existential phenomenon, one which is totally privileged and the other which is fundamentally criticized. The first, claims that a robust form of individuated humanity (the Subject) exists prior to and outside all cultural and social forces, and is able to produce our cultural realities solely through its own structure, logic, freedom, and interests. The second option is to grant no agency or freedom to anyone to be able to accomplish this cultural task, making people appear as if they are thoroughly implicated and designed by the overarching social and cultural forces they are embedded within. The option which this thesis is attempting to articulate via Foucault and a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology is to accept that the notion of the self and the cultural forces which help to design any codification or formalization of it are simultaneous, mutually reciprocal, and equi-primordial. Thus, instead of demanding a necessary delineation which arises from one side or the other, this mentality stresses the fact that ‘we’ (or both the ‘individuals’ and the group) form both ourselves and our cultural worlds together and at the same time in a constant and ceaseless, relational dynamic. To reduce this conversation into a maxim, one no longer asks, “Does man make culture or does culture make man?”, since neither option is considered tenable any longer; rather the question becomes, “how do different cultures develop the notion of who they are in conjunction with and based upon the previous patterns and notions of who they already think they are and act as?”.

prevalent Liberal discourse about the self we have all been exposed to, one which opposes Free, self-determined agency on the one hand with totalized, structural determination on the other. Once this has been accomplished, then the well waxed dilemma of where to place Foucault along this continuum can be problematized. At this point this thesis will barely gesture at this challenge of problematization.

First and as previously discussed, this 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' worldview demands that no space or pocket can ever be envisioned as residing beyond, before, or prior to the under-girding, relational dynamic within which all things, including the self, are necessarily caught up in and totally produced by. The self or individual then, can not be conceived as ever able to stand outside of any these immanent processes. Second the self, and just like anything else, must be understood to reside within this as a secondary and produced feature of existence. In short, this means that it should be recognized as a particularized cultural artifact which has had its distinct form given to it according to the specific, dynamic relations it is caught up in and concocted by. Third, at the primary, basic, or alpha level, no first, fundamental, or trenchant demarcations, divisions, or definitions of any kind can be imagined to naturally exist or be imposed upon this 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology. Given this worldview, at base everyone (and everything) must be seen as fundamentally connected not only to this relational under-girth, not only to the 'Relations' and 'Dynamics', but also to all others, as well as everything else.

If we accept these three points, the notion of the self (or identity) expressed or displayed in or by any specific or distinct cultural environ can now never be imagined as something that can be reduced into necessary division or distinct codifications; rather the

distinct instantiations portrayed in any of these cultural milieus must be considered to exist, first and foremost, as nothing more than a possible structure in a continuum of never-divided, non-differentiated relational continuity. To be as clear as possible here, once our basic ontology has been envisioned in this relational way, something that acts as the grounds, logic, and material upon which the particular sense of the self either at the conceptual or existential level is manufactured and manifested by, then this means that the various ways to culturally depict the self as distinct, designated, and individuated unities, must be seen as secondary, produced, provisional nominations which have been imposed upon and informed onto our ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ reality. In short, the very idea that the self could even be considered to exist as a unique and specified unity, immediately means that it is already being conceptualized and imag(in)ed in a specific and particular way by someone ensconced in the type of culture which produces it to be seen in this very defined and structured way<sup>255</sup>.

To continue, this also means that the structural limitations traditionally ascribed to the self must immediately be dissolved upon this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ model<sup>256</sup>.

---

<sup>255</sup> In this worldview there are no fundamental discontinuities; only greater and lesser produced, secondary, imposed, and imagined breaks in our continuity.

<sup>256</sup> This is not to reduce the world into a globalized, totalized, homogenized, or cosmopolitan first soup. The point being made is that although there are real, actual, and necessary distinctions, divisions, and differences which exist between groups, individuals, or ‘things’, they are not themselves fundamental, trenchant, or necessary in how they are imagined, produced, or imposed. This is not an attempt to do away with all difference; rather the attempt is being made to explain the necessity of difference in a different way—as based on a first, original, non- distinguished continuum, or within a basic, shared, continuous commonality. Traditionally the scientific arguments usually offered by our academic community often attempt to explain similarity and difference upon a worldview which begins with a plurality or multiplicity of differential, uniform, singular entities. The issue becomes: how do these aspects come together to form an even greater unity (Kantian logic), or how do we retain these original or natural distinctions, often in a relativistic fashion, in order to explain and show the importance of difference (Herderian logic). Obviously, both sides begin their worldview with the same ‘Atomic’ and ‘Foundational’ ontology. The argument offered by this thesis is one which begins completely opposite—upon a general and under-arching commonality, which is used as the groundwork to explain the many necessary, imposed, and produced differences we imagine as necessarily existent within our cultural field. How is our ontology made possible without an argument which asserts its existence upon some form of a cosmological, ontological, or methodological dogmatism?

Vertically speaking, at the primary level it is now fundamentally impossible to distinguish an individual per se from the group they reside within, since they are both being constituted together by the same processes, practices, and techniques, albeit at different levels of cultural production and relational intensity. By logical implication, this same argument also holds in relation to specific groups of humanity at large, since once again the fundamental demarcations imputed into the 'family of man' must now be seen as nothing more than mental abstractions which have been produced by our culture in order to organize and correlate our particular experiences of our own cultural existence. In short, the notion of the self which we use to refer to or designate distinct general cultural groups or the individuals found therein is only one singular and possible extrapolation of the possibilities given an open and infinite model.

In conjunction with this vertical re-conceptualization of the self, we must also accept that this same rationale can be deployed horizontally. This means that the particular notion of the self portrayed by any group of people can never be stabilized or formalized into one codification which can be seen as completely or totally representing any or all of them. This same logic obtains both in discussions as to how the differences between individuals in a specified social locus arise or between groups over disparate cultural milieus. As stated, this is because such divisions are nothing more than imagined separations, structures which have been imposed unto our basic relational reality after the fact, and so must be imagined as only secondary, provisional, contingent, and nominal renderings of reality. In short, given this 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' worldview, the self can not be imagined to exist fundamentally as an a-historical, pre-defined, atomic unit (the Subject), and further the self can not rest as a distinguished and distinct individuation

that perfectly represents any individual, group, people, culture, or nation. The distinctions which we normally accept about 'who we are', completely and fundamentally break-down once our world is re-conceptualized in this relational way at the ontological level<sup>257</sup>.

Now upon this recasting, we can very quickly gesture at how Freedom, agency, and self-constitution might look upon this 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' model. Most importantly, the idea that we are completely trapped within and solely produced by these under-arching relations can not be overemphasized. This worldview is not one which accepts that we have no control or involvement whatsoever in how we produce either our sense of the self or our cultural worlds. In short, we can not accept that all things formed via this immanent, relational force are completely manufactured in a totally imposed, codified, and dictated way.

Previously, we cited three reasons offered by Foucault as to why we are able to freely and consciously manufacture ourselves and our cultural worlds with deliberation, responsibility, and agency, even though we are completely embedded within and produced by this pre-existent, immanent, under-arching, dynamic relationality. First we explained that the realization of any totalized 'States of Domination' would be impossible upon this model since they only exist as a limit or pole framing this system<sup>258</sup>, and second it was claimed that resistance must necessarily exist as a fundamentally recalcitrant,

---

<sup>257</sup> Importantly, upon the acceptance of a 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' ontology not only are relations with the 'other' absolutely necessary for the possibility and practice of self-formation, but in fact at base and in the original both the 'self' and the 'other' are at first the same, but in the second necessarily different. However, the sameness is necessary, natural, and fundamental, the difference is imposed, subsequent, and culturally produced.

<sup>258</sup> Please see pp. 75- 89.

productive force which on its own ensures that the relations and dynamics remain stimulated and can never stabilized or frozen<sup>259</sup>. Third, we mentioned that dual and reciprocal processes of objectivation and subjectivation are always in operation, which to recap is a vision that explains that both the subject and the object must be understood as completely caught up together within a singular, constituting process of mutual and syncopated transformation<sup>260</sup>. Each side simultaneously, reciprocally, and completely alters, augments, and diminishes the aspects of the other (and all else), making any reduction, separation, or division of one side to the other merely an analytical and philosophical exercise, something which only exists to allow for further intellectual clarification<sup>261</sup>.

Thus, instead of accepting the immediate stance that we must see these chthonic and immanent relations as operating in a determined, one-way, and totalizing way which produces fundamentally dominated individuals, or that the individuals form these relations solely in accordance with their personal freedom, agency, and genius, on this model they should instead be seen as operating in an equi-primordial orchestration, or as a constant, mutual, and dynamic negotiation which totally transforms both aspects in reciprocal relation to the changes which everything else undergoes. Thus, on the one hand, the self can not be seen as something which is completely subjectified, dominated, or determined by these prior immanent relations, nor on the other hand as having complete individual freedom to personally deliberate upon and produce our cultural

---

<sup>259</sup> Please see pp. 78- 79.

<sup>260</sup> Please see pp. 64- 69.

<sup>261</sup> In short it is impossible to reduce any analysis to epistemological determinations or metaphysical speculations. Each set of issues is only made possible given the way the other is side is also being structured.

structures solely from themselves; rather the self at both the cultural and individual level should be seen as a provisional, malleable structure; a shared and common experience; and as the major relational sculptor of what will become our distinct and idiosyncratic cultural worlds. Thus, the self either as a cultural and individuated unit is something which is always being formed in conjunction, unison, syncopation, and orchestration with all other aspects or products of the social universe it is ensconced within, and amidst, by, via, and through the under-arching relationality it is embedded.

Now once this mentality has been accepted, then it definitely follows that a modicum Liberty and Freedom must exist within this dynamic in order to practice this task of group and self-formation<sup>262</sup>. Obviously this means that we must work towards the liberation of ourselves and others from ‘States of Domination’, and that at times their eradication is a necessary precondition for the very possibility to practice group and self-formation<sup>263</sup>. In these cases then, the first and most pressing commitment appears to be fundamentally challenge any imposed ‘Structures of Domination’ in order to stimulate the movement of the relational dynamics which have been frozen and consolidated by them.

However, Foucault directly states that even more fundamental than focusing on ‘Processes of Liberation’ to move us away from all possible ‘Structures of Domination’, and it is with this thought that we will end this chapter, is the fact that this activity is not sufficient alone to clarify the practices of Freedom which will immediately and

---

<sup>262</sup> ECSPF: pp. 283- 284, 290- 291, 292; SP: pp. 340- 343, 345- 348; STSW: p. 160; FWL: p. 137.

<sup>263</sup> ECSPF: pp. 282- 284; SP: p. 342. As previously discussed on pp. 75- 89, SD’s are imagined as exactly what prevent such self-formation practices, processes, and techniques, since when they are instituted little to no relational flexibility, dynamic, or Freedom is retained to shape, transform, or alter our selves, structures, or situations, Cf. ECSPF: p. 300.

necessarily arise once these constrictive structures have been renovated or effaced<sup>264</sup>.

There is not a doubt that Foucault urges us to challenge any and all States of Domination, and to fight for the protection of our relational fabric, but he also clearly states that this alone is not enough to coordinate the specific ways that freedom must be both practiced and restricted given these our liberated structures and relations.

To offer a thought experiment, “If all were all to liberate our sexuality tomorrow, is this a world we want to live in?” Obviously we would still have to regulate our Freedom in relation to ourselves, in relation to others, and in relation to the structures produced in this completely sexually liberated world. It is not enough to work towards undermining all the restrictive and imposing structures of domination in our cultural worlds, without also being ready to enter into shared, communal processes of relational re-formation, re-sanction, and reproduction. The real question this mentality of ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ Freedom offers is: how do we want our relations to be consolidated afterwards to produce our social life? Which relations should be privileged, used in what way, at what cost, for which reasons, and of course what are the possibilities for further alteration or transformation to any specific constellation or the system at large<sup>265</sup>.

---

<sup>264</sup> ECSPF: pp. 282- 284; CT: p. 263; SPK: pp. 354- 355.

<sup>265</sup> Again one can understand the importance of Ethics for this model (the self’s relation with the self) and Governmentality (the self’s relation with the other in the practices of the self), given the lack of a first foundation for the self, and the fact that it is a double entendre which refers both to the individual, to the group at large, and to humanity itself. Before leaving it is important to note that Foucault takes this relationality very seriously and explicitly offers some ethical considerations about how to act in a world that is based on a relational co-existence at the ontological level. In general we should ensure that the relations and relationality are always protected by extending and allowing as much freedom and as little domination as possible to produce our cultural worlds (ECSPF: pp. 298- 300; PE: p. 379; SCSA: p. 147- 148). To accomplish this, Foucault designates a number of maxims or procedural instructions to ensure that this does not happen. It must be stressed however, that these base rules are by no means a summary of his many other political and specifically ethical directives that he offers throughout his works, something that should be given their own space; rather, they act as the basic ground-rules to ensure that relations and freedom (and so cultural life in general) are always kept open, possible, and alive.

In our attempt to both sustain, protect, and further our relationality, relations, and freedom, Foucault offers four major statements of advice or provisional maxims. First of all we are to always embrace an

It is with this that we begin to get a glimpse of Foucault's overall project, "the investigation of the different ways (our) culture(s) produces notions of the self, via their own processes, practices, and techniques of self-constitution, but always understood as completely embedded within a sea of relations and in conjunction with the syncopated relational production of everything else". All groups and all individuals throughout the world are all simultaneously involved and caught up in this task of cultural production, a process which constantly renovates ourselves, our cultures, and our shared and common world.

We will now enter into our final chapter which will consider the existential stakes of accepting either worldview as the authoritative description of ourselves and reality.

---

experimental attitude in our relations with things. Second, any provisional thing formed, consolidated, or established must have its scientific effectiveness and utility first calibrated against our relationality, and anything which attacks, impugns, or impinges on these relations should be modified, rearranged, or reversed. Third, all partners should always be honored as a subject of action an indispensable element in this nexus of relationality, and so we are to conduct ourselves in such a way that creates as little domination as needed, and so allows our partners as much Freedom as possible. Lastly, there is total and complete recalcitrance towards ever completely fixing any relations or the relationality into one frozen, eternal, permanent form, which is called a State of Domination Cf., ECSPP: p. 284; WE: pp. 313- 319; Post: pp. 449- 450; IA: pp. 398- 399; WICP: pp. 383- 384; SP: pp. 330- 331, 336, 340; FWL: pp. 139- 140.

## Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

Summary as Political Stakes; Future research; A ‘Relational Cut’ and a ‘Cultural Turn’

### A. Summary as Political Stakes<sup>266</sup>

The last chapter offered a contrast between two ways the self can be depicted. The first, which has been ascribed to Traditional research pursued in the academic disciplines of Political Theory and Philosophy offers a vision of ‘who we are’- The Subject- that portrays it as an a priori, foundational, and pre-individuated aspect of our existence, and so as a universal, trans-cultural, and necessary feature for all reality. The second, this time offered from a Foucauldian or ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ perspective imagines the self to be a secondary, provisional, and malleable entity or cultural, historical, and political construct which has been manufactured according to the practices, processes, and techniques it is indigenous to.

The two chapters prior to this explained how either stylization of the self which is outlined above, is itself completely based on or fully made possible by two different ontological models of reality or cultural worldviews. The first, and again attributed to the aforementioned academic scholarship, begins its philosophical vision with a

---

<sup>266</sup> If we were to highlight three important themes canvassed in this thesis, they are: that despite the many revisions, alterations, and modifications in scope, theme, and focus which Foucault offers to his project, he consistently utilizes a ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ ontology in order to ground his unique style of methodology throughout his work (or at least in the ‘middle’ and ‘later’ stages examined in this project); that he offered three analytical models to help aide our imagination to allow it to envision how ‘Relations’ and ‘Dynamics’ could be understood to act as the groundwork, basis, logic, and source for all aspects of cultural formation and reproduction; and that the self is an active aspect of this ‘Relational’, ‘Dynamic’ world even if it is embedded in and produced by the under-arching relationality it is indigenous to.

pronouncement of a number of already pre-established, foundational, and atomized things, understood as a-historical, universal, de-contextual, first units of reality. The second and in counter offers a mentality which imagines that relations, dynamics, and a relationality pre-exist all things, and acts as the under-gird, basis, logic, source, and force upon which, through, by, and via all aspects of cultural reality are produced and transformed.

Finally, our first chapter explained that either worldview engages in alternate descriptions as to how we should imagine origins, beginnings, and first order (cosmology); primary, elemental or originary features of existence, as well as the secondary aspects subsequently formed by them (ontology); and what will be considered proper scientific routes to garner knowledge and interact in the world (methodologies).

At this point it must be emphatically stated that it would be absolutely impossible to authoritatively ascertain the ‘truth’ or necessity of one of these cosmological/ontological stances over the other, since neither of these worldviews could ever be in and of itself absolutely provable or verifiable. This would be an impossible feat to accomplish for two reasons. First of all, it is obviously not possible to return to the very first primitive or alpha condition of all reality to view how the world was first established or entered into existence. Second and even if this first task could be realized, it would then be impossible to be able to actually stand outside this cosmogonical process in order to offer a ‘scientific’ or ‘objective’ report as to how the world really was first ordered or produced<sup>267</sup>.

---

<sup>267</sup> Of course we create scientific models that attempt to make sense of how we originated, where we are now, and where we are going to. Further, upon these endeavors we can try to work back to justify the coherence of these root assumptions. However, to use these scientific models, themselves based on nothing more than cosmological and ontological speculation, to fundamentally prove our original assertions is not only

In other words basic questions about our very reality will always remain open and un-ended: did the universe actually begin in an initial eruption that produced all of reality in one fundamental, singular moment; is one of these first, necessary, eternal units of features the Cogito or Subject of Truth, a universal formula that completely captures ourselves as thinking entities; did the world in fact begin with a plurality of equally free, atomic individuals, who all competed against each other for scarce resources in a pre-cultural, pre-social, proto-political ‘State of Nature’? Have relations, dynamics, and a relationality always and eternally under-girded our cultural world, ceaselessly producing and transforming all of our social features; is the self nothing more than a living cultural, historical, and political artifact that is constantly being formed via the relations and dynamics it is based on and produced by?

It is at this point that we come directly to the political stakes of this thesis and ontological/methodological debate. Given that it is impossible to absolutely ascertain or guarantee the ‘Truth’ lying behind either of these origin stories, then our evaluation of such charter myths cannot simply rest on epistemological criteria. Instead other questions must be asked of these philosophical discourses: how do these accounts act as truthful things? How are they given their initial articulation; imposed on our cultural imagination; and granted social and scientific acceptability? How are they used to manipulate our reality in order to make it in accordance with an already pre-authorized worldview?

This thesis believes these political stakes can be cashed out in two important ways: what is marginalized and excluded once one of these worldviews is pronounced to the

---

tautological, but in fact completely overlooks the important uni-lateral relation which inheres between the notions of cosmology, ontology, and methodology.

detriment of the other; and what are the implications for our involvement with the world if either is culturally accepted as the official narrative grounding our understanding of the world? Turning to the first issue, we will make four points, and the first two should be immediately obvious. First of all, the way either worldview envisions our reality makes some features of existence appear more fundamental, prominent and pronounced than others. In other words, the way we world or disclose our reality to ourselves will allow some aspects of the world to appear as more obvious, basic, prior, fundamental, and essential than other possible features of existence.

The actual contrast been employed by this thesis has been in terms of how ‘relations’ and ‘things’ are imagined by either of these particular cultural worldviews or models of reality. The first, cited as our traditional discourse, and named ‘Foundational’ and ‘Atomic’ initiates its philosophical imagination by prioritizing ‘things’, which in turn demands that its investigations, inquiries, arguments, and assessments begins with and focuses on such entities. The other begins with relations, dynamics, and a relationality, named Foucauldian or ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ in order to explain how the ‘things’ we witness in our cultural realities might have been culturally, historically, and politically produced, organized, and implemented. The specific example we used to illustrate this difference was in terms of how the self is portrayed and utilized by either worldview. In the first case this was represented by the Modern Subject of Thought (Philosophy) and Power (Political Theory), and it was shown to be imagined as a fixed, constant, universal notion of who we are, residing prior to and before any feature of cultural existence- a thing. The second was understood via Foucault’s relational account, and so now envisioned as a highly malleable, cultural, historical, political product which has been

formed via and within under-arching relational dynamics, social practices and idiosyncratic techniques- formed by relations.

Second, it can be seen that each of these two worldviews overemphasize and privilege exactly the features that the other is attempting to disqualify, marginalize, and downplay. In other words the championing of ‘things’ by our first model is done to the detriment of ‘relations’, which makes them appear as secondary, derivative, and contingent to these more prior features of existence. The second in contrast fundamentally re-evaluates this opposition and so declares ‘relations’ as prior, first, and more previous to ‘things, which in turn casts ‘things’ into the position of being secondary, provisional, and manufactured. Thus each of these contrasting positions place paramount importance and priority on completely opposite features of existence.

The third point to make between these two disparate ways to imagine the world is that whenever either attempts to explicate its own vision of the world it immediately cancels out the grounds, logic, and possibility for the other to vocalize its discourse. In short, they cannot both be accepted or instantiated as our reality at one and the same time.

Thus, once our first model of reality is accepted as the basis of cultural existence and as the primary aspects for scientific analysis, a move which downgrades ‘relations’ to secondary, derivative, contingent, and epiphenomenal features of existence, and so aspects which can be easily overlooked, marginalized, or even excluded whenever speaking about the lives, then our ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ or Foucauldian approach to reality will be considered an illogical, incoherent, unintelligible, and so illegitimate way to conceive and approach our existence. Any attempt to understand our culture as being formed in this ‘Relational’ and ‘Dynamic’ way will immediately be both frustrated and

disqualified. Conversely, once our second approach is accepted, one which suggests that whatever any culture or group considers or nominates to exist as a 'thing' is itself only a malleable, secondary, and derivative construct which has gained its structure and value via the prior and more previous 'Relations' and 'Dynamics' it is embedded within and indigenous to, then in turn any analysis which is initiated with the first acceptance of a Subject or any other first, foundational, or atomic entity understood as pre-existing within the philosophical field, must be seen as an ungrounded, insincere, and culturally arrogant way to imagine and investigate our existence.

However and to make our fourth, there is a very noticeable and key difference in how either of the two worldviews work to exclude or marginalize the other's vision. Although they each attempt to fundamentally cancel out the grounds, logic, and intelligibility of the other's discourse, this is done in two different ways. The first accomplishes this by declaring that there can be no other official and legitimate narrative but its own, and so by nature will act hostile and antagonistic towards any other possible stance. The second in comparison appears is much more flexible and open to alternate worldviews, since to it is prepared to coexist with any vision of reality which does not begin by denying that life rests upon a basic relationality and formed via 'Relations' and 'Dynamics', or minimally does not begin with any first, fixed, universal, a priori features of existence that entered into cultural existence in a pre-determined, pre-established, and pre-individuated way. Thus, although each may work to completely undermine the grounds, logic, and discourse of the other; the first is by nature absolutely recalcitrant to any other vision but its own; whereas the second is prepared to coexist with any worldview other than the first.

This also means that our first or traditional worldview is very limited, since it is only able to pronounce the sanctity and prove the truth of its own position by philosophically denying all other possible approaches; the second in counter is able to interrogate and problematize the assertions made by the first offering both an alternate explanation as to how this particular description of cultural reality was produced and instituted. In fact, the second worldview can show that our traditional discourse is only one possible description about the world, something which is partial to its own view of reality, and in fact lacks the sufficient depth to be able to ground its own vision of existence.

It is with this insight on the dissimilar principles of exclusion which are offered by either model that we can move onto the second major point we are trying to make in this conclusion: the real existential stakes involved in the cultural acceptance and social deployment of either worldview. Again, much more important than actually determining once and for all the fundamental truth lying behind our cosmological and ontological models of reality is to understand how these differing ways of organizing our world actually impact on how we live a shared and common existence.

According to our Foucauldian or 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' worldview, both the Modern Subject and the traditional way of envisioning existence have been asserted as the singular, sole, obligatory, and necessary form for self-constitution and understanding reality; yet, from this alternate perspective they appear as nothing more than particular and idiosyncratic descriptions which have been developed within, by, via, and through the local and immanent cultural patterns, processes, techniques, and practices they are embedded in and indigenous to. Thus from this stance, the unique discourse offered by

our tradition cannot be asserted as any more universal than any other way the self or reality can be depicted or portrayed. To put this as succinctly as possible, despite its arrogant and bold claims to the contrary, this narrative can not be considered any more exceptional than any other possible iteration or way the world can be imagined and conceived

However, our traditional discourse, one that begins with first, universal entities as the singular, necessary, and obligatory conditions that ground this 'legitimate' portrayal of, obviously believes that its cosmological, ontological, and methodological insights stand above any form of interrogation, questioning, or criticism. It claims that these are the universal (and non-cultural) standards which must be accepted by the whole world as the basis and possibility of having any proper cultural experiences to understand reality or standardized method from which to scientifically analyze the world. Frighteningly, by this point our culture has almost completely accepted this particular way of representing ourselves and our world, and it has become thoroughly entrenched within the disciplines of philosophy and political theory (to mention only the two which are analyzed in this thesis). Naturally, this completely clouds our considerations as to what else can be imagined as the primary and paramount aspects of reality, but it also totally affects the philosophical, political, and scientific discourses we engage to order our existence to perfectly match up with this pre-accepted vision. In other words, this particular way of envisioning the world has become the standard, norm, and basis for our outlook on what life, culture, and existence should be, which in turn act as the foundations and constants that ground our conversations, investigations, and analysis. There are few if any models which are authorized as able to challenge, criticize, or problematize this model of reality

without being indicted as hostile to our notions of Reason, Science, Truth, Order, Justice, Law, and Right.

Yet, as if this self-imposed hegemony was not enough, this way of thinking, one which is completely entrenched within our academic and social institutions, is now being franchised throughout the world in order to assimilate and colonize all people under this singular and global rubric. Ideas which have been crystallized as our basic cultural standards and social policies have become the benchmark by which to judge, modify, and rearrange the ways of life for all other groups of people. Thus, it could be claimed that our traditional model of cosmology, ontology, and methodology today acts as a global ‘State of Domination’, something which must be resisted, interrogated, and overcome. In short, this worldview and its associated scientific regimes and social policies should be indicted as hegemonic, assimilative, authoritarian instrument when issued as the governing logic over our own cultural environ, and as an effective tool of colonial, genocidal, and totalitarian administration when wielded by our international organizations upon other ways of being practiced throughout the world<sup>268</sup>.

To end, these seemingly ‘mere’ philosophical differences about how to view ourselves and reality, do in fact completely shape the way we inhabit the world, live in communities, relate with each other, and care for our sel(f)ves. Thus, this conversation is not simply an academic exercise which is based on a simple philosophical distinction; rather it is a very real political attack upon our own tradition one that claims that it holds the official depiction of our basic reality. In short, these philosophical differences are fundamentally and foremost political conversations about how we arrange and exist

---

<sup>268</sup> Of course upon this model there are no real, absolute, or fundamental ‘inside/outside’ distinctions. We nominate and produce what we call ‘ourselves’ and what we consider as ‘other’.

within shared cultural milieus, common social arrangements, and our global existential reality.

## **B. Future Research**

I appreciate the time, care, and patience which any reader has granted to this thesis. Although this thesis does not want to hold any examiner hostage for any longer with its thoughts, two very brief and final points will be made. First, although we spent most of our energy showing the analytical problems of pre-accepting a worldview which begins with a 'Foundational' and 'Atomic' ontology, just as important would be to show how these first and pre-individuated unities are utilized in our culture in a synthetic manner. In other words it is not enough to show that these elementary, primitive, or primary entities which we nominate as the basis of our reality are philosophically ungrounded and culturally arrogated, but even more striking is how we use these pre-assumed, pre-determined, pre-established markers as the groundwork to form our sciences and practices.

One could point to the tradition of Moral Philosophy which begins its discourse upon the pre-cognition of a Modern Subject and then asks how we should properly quantify and arrange them (utilitarianism); the possibility of rightful and lawful contracts between them (contractualism); or the importance of always remaining true to this particular model of self-organization and awareness (deontology). What other possible ethical stance could arise if we do not begin or frame our discussion upon our traditional model?

Further one could look at how sovereignty is legitimated in a country like Canada, one which supposes that the land it occupies was surrendered in an ethical, legal, and post-

colonial fashion. How is this argument of rightful conquest and colonization based on our traditional model of reality, and how are First Nations depicted and described in this account? How does Anthropology and Law buttress this philosophical and political narrative to ensure the legitimacy of our State-Sovereignty remain unquestioned, unchallenged, and legitimate? Why is this process understood as only existing in other parts of the world?

Again models of development and global institutions such as the UN could be examined as to how they have used this narrative to the groundwork and benchmark to criticize and marshal other groups to live according a certain and specific cultural standard. What damage does this do to other ways of living, including the possibility for us to imagine our own existence differently?

Every single one of these sets of questions could be interrogated with further research upon the costs and benefits of imposing our worldview upon our shared global reality. Even more interesting would be to examine the merit and claims of any of these discourses upon our Foucauldian, or 'Relational' and 'Dynamic' model of existence. Moreover, upon this alternate imagination of reality how could the ethos of Anarchy and the importance of environmental awareness be understood differently. How could this model open up new ways to talk to other cultures (and especially First Nations in Canada) about how our shared existence is and can be imagined differently.

### **C: The 'Relational Cut' and the 'Cultural Turn'**

Finally, this thesis has been an attempt to offer what could be considered a ‘Relational Cut’ wielded against our ‘Foundational’ and ‘Atomic’ ontology. This would displace, historicize, ‘culturate’, and interrogate the basic way we imagine our existence. This allows us to question, examine, and criticize a model of reality which for far too long has been considered beyond and above any form of rational scrutiny. This ‘Relational Cut’ in turn is in the hopes of inaugurating a ‘Cultural Turn’ into our cultural imagination, scientific practices, and social policies- in short our very ethos and way of life. With this we can once again realize that our story is only one possible instantiation in an infinite sea of articulations, each beautiful and meaningful as its own expression of our cosmological, ontological, and methodological impulses.

## Bibliography

### Works Cited: by Foucault

1984

*The Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality, Vol. 2*, trans. R. Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1985. (UPL).

“Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 281- 301, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (ECSPF).

“Politics, Polemic, and Problematizations: An Interview With Michel Foucault.” trans. Lydia Davis. In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 111- 119, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (PPP).

“Preface to the History of Sexuality, Vol 2.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 199- 205, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (Pref.).

“What Is Enlightenment.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 303- 319, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (WE).

“What Is Critique.” (WC). In *The Politics of Truth*, Sylvie Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth, eds. New York: Semiotext(e), 1997.

“An Aesthetics of Existence.” trans. Alan Sheridan, pp. 47- 53. In *Politics, Philosophy, Culture- Interviews and Other Writings, 1977- 1984*, Lawrence Kritzman, ed. New York: Routledge, 1988. (AE).

“Concern For Truth.” trans. Alan Sheridan, pp. 255- 267. In *Politics, Philosophy, Culture- Interviews and Other Writings, 1977- 1984*, Lawrence Kritzman, ed. New York: Routledge, 1988. (CT).

“The Return of Morality.” trans. Alan Sheridan, pp. 242- 254. In *Politics, Philosophy, Culture- Interviews and Other Writings, 1977- 1984*, Lawrence Kritzman, ed. New York: Routledge, 1988. (RM).

1983

- “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of a Work in Progress.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 253- 280, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (OGE).
- “Maurice Florence.” trans. Robert Hurley. In *Volume 2: Aesthetics: Method and Epistemology*, pp. 459- 463, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (MF).
- “Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.” *Volume 2: Aesthetics: Method and Epistemology*, pp. 433- 458, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (Post).
- “Interview With *Actes*.” In *Volume 3: Power*, pp. 395- 402, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (IA).
- “The Risks of Security.” In *Volume 3: Power*, pp. 365- 381, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (RS).
- “What Is Called “Punishing”?” In *Volume 3: Power*, pp. 382- 393, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (WICP).
- “Politics and Ethics: An Interview.” trans. Catherine Porter. In the *Foucault Reader*, pp. 373- 380, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: Pantheon, 1984. (PE).
- 1982
- The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, trans. Graham Burchell. Frederic Gros, ed. New York: Picador, 2006. (HS).
- “Course Context.” In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, trans. Graham Burchell. Frederic Gros, ed, pp 522- 526. New York: Picador, 2006. (Gros).
- “Dits and Ecrits.” In “The Analytic of Finitude and the History of Subjectivity”, Beatrice Han. In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Second Edition, Gary Gutting, ed, pp. 176- 209. Cambridge: CUP, 2003. (Han).
- “Hermeneutics of the Subject: Course Summary.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 93- 106, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (HSS).
- “An Interview by Stephen Riggins.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 121- 133, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (ISR).
- “Sexual Choice, Sexual Act.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 141- 156, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (SCSA).
- “Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 163- 173, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (SPPID).

“Technologies of the Self.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 223- 251, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (TS).

“The Political Technology of Individuals.” In *Volume 3: Power*, pp. 403- 417, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (PT).

“The Subject and Power.” In *Volume 3: Power*, pp. 326- 348, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (SP).

“Space, Knowledge, Power.” In *Volume 3: Power*, pp. 349- 364, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (SPK).

1981

“Friendship as a Way of Life.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 135- 140, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (FWL).

“Subjectivity and Truth: Course Summary.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 87- 92, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (ST).

“Social Triumph of the Sexual Will.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 157- 162, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (STSW).

“Omnes et Singulatim”: Toward a Critique of Political Reason.” In *Volume 3: Power*, pp. 298- 325, James Faubion, ed. New York: New Press, 1998. (OS).

1976

*Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey. M. Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, eds. New York: Picador, 2003. (SMBD).

*The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990. (HSI).

“Society Must Be Defended: Course Summary.” In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 59- 65, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997. (SMBDS).

## Works Cited: on Foucault

### Books:

Best, Steven. *The Politics of Historical Vision: Marx, Foucault, Habermas*. New York: Guildford Press, 1995.

Best, Steven and Douglas Kelner. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*. New York: Guildford Press, 1991.

Hadot, Pierre and Arnold Davidson. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995.

Sanbonmatsu, John. "The Prince and the Archaeologist." In *The Postmodern Prince: Critical Theory, Left Strategy, and the Making of a New Political Subject*, Chapter 5. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004.

### Articles:

Allen, Amy. "Foucault, Feminism, and the Self: The Politics of Personal Transformation." In *Feminism and the Final Foucault*, pp. 235- 257, Dianne Taylor and Karen Vintage, eds. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

Davidson, Arnold. "Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics." In *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, pp. 221- 235. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994a.

Davidson, Arnold. "Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault: The History of Ethics and Ancient Thought." 1994b. Reprint in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault, Second Edition*, Gary Gutting, ed, pp. 123- 148. Cambridge: CUP, 2006.

Hindess, Barry. "Politics and Liberation." In *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*, pp. 50- 63, Jeremy Moss, ed. London: Sage, 1998.

Fraser, Nancy. "Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'." 1985. pp. 185- 209.

Fraser, Nancy. "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions." 1981. Reprint In *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, pp. 18- 34. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

Habermas, Jurgen. "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present." Reprinted in David Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, pp. 103- 108. Oxford: Basil Books, 1984.

Han, Beatrice. "The Analytic of Finitude and the History of Subjectivity." In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault, Second Edition*, Gary Gutting, ed, pp. 176- 209. Cambridge: CUP, 2006.

Moss, Jeremy. "Introduction: The Later Foucault". In *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*, pp. 1- 17, Jeremy Moss, ed. London: Sage, 1998.

Patton, Paul. "Foucault's Subject of Power." In *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*, pp. 64- 77, Jeremy Moss, ed. London: Sage, 1998.

Smart, Barry. "Foucault, Levinas, and the Subject of Responsibility." In *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*, pp. 79- 92, Jeremy Moss, ed. London: Sage, 1998.

Taylor, Charles. "Foucault on Freedom and Truth." Reprinted in David Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, pp. 69- 102. Oxford: Basil Books, 1984.

Walzer, Michael. "The Politics of Michel Foucault." Reprinted in David Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, pp. 51- 68. Oxford: Basil Books, 1982.

### **Other Works Cited:**

#### **Books:**

*The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, second edition, Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James, eds. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

*The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Robert Audi, general ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Descartes, Rene. *Philosophical Essays and Correspondences*, Roger Ariew, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, Revised Student Edition, Richard Tuck, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison. New York: W.W.W. Norton and Company, 1967

Reese, William. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*. Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1999.

de Spinoza, Benedict. *The Ethics and Other Works*, Edwin Curley, ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

### **Articles:**

Foster, M. B. "The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Natural Science." In *Mind*, 43 (1934): 446- 468.

Foster, M. B. "Christian Theology and Modern Science of Nature (I)." In *Mind*, 44 (1935): 439- 466.

Foster, M. B. "Christian Theology and Modern Science of Nature (2)." In *Mind*, 45 (1936): 1- 27.

### **Resources for Foucault:**

#### **Books:**

*Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, Michael Kelly, ed. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994.

Dreyfus, Hubert, L. and Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Gutting, Gary. *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Foucault, Michel. *The Care of the Self: History of Sexuality, Vol. 3*, trans. R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1984.

Foucault, Michel. *The Politics of Truth*, Sylvie Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth, eds. New York: Semiotext(e), 1997.

Foucault, Michel. *Fearless Speech*, Joseph Pearson, ed. New York: Semiotext(e), 2001.

Gutting, Gary. *Foucault: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Hadot, Pierre. *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Han, Beatrice. "The Analytic of Finitude and the History of Subjectivity." In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault, Second Edition*, pp. 176- 209. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Mahon, Michael. *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy, Truth, Power, and the Subject*. Albany, New York: SUNY, 1992.

McHoul, Alec and Wendy Grace. *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power, and the Subject*. New York: Melbourne University Press, 2003.

Mills, Sara. *Routledge Critical Thinkers: Michel Foucault*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Owen, David. *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Simons, John. *Foucault and the Political*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Smart, Barry. *Key Sociologists: Michel Foucault*, revised edition. New York: Routledge, 2002.

### **Collections:**

*After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges*, ed. Jonathon Arac. London: Rutgers University Press, 1988.

*Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Gary Gutting, ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

*Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, second edition, Gary Gutting, ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

*Critical Essays on Michel Foucault*, Karlis Racevskis, ed. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1999.

*The Final Foucault*, James Bernauer and David M. Robinson, eds. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988.

*Foucault: A Critical Reader*, David Couzens Hoy, ed. Oxford: Basil Books, 1986.

*Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, Trans. Timothy J. Armstrong. Hempstead, U.K.: Harvester, 1992.

*Foucault and Heidegger: Critical Encounters*, Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, eds. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

*Foucault and His Interlocutors*, Arnold I. Davidson, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

*Foucault Contra Habermas: Recasting the Dialogue between Genealogy and Critical Theory*, Samantha Ashenden and David Owen, eds. London: Sage, 1999.

*The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*, Jeremy Moss, ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1998.

### **Articles:**

Connolly, William. "Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault." *Political Theory* 21 (Aug 1993), pp. 365- 389.

Dreyfus, Hubert, L. "On the Ordering of Things: Being and Power in Heidegger and Foucault." In *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, pp. 80- 95. Hempstead, U.K.: Harvester, 1992.

Deleuze, Gilles. "What Is a Dispositif." In *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, pp. 159- 168. Hempstead, U.K.: Harvester, 1992.

Gordon, Neve. "Foucault's Subject: An Ontological Reading." *Polity*, 31 Spring #3, pp. 396- 414 (1999).

Gros, Frederic. "Course Context." In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, pp. 507- 550. Frederic Gros, ed. New York: Picador, 2006.

Hacking, Ian. "The Archaeology of Foucault." In *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, pp. 27- 49. David Couzens Hoy, ed. Oxford: Basil Books, 1986.

Hadot, Pierre. "Reflections on the Notion of 'the Cultivation of the Self.'" In *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, pp. 225- 232. Hempstead, U.K.: Harvester, 1992.

Macherey, Pierre. "Towards a History of Norms." In *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, pp. 176- 191. Hempstead, U.K.: Harvester, 1992.

Rabinow, Paul. "Introduction." In *Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. XI- XLII, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: New Press, 1997.

### Philosophical Resources:

*A Pre-Socratics Reader: Selected Fragments and Testimonia*, Patricia Curd, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996.

Aristotle. *Selections*, trans Terence Irwin and Gail Fine. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995.

Bennett, Jonathon. *Learning From Six Philosophers, Vol 1 & 2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Baghramian, Maria. *Relativism*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

*Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, Paul Guyer, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Copleston, Frederick, S.J. *The History of Philosophy, Vol. I, IV-VI*. New York: Image Books, 1993.

Francks, Richard. *Modern Philosophy: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.

Gutting, Gary. *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Allen W. Wood, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996.

Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.

Kant, Immanuel. *Political Writings*, Hans Reiss, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Leibniz, G.W. *Philosophical Texts*, R.S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*, second edition, Peter Laslett, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Matthews, Eric. *Twentieth Century French Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Plato, Complete Works, John M. Cooper, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Basic Political Writings*, Peter Gay, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987.

Marx, Karl. *Early Political Writings*, Joseph O'Malley, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Keith Ansell-Pearson and Carol Diethelme, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Adrian Del Carro and Robert Pippin, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006/

## Appendix: Key to the Shorthand Terms Used in this to Refer to Foucault's Texts

All references are organized in footnotes first according to date of publication and then according to source for publication.

1984

*The Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality, Vol. 2.* UPL

“Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom.” ECSPF.

“Politics, Polemic, and Problematizations: An Interview With Michel Foucault.” PPP.

“Preface to the History of Sexuality, Vol 2.” Pref.

“What Is Enlightenment.” WE.

“What Is Critique.” WC.

“An Aesthetics of Existence.” AE.

“Concern For Truth.” CT.

“The Return of Morality.” RM.

1983

“On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of a Work in Progress.” OGE.

“Maurice Florence.” MF.

“Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.” Post.

“Interview With *Actes*.” IA.

“The Risks of Security.” RS.

“What Is Called “Punishing”?” WICP.

“Politics and Ethics: An Interview.” PE.

1982

*The Hermeneutics of the Subject.* HS.

“Course Context.” Gros.

“Dits and Ecrits.” Han.

“Hermeneutics of the Subject: Course Summary.” HSS.

“An Interview by Stephen Riggins.” ISR.

“Sexual Choice, Sexual Act.” SCSA.

“Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity.” SPPID.

“Technologies of the Self.” TS.

“The Political Technology of Individuals.” PT.

“The Subject and Power.” SP.

“Space, Knowledge, Power.” SPK.

1981

“Friendship as a Way of Life.” FWL.

“Subjectivity and Truth: Course Summary.” ST.

“Social Triumph of the Sexual Will.” STSW.

““Omnes et Singulatim”: Toward a Critique of Political Reason.” OS.

1976

*Society Must Be Defended.* SMBD.

*The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction.* HSI.

“Society Must Be Defended: Course Summary.” SMBDS.