Sharman, Adam (1995) A ruse of reason: constitutionalist powers in the work of Michel Foucault. PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

A Ruse of Reason: Constitutionalist Powers in the Work of Michel Foucault

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May, 1995

For my mother

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ABSTRACT

The thesis begins by examining the philosophical underpinnings of Foucault's 'constitutionalist' methodology. It argues that the archaeological method of *The Order of Things* derives principally neither from phenomenology nor structuralism, but from a philosophical and scholarly tradition (that of Kant, Cassirer, Duhem, Koyré) in which mathematics, the scientific revolution of Galileo et al, and an *a priori* conceptualism are paramount. It suggests that the rigid gathering of conceptual energies into the notion of *episteme* finds an echo in the subsequent genealogical work on prisons. The thesis challenges the widely-held view that Foucault is a Nietzschean thinker, maintaining that his overstatement of the constitutionalist powers of 'discipline' is conditioned as much by a strong Cartesianism as by his residual structuralism. The thesis shows how the Classical theme of order informs Foucault's attempt to develop a modern theory of the constitution of the subject in discourse. It postulates that the much-traduced first volume on sexuality, which introduces time into his theory and embraces many of the truisms of twentieth-century theoretical science, exhibits a less rigid understanding of constitutionalist powers. The penultimate chapter addresses, in the context of accusations of Eurocentrism levelled at Foucault's work, some of the shortcomings of theoretico-political work which fails to think through the 'deconstitution' of power, the play between order and disorder. Finally, a profound continuity is posited between the archaeological method of *The Order of Things* and his treatment of sexuality. Rejecting the suggestion of an

epistemological break, the thesis discovers the strategic invocation, in the final two volumes, of a very traditional understanding of reason. Diverging from those critics who only hear in Foucault the insistent theme of specificity and the persistent denunciation of reason and (technological) rationality, the thesis maintains that his writings effect a constant appeal to *logos* as order and reason.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

In the opening words of an article on the history of psychology published in 1957, Foucault writes: 'Nineteenth-century psychology inherited from the Enlightenment a concern to align itself with the sciences of nature and to rediscover in man the prolongation of the laws governing natural phenomena.'[1] This alignment rested on two philosophical postulates: the first, that the truth of man is exhausted in his natural being; the second, that the way (*chemin*) of all scientific knowledge must pass through the determination of quantitative relations, the construction of hypotheses and experimental verification. Even in this early foray into the history of a *savoir*, Foucault insinuates into the positivists' method, into their *chemin*, their way of proceeding (the Greek *methodos* means 'pursuit of knowledge'; *meta* is 'with, after', *hodos*, 'way'), the word *construction*.[2] The presence of 'construction' is enough calmly to expose the positivist ruse which facilitates the fraudulent

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[1] 'La Psychologie de 1850 à 1950', in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits 1954-1988*, ed. by Daniel Defert and François Ewald, 4 vols (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1994), *Vol. I: 1954-1969*, pp.120-137 (p.120) (first publ. in *Histoire de la philosophie européenne. Tôme 2. Tableau de la philosophie contemporaine*, ed. by A. Weber and D. Huisman (Paris: Fischbacher, 1957), pp.591-606). I have elected to refer to English translations where they exist. Unless otherwise indicated, all other translations are my own.

[2] Foucault makes the following distinction between *savoir* and *connaissance*: 'By *connaissance* I mean the relation of the subject to the object and the formal rules that govern it. *Savoir* refers to the conditions that are necessary in a particular period for this or that type of object to be given to *connaissance* and for this or that enunciation to be formulated.' Translator's note in Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972; repr. Routledge, 1994), p.15.

combination of a powerful *préjugé de nature*, the belief in natural man and in a natural means of knowing man, with a man-made approach, the construction and testing of hypotheses, the work of the mind and the deployment of technology, of *tekhnē*.

In other texts, he will fall more critically on the work of construction and the *préjugé de nature*. The work, not the mere fact of the work. That individuals are the material of conjecture, imagination and fictionalization at the hands of others is the banal starting point for Foucault's explorations of the *how*. Such explorations take him from the personal vagaries of a doctor diagnosing a patient whose bile has 'dried up in its passages and turned into melancholy', to questions concerning the system of knowledge within which this idea of melancholy may function, to institutional, political and social questions, to considerations of architecture, space and *tekhnē*.[3] And with these explorations comes the conviction (Lacan and a certain historical moment are never far from the scene) that individuals are constituted even down to 'their' individuality and condition as subjects.

Construction is to be understood, therefore, both as thought and as *tekhnē*. The latter, which Foucault sees applied malevolently in the guise of an objectifying gaze, a medical intervention, an architectural arrangement, will always remain vital to him. His work communicates remarkably the sense of power's physical, material 'grip', to use one of his omnipresent metaphors. Foucault's active involvement in the practice of psychology and psychiatry

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[3] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. by A.M. Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1973; repr. Routledge, 1991), p.24.

doubtless allows him to draw on an important emotional as well as intellectual reservoir. However, it is neither the new psychology nor the new anthropology of Mead, Benedict and Luton (both disciplines are mentioned in 'La Psychologie de 1850') that will provide me with the route into Foucault's work. Philosophical, social, linguistic and natural scientific thought will guide me through a study of Foucault's oeuvre, which, following Husserl, and for reasons I shall explore in due course, I prefer to call 'constitutionalist' rather than 'constructionist' thinking. Starting from the premise (which risks the banality of the truism) that one cannot begin to evaluate what Foucault says about the mad, about *les choses*, about prisons, power and sexuality without an understanding of the way he 'pursues' them, the thesis examines the formation and functioning of Foucault's constitutionalist method.

Edward Said writes, I think correctly, that in the English-speaking world more attention has been paid to Foucault's methodologies than to his histories.[4] Yet I would offer three reasons, in addition to the most obvious of them all – namely, the methodological exigency of the structuralist moment itself – for renewing this engagement. Firstly, there is Foucault's own preoccupation with questions of method. Said himself, in the same tribute, mentions Allan Megill's contention that *The Archaeology of Knowledge* represents a parodic re-writing of Descartes' *Discours de la méthode*. One may add to this Foucault's *The Order of Discourse*; the insistence in *The Order of Things* on the primacy of archaeology; the inclusion of a chapter on

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[4] Edward Said, 'Michel Foucault, 1926-1984', in *After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges*, ed. by Jonathan Arac (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), p.9.

method in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*; the methodological revisions of the final two volumes on sexuality; the raging polemics, first for archaeology, then for genealogy, in a plethora of articles and interviews over a twenty-year span. Foucault described himself on one occasion as 'a merchant of instruments, a maker of recipes, an indicator of objectives, a cartographer, a reader of plans, an armourer'.[5] The critical attention to method is motivated at least in part by something in the texts of Foucault. Still no excuse for ignoring his histories.

Secondly, has the critical attention devoted to Foucault's methodologies been illuminating? There certainly exist perspicacious and telling critiques (which I highlight where appropriate), but I submit that much critical response to them is naively trusting of the writer's own accounts of the innovations wrought by his methods. Thus Lois McNay: 'Foucault's rejection of the "literary turn" of much recent philosophy, his corresponding insistence on the historical specificity of his categories [...] and his retention of a notion of the acting self, distances his work from that of other French philosophers.'[6] I shall contest these and other articles of faith concerning what Foucault purportedly managed to reject or retain. Is it satisfactory, for instance, to accept that Foucault inherited the mantle of Nietzsche and, to a lesser degree, Heidegger? Or can it be said that his work is un-Nietzschean and un-Heideggerian in very significant respects.

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[5] Michel Foucault, 'Sur la Sellette: Michel Foucault', *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 3 March 1975, p.3.

[6] *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p.193.

Thirdly, the thesis is only partly about the work of Foucault; its concern is also with the Foucaultian moment, with its principal theme – the relationship between power and knowledge –, with its sapient insights, its impassioned overreachings and its faith regarding the critical idiom of 'construction' and 'constitution'. In short, what Maria Daraki has called 'the Foucault phenomenon' demands more scrutiny. In certain academic circles 'Foucault' has become a by-word for a variety of problematics, including those of institutionality, power, the subject, and discourse. Likewise (despite having virtually nothing to say about the phenomenon), Foucault has been hailed as one of the divas of postmodernism. 'Foucaldism' has passed successfully into contemporary academic discourse with an ease that betokens what various commentators consider to be its historical timeliness.[7] Throughout the thesis, I shall examine the extent to which this timeliness may be attributed to the capacity of Foucault's work to withstand a Popperian falsifiability (whereby it would answer more questions than competing theories) and the degree to which it not only modifies but also responds to the general conditions surrounding the act of knowing which currently prevail in Western academe.

The thesis develops as follows: Chapter one deals with a Heideggerian convergence in *The Order of Things*. Contrary to those attempts (which contain important germs of truth) that petition for the text to be read as an iconoclastic critique of phenomenology and/or Kantianism – in particular their

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[7] In contrast to Nietzsche's 'untimely' meditations. Cf. Maria Daraki, 'Michel Foucault's Journey to Greece', *Telos*, 67 (Spring 1986), 87-110 (p.87 and pp.108-110); Jean Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1977), pp.12-15; Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity – Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1985), p.190.

recourse to the transcendental subject – the work, which is indebted to a tradition that assigns a vital role to mathematics and the scientific revolution of Galileo et al, may be understood as belonging (though never slavishly) to an even longer-established tradition firmly believing in the adequation between conceptual form and subject matter (the *episteme* would thus be a configuration of knowledge which emerges from things themselves). No less important is the work of the *episteme* on the order of things themselves. Important in Chapter one but also throughout the thesis, for it is argued that the model of constitution developed in *The Order of Things*, and the particular management of constitutionalist powers (in this case conceptual) found therein, reappear in the genealogical texts treating of social subject matter.

Chapter two examines *Discipline and Punish* and the Nietzschean dimension of Foucault's work. It investigates that text's important rewriting of the second essay from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (this much is uncontentious), but argues that *Discipline and Punish* also bears the traces of what I have called, in an infelicitous phrase, a technological Cartesianism, which would allow the carceral machine of power to function in too uniform, too un-Nietzschean a mode. Would allow. In fact the disciplinary machine exhibits a curious malfunction, a systemic defect the congenitality of which ensures that the carceral network's constitutionalist powers be aporetic, that the prime subjects of disciplinary power necessarily escape subjection.

Chapter three represents a reprise of both archaeological and genealogical moments. It focuses on Foucault's theory of discourse as act, especially the theory of the *énoncé* which he elaborates principally in *The*

Archaeology of Knowledge. It suggests that the combination of a formalist archaeological theory applied to a genealogical understanding of the production of knowledge in social institutions results in a seductive but problematic theory of subject-positions. Foucault speaks of a *décalage* between the author of a text and the subject of the *énoncé*, while I perceive a certain *calage*, a wedging or chocking. Formalist it may appear, but the stakes of the debate enunciated in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* are potentially of the highest political order. If to speak is to assume a certain subject-position within an institutional, social field of power, might not the motility of subject-positions itself be enough to set to work the movement of refusal and resistance? I explore this question in relation to the debate – which does not end in 1972, Derrida publishing a further piece in 1992 – between Foucault and Derrida over *Histoire de la folie.*

Chapter four postulates that the first volume of the history of sexuality is the theoretical milestone of Foucault's oeuvre. It marks the place where constitutionalist powers are thought more plurally, to the point where the very notion of constitution is to a certain extent deconstituted. Resistance enters the scene it had never left; likewise time, which literally provides the basis for a less closed, less structuralist formulation of power(s). The chapter has recourse to twentieth-century theoretical science in order to demonstrate how Foucault is but one contributor to much more widespread theoretical machinations concerning order/chaos, system/event, determinism/chance. It also observes that Foucault's move away from the general and the universal to the local and the specific is not without its problems, that, as the compass of *La Volonté de savoir* itself reveals (the emphasis on populations being the

most obvious instance), the micro without the macro is strictly inconceivable.

Chapter five punctuates the time of the thesis and is the odd man out. It interrupts the sense of a development across Foucault's work and does not concentrate on any one particular text. Instead it takes from Chapter two the model of the 'carceral', together with the part played in it by guilt; from Chapter three, the theory of subject-positions; and from Chapter four, the insights concerning order/disorder, determinism/chaos. It examines the accusation levelled at Foucault according to which his work is Eurocentric, mustering a defence against that charge. It does this in order to develop an agenda of its own, namely, the exploration of the potential pitfalls of a constitutionalist analysis which would imbibe the lessons of the disciplinary carceral network, and of multiple subject-positions, yet precisely ignore the lessons of *La Volonté de savoir* in order to condemn unequivocally the power of Europe and the West. Although the chapter defends Foucault against charges of Eurocentrism, it does suggest that his own disjunctive *écriture* furnishes an idiom and an ethos for the kind of accusation subsequently levelled at him.

Finally, Chapter six examines the part played by abstraction in Foucault's work, arguing that it is a less successful role when played out in the work on sexuality (roughly commensurate in its failure with the constitutionalist powers which philosophy would like to bestow upon itself, and which Foucault would like to bestow upon philosophy). Foucault's final two published volumes of the history of sexuality, which in one sense represent a pronounced shift in perspective – embracing as they do a (formerly

absent) autonomous, self-fashioning human subject –, may also be regarded as marking a profound continuity with the earlier work, and this in two ways. Firstly, constitutionalist powers again exercise themselves in demiurgic fashion (if they did so in the shape of the *episteme* in *The Order of Things* and if they took the form of 'the carceral' in *Discipline and Punish*, in *The Use of Pleasures* and *The Care of the Self* they resurface in the guise of the human individual). Secondly, despite the widespread thematics of specificity, micro-powers, *tekhnē* and practice (which stand in opposition to and condemnation of theory and, above all, the universal), I argue that from the work on archaeology through to the late work on sexuality there is constant recourse to a very traditional theme of the *logos*, reason or order which presides over the world. If his texts can apparently condemn this demiurgic reason, the narrative narrating is also quite capable of setting it to work for its own purposes. (In question is Godliness.)

The risks that attend my project may be stated quite simply. How to avoid repeating the determinism which I find in Foucault's work? Prefacing his essay on Husserl, '"Genesis and Structure" and Phenomenology', Derrida writes of the dangers of a debate which appears to be not so much an 'attentive scrutiny' as a 'putting into question, that is, an abusive investigation which introduces beforehand what it seeks to find, and does violence to the physiology proper to a body of thought'.[8] I can only hope to scrutinize attentively.

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[8] In *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; repr. 1985), pp.154-168 (p.154). The name 'Derrida' will never be far from the scene. The thesis is not a work of deconstruction but certainly operates in its hinterland.

CHAPTER 1

MENTE CONCIPERE: METHOD AND TRADITION

IN *THE ORDER OF THINGS*

Introduction

It is a matter of little contention that Foucault the social thinker (of

prisons, of the normalization of the mad, of sexuality, and, above all, of

power) is the more fêted Foucault, the Foucault that commands most attention,

though to a perhaps unfortunate degree when one can speak of a critic's focus

on Foucault's early work as 'regretful'.[1] This chapter chooses to begin,

though, with the more sober, more arcane Foucault of *The Order of Things*.

Not that its analysis of that text represents a thorough-going attempt to do

justice to it. It should be stated unequivocally from the outset that the concern

is not to offer a full and rigorous account of the book's undoubted richness

(and in fairness much of the brilliance lies in the detail); we are concerned,

rather, with examining the archaeological method and its presuppositions in

order to suggest that, despite the repudiation to which Foucault later subjected

both archaeology in general and *The Order of Things* in particular, the method

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[1] The regret, aimed at Karlis Racevskis, belongs to Jonathan Arac, 'The Function of Foucault at the Present Time', *Humanities in Society*, 3:1 (Winter 1980), 73-86.

deployed in that text is of capital importance for an understanding of the later work, especially in what concerns constitutionalist thinking. To that end, the chapter will scrutinize Foucault's archaeological method by reading *The Order of Things* alongside Heidegger's interpretation of Kant. We shall concentrate on the first part of the book, that is to say, on the passage from the Renaissance to the Classical *episteme*, in the belief that it constitutes an exemplary moment in Foucault.

Broadly speaking, the chapter postulates three things. First, that Heidegger provides a direct source for *The Order of Things*, especially in what relates to Foucault's binding together of the theme of *mathesis*, the concept of the *episteme* and the questioning of the *subjectum*, a nexus of concerns which arguably take their cue from Heidegger on what he calls the mathematical. It is for this reason that a cluster of phenomenological themes which obviously exceed Heidegger (above all in the direction of Husserl) is rather schematically gathered around his name. Heidegger is hardly the origin of *The Order of Things*, but he is a crucial pre-text. Second, that Foucault's book is an attempt to trump Heidegger's interpretation by historicizing the emergence of Kant's transcendental subject and questioning in the process the constitutive powers accorded the subject in the modern phenomenological tradition. At the root of his critique lies a fierce aversion to the notion of the 'thing in itself', a rejection which will direct Foucault's thinking in subsequent books. Finally, that Foucault practises a strong misreading of Heidegger. To that extent, we see the laying of a new, axiomatic and deterministic ground, upon which Foucault hopes to build his archaeological theoretical edifice.

The deficiencies and overreachings which beset *The Order of Things* (the overstatement of discontinuity, the totalizing drive of the *episteme*, to name but two) are common knowledge. The contention that the book's methodology is axiomatic will thus surprise few. The chapter is path-marking rather than path-breaking. If it has any claim to opening up a new route, this perhaps lies, paradoxically in view of the asserted novelty of archaeology, in its insertion of Foucault into a tradition. If it is the case that we can already discern in Foucault's interpretation of *mathesis* as order rather than measurement the beginnings of a move away from the logico-mathematical to the social, it seems to me that this move is itself made according to a very traditional logico-categorical schema.

The constitution of archaeology

Foucault's archaeological method is directly concerned with forging a new way to pursue knowledge.[2] The question of whether it is a matter of lighting upon or constructing the way or road is germane to our concern with method in this first chapter.

Strictly speaking, the most explicitly methodological text of Foucault's is *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, though that work is altogether less

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[2] Aristotle begins his *Physics* with 'method' understood as 'research'. It is also worth signalling at this early stage that Kant, in a text which will assume importance for us in due course, binds the question of mathematics to that of the way as path or road (*Weg*): 'In the earliest times to which the history of human reason extends, *mathematics*, among that wonderful people, the Greeks, had already entered upon the sure path of science. But it must not be supposed that it was as easy for mathematics as it was for logic – in which reason has to deal with itself alone – to light upon, or rather to construct for itself, that royal road.' Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1929; repr. 1992), p.19.

concerned than the 1966 text with practising what it preaches. *The Order of Things*, on the other hand, foregrounds and performs the archaeological method at length. In the preface, Foucault announces a new method which departs from the history of ideas or of science. His project consists (and the Kantian phrase 'conditions of possibility' will assume the dimensions of a slogan) in bringing to light

> the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility.[3]

The fledgling method is baptized 'archaeology'. A footnote reads: 'The problems of method raised by such an "archaeology" will be examined in a later work' (p.xxii). This suggests that such problems receive no examination in the current project. And this is very nearly the case. For Foucault, in this text, it is not archaeology that raises problems of method: archaeology is a corrective to the problematical methods of others. There is thus little place (though not no place) for doubt in this text, especially self-doubt: Descartes, as Georges Canguilhem points out, gets less space than *Don Quijote*.[4]

The word *archaeology* is manifestly not new to *The Order of Things*. Aside from designating an autonomous scholarly and practical tradition, Foucault explains elsewhere – in an acrimonious exchange with George Steiner, who attributes Foucault's usage to Freud – that he took the word from

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[3] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970; repr. 1985), p.xxii; *Les Mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966).

[4] Georges Canguilhem, 'Mort de l'homme ou épuisement du cogito?', *Critique*, 24:242 (July 1967), 599-618 (p.600).

Kant's *Fortschritte der Metaphysik*.[5] Etymologically, the word has more

ancient roots: combined form of the Greek *arkhaios*, ancient or primitive (from

arkhē, beginning) and *logia*, discourse. Lastly, *archaeology* is not new to

Foucault's 1966 text since it had already figured in the preface to *Folie et*

déraison: histoire de la folie à l'âge classique.[6] However, with the revised and

re-titled 1972 edition, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, comes the

suppression by Foucault of the original preface, and the first appearance of the

word in that text now comes in an important passage dealing with the process

of internment in the mid-seventeenth century of all those tarred with the brush

of unreason (collectively the *asociaux*, not just the insane).[7] Here the word

archaeology appears in a passage in fact far more expressive of the nature of

the project than was the now suppressed preface. Although we must guard

against using the presence of the same word to assimilate the differing methods

of *Histoire de la folie* and *The Order of Things*, this early appearance

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5 George Steiner, 'The Order of Things', *New York Times Book Review*, 28 February 1971, p.8. Foucault, 'Monstrosities in Criticism', trans. by Robert J. Matthews, *Diacritics* 1 (Fall 1971), 57-60. The word also appears in Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, a book translated by Foucault, in a section on signs and geology ('On the Power of Using Signs'). As Sartre is quick to point out, Foucault also adopts a geological metaphorics. Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', *L'Arc*, 30 (1966), 87-96 (p.87). But where Foucault's archaeology is a means of arriving at something, Kant's is the thing to be arrived at, an 'ancient state of the world' which is an '*archaeology* of nature' (Kant, *Anthropology*, p.66). Kant's *Fortschritte* is *What Real Progress has Metaphysics made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?* in English.

[6] Paris: Plon, 1961. 'The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason *on* madness, could be established only on the basis of such a silence. I have not tried to write the history of that language but, rather, the archaeology of that silence' (pp.x-xi). Jacques Derrida charges Foucault with failing in that text to look closely enough at the very meaning of the word Foucault will claim for the name of his project. 'Cogito and the History of Madness', in *Writing and Difference*, pp.31-63.

[7] Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1972. Given that the English translation is a drastic abridgement of the original, I shall refer to the French text throughout and provide my own translations.

illustrates well a simultaneous broaching and breaching of the question of method. Foucault has just concluded that the gesture of internment (which marks a new attitude on the part of the authorities toward the *asociaux*: now they are to be hidden from public view) has 'created' alienation (we shall have cause later to examine the link between constitution and creation). He continues:

> In this sense, to rewrite the history of this process of banishment is to attempt the archaeology of an alienation. It is not a matter of determining what pathological or police category was therein involved, which would still take this alienation as a given; but it is necessary to know how this gesture was achieved, that is to say, what operations are balanced in the totality that it forms, from what disparate horizons emerged those who were together removed by the same act of segregation, and what experience Classical man had of himself at a time when certain of his most familiar features were beginning to lose their familiarity and their resemblance to any recognizable image of himself. If this decree has a meaning, by which modern man designated in the madman his own *alienated* truth, it is insofar as a field of alienation was constituted [*constitué*], well before the madman takes hold of and symbolizes it, in which the madman found himself banished, among so many other figures who for us no longer have any kinship with him. This field was circumscribed in reality [*réellement*] by the space of internment; and the way in which it was formed should show us how the experience of madness was constituted. (p.94)

One can already see at work in this passage, albeit with a social as opposed to narrowly epistemological slant, the tell-tale semantics of two Foucaultian concerns. On the one hand, the thing-in-itself cannot be entertained. As Foucault states, in examining the process by which the undesirables were excluded it is not a matter of determining what pathological or police category was therein applied, because to do so would take that alienation as given – just what is being challenged. On the other hand, the language of constitution. So, if there is any meaning to the 1656 decree, it is inasmuch as a field of alienation was therein 'constituted'. In other words, the fact of the alienation of the mad and associated undesirables is no natural fact at all and thus should

not be regarded as somehow marking a natural and simple division between reason and madness. Rather, this alienation, or better, this field of alienation, was in a sense produced or constituted by a whole series of authoritative bodies and powers: a field become a force field.[8]

This early relationship between archaeology and constitution deters one from positing the rarefied epistemology of *The Order of Things* as the cradle of Foucault's method (a fact already suggested by the essay on the history of psychology). However, the later text does represent a much more concerted effort than the earlier work to dwell on questions of applied constitutionalist method and to work out a position – particularly in its joust with phenomenology – the logic of which will reverberate throughout Foucault's more popular attempts to carry philosophical musings on constitution into social history.

Before examining that position along a Foucault-Heidegger axis, it is important to underscore briefly the place of constitution in the philosophy of Husserl, for we are persuaded that the real object of Foucault's criticism in *The Order of Things* is the more classical phenomenology of a Husserl or a Merleau-Ponty and that Foucault is in fact using Heidegger as a stepping stone to take him out of phenomenology altogether.[9] In a lucid and, for our purposes, extremely apposite book, Robert Sokolowski shows the elaboration

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[8] The constitution trope is repeated in relation to madness in *The Archaeology*, p.32.

[9] *The Archaeology*, p.203, binds the idea of transcendental constitution to the names Kant, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, declaring its own aim to be that of freeing history from the 'grip' of phenomenology, a metaphor we shall have cause to highlight in due course.

and development of Husserl's concept of constitution across his work.[10] Interestingly, in view of our concern with mathematics, Sokolowski demonstrates how the first stirrings of constitutionalist thinking in Husserl can be found in Husserl's *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, in which he explains the origin of groups by means of the mental acts which constitute them.[11] (Though Husserl does not yet actually use the word 'constitution', Sokolowski argues that the same paradox is at work here as in the later *Logical Investigations*, where constitution is fully elaborated.) A group of books thus assuredly has an objective existence, but does not exist *qua* group until it is formed by a mental act of 'collecting'. The paradox lies in the fact that something objective exists only by virtue of subjective mental processes. In the *Logical Investigations*, the word and concept 'constitution' come into their own, Husserl seeking to explain how subjectivity 'constitutes' objectivity (the German verb is *Konstituieren*). According to Husserl's theory of the phenomenological reduction, which finds its elaboration in *Ideas I*, an objectivating act establishes an intentional relationship to an object and thereby establishes that object as an object of consciousness. Likewise with meaning, which is constituted through an 'intending'.

Sokolowski links Husserl's use of the word 'constitution' to a certain Kantianism, claiming that Husserl took the term from the neo-Kantians, and

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[10] *The Formation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964).

[11] According to Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry': An Introduction*, trans. by John P. Leavy, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978; repr. 1989), the mathematical object is the privileged example and most permanent thread guiding Husserl's reflection.

more particularly from Paul Natorp, a major influence on Husserl. In the tradition of the neo-Kantians, constitution designates the process by which subjectivity forms objectivity by virtue of its own activity. However, an important difference distinguishes Husserl's use of the term from that of the neo-Kantians:

> the Kantian tradition maintained the idea of fixed subjective categories that are imposed upon sensation, while Husserl never accepted this. For the neo-Kantians, strictly speaking, it is the categories that constitute the object, and this process of constitution takes place in subjectivity; for Husserl, on the other hand, subjectivity itself constitutes the object. In his conception of constitution, whatever categories are constituted are the *result* of encounter; they are never found before encounter and imposed on it. Husserl's subjective apriori is not as rigid as the Kantian system of apriori elements is. (Sokolowski, p.216)

That said, Sokolowski makes a concerted effort to emphasize that Husserl's transcendental epoche does not posit an all-powerful subjectivity at the expense of a lost reality. Reality is retained in *Ideas I* as 'constituted', in the sense that it cannot be conceived apart from consciousness. Sokolowski argues that this is not idealism, that subjectivity is not the source of all meaning and sense. He claims that in Husserl,

> The objects and senses which are given as intentionally constituted are simply accepted as given; their origins or sources are not explained totally by subjectivity. There is a certain givenness or facticity in them which is not entirely the work of consciousness. If this is the case, it must be so because the contents of meanings or objects cannot be accounted for by means of subjectivity. Consciousness does not 'create' them; it *allows* them to emerge as real, but does not make them. In other words, it is a necessary condition for them, but not an all-pervading, sufficient cause. (pp.138-139)

Consequently, Husserl will seek to maintain the irreducibility of both terms in the paradox (consciousness and transcendent reality), and in fact will concede that the work of intentionality remains mysterious: '"Between consciousness and reality there yawns a true abyss of sense"' (p.135).

Even if Husserl points to an attenuated subjectivity, this will not be

enough to convince Foucault that the constitutional powers of the subject are not still being grossly overstated by phenomenology. Take a passage like the following from Husserl, which indeed anticipates many of the questions asked by Foucault:

> But then new questions impose themselves in regard to this mankind: are the insane also objectifications of the subjects being discussed in connection with the accomplishment of world-constitution? And what about children [?] [...]. And what about animals? There arise problems of intentional modifications through which we can and must attribute to all these conscious subjects – those that do not cofunction in respect to the world understood in the hitherto accepted (and always fundamental) sense, that is, the world which has truth through 'reason' – their manner of transcendentality, precisely as 'analogues' of ourselves. [...] Further, there are the problems of birth and death and of the transcendental constitution of their meaning as world occurrences, and there is the problem of the sexes. And finally, concerning the problem of the 'unconscious' that is so much discussed today [...] this is in any case a matter of occurrences in the pregiven world, and they naturally come under the transcendental problem of constitution, as do birth and death. As something existing in the world common to all, this sort of thing has its manners of ontic verification, of 'self-giving,' which are quite particular but which originally create the ontic meaning for beings of such particularity. Accordingly, within the absolutely universal epochē, in respect to beings having this or any other kind of meaning, the appropriate constitutional questions have to be posed.[12]

New questions (newer than those of Husserl) and the question of newness will often be at stake in Foucault. But if, for Foucault, the new questions remain 'constitutional', if it remains a matter of world-constitution and objectification, the problems encountered therein are not to be resolved transcendentally. Herein an important difference between Husserl and Foucault. The latter will bring reserves of circumspection and scepticism to bear on the constitutional powers of the subject and on the process of objectification. The tone of his assault on the subject's powers will be set by disavowal and destruction rather

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[12] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp.187-188. The German word Husserl uses is *Konstitution*; I shall return to this presently.

than by attenuation. For Foucault, both the questions and the problems must be posed anew and the recasting will bear heavily on method.

It is interesting, though, how *The Order of Things* appears in one respect to depart from phenomenology while at the same time assuming a typically Husserlian point of departure. In his later work, Husserl moves towards a genetic constitutional analysis in which objectivity is now conceived as the solidifying of a part of our intentional life in a judgement, it being understood that this solidification is always a perilous moment in the midst of a process, a flow of consciousness. This does not therefore suppose ready-made structural elements which are simply adequate to an object or meaning, but entails a sibylline 'pre-predicative' encounter (which is what we take Husserl to mean by the phrase 'self-giving' in the above passage). Husserl's notion of *Lebenswelt*, life-world, is what issues directly from pre-predicative encounter. 'It is the complex of primitive meanings that are constituted before any scientific conceptualizing is carried out on the world, and thus serves as the basis on which such scientific theorizing is founded' (Sokolowski, p.184). In *The Order of Things*, Foucault proffers his own enigmatic description of a 'fundamental' 'domain', lying half-way between the codes which govern the way we perceive, the way we use language, and those regulating the higher-level scientifico-philosophical reflections. This domain is more 'confused' and 'obscure' than the other two regions; in it a culture finds that there are things which are in themselves orderable, which belong to a certain mute order; in short it finds that *'there is* order'. As with Husserl, there is something like an attempt to explore this difficult 'self-giving'. By the same token, this is not

the *Lebenswelt* of Husserl, precisely insofar as there is order at bottom. If I understand Foucault correctly in this dense and perforce enigmatic passage, it is not the subject that constitutes order, and even less does it give it; '*il y a* de l'ordre'. It (and the problem of nomination is capital, though Foucault solves it presently by means of the word *episteme*) is that which, enigmatically, resists the first (broadly speaking perceptual) codes; reveals them as codes; provides the foundation upon which conceptual reflection builds its theories (the Husserlian resonance is striking here); and, finally, ensures that a culture finds itself before the 'brute being of order' (xxii; trans. mod.). To anticipate our argument, and so provide a bridge into Heidegger, we might reasonably ask: how does one know that '*il y a* de l'ordre'? And for that matter, how does one conceive of an order in which the subject would itself be given, as opposed to being that which gives (the) order?

Foucault and Heidegger

To examine what binds together Foucault's understanding of constitution, order and the subject, I propose to compare Part I of *The Order of Things* with a section from Heidegger's *What Is a Thing?*, though references will be to the version which appears under the title of 'Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics' in the *Basic Writings*.[13] Generally speaking,

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[13] *What Is a Thing?*, trans. by W.B. Barton, Jr. and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967). The book is the text of a lecture course from 1935-1936 which was not published until 1962; *Basic Writings*, ed. by D. Farrell Krell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp.247-282. I use this version because the Greek is in modern script. Apart from minor changes in the translation there are also five passages from the original which have been omitted. All five are concerned with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and in fact the whole purpose of the section (entitled 'The Modern Mathematical Science of Nature and the Origin of a Critique of Pure Reason' in the book) is to show 'precisely that formation of modern

Heidegger furnishes a peculiar admixture of methodological and conceptual concerns the pertinence of which to Foucault's own practices has been insufficiently appreciated. *What Is a Thing?* in particular dwells in exemplary fashion on a certain way of 'taking' the objects and practices upon which attention is brought to bear, a concern shared by Foucaultian archaeology, which is preeminently concerned with both the task of understanding how it is that we apprehend the most apparently fundamental things and the nature of that epistemological order which lifts such objects up to be known.

At an earlier stage of Foucault's intellectual career the influence of Heidegger remains unambivalent. It is well known that Foucault's interest in existential analysis or phenomenological psychiatry passed by way of Ludwig Binswanger, for the translation of whose *Traum und Existenz* Foucault penned an introduction as indebted to Heideggerian *Daseinanalyse* as the Binswanger text was itself.[14] Indeed, even in a later interview Foucault is still content simply to say that he was 'a Heideggerian'.[15] The adjective requires some comment, however, for while it has been suggested that Foucault was in general reticent to reveal his dominant intellectual influences, in fact I am not sure this is the problem.[16] One often finds Foucault acknowledging the

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metaphysical thought in whose train something like the *Critique of Pure Reason* could and had to arise' (p.96).

[14] Foucault, 'Introduction' to Ludwig Binswanger, *Le Rêve et l'existence*, trans. by Jacques Verdeaux (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1954), pp.9-128.

[15] Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*, trans. by R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), p.72. The title of this collection is a misnomer: *on Marxism* would be more appropriate, if still inadequate.

[16] Richard Wolin, 'Foucault's Aesthetic Decisionism', *Telos*, 67 (Spring 1986), 71-86 (p.72).

influence of figures such as Sade, Bataille, Artaud, Roussel, Sollers and, especially, Canguilhem, Bachelard, Nietzsche and Deleuze. The problem relates, rather, to the lack of expatiation in Foucault's major texts on the detail of influence, since acknowledgements usually take the form of a simple roll-call of proper names. This economy with influences reaches its apogee in the first volume on the history of sexuality where Foucault dispenses almost entirely with bibliographical details. As one might half expect, then, Foucault provides little assistance on the question of any supposed Heideggerian influence on *The Order of Things*. That the text bears the mark of Nietzsche is acknowledged.[17] However, nowhere does he refer to a Heideggerian connection. When he comments on his general debt to Heidegger, calling him 'the essential philosopher', we are treated to a morsel of information ('I do not know Heidegger well enough: I hardly know *Being and Time* nor what has been published recently. My knowledge of Nietzsche certainly is better than my knowledge of Heidegger') and proper names are left to do the rest.[18]

Critical opinion of *The Order of Things* has generally divined the heavy

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[17] See, for example, Michel Foucault, 'Deuxième entretien avec Michel Foucault: sur les façons d'écrire l'histoire', with Raymond Bellour in *Lettres françaises*, 15 June 1967.

[18] In Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.242-254 (p.250; trans. mod.). This is a reprint of what has become known as the 'Final Interview', trans. by Thomas Levin and Isabelle Lorenz in *Raritan* (Summer, 1985), p.8 (first publ. in *Les Nouvelles* (June 28, 1984)). The passage in which he discusses the influence of Nietzsche and Heidegger is ambiguous. For example: 'My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger. I nevertheless recognize that Nietzsche carried the day [*l'a emporté*]'. Similarly, I take it that Foucault's statement that he had tried to read Nietzsche in the fifties but 'Nietzsche alone did not appeal to me – whereas Nietzsche and Heidegger: that was a philosophical shock!' means not that he in fact read Nietzsche first (which would contradict the dates he furnishes), but that his first encounter with Nietzsche had taken place in ignorance of the specific texts Heidegger devoted to the interpretation of Nietzsche. Which complicates his rotund 'I am simply Nietzschean'.

imprint of structuralism and the no less weighty rejection of a subject-centred tradition stretching from Kant through to phenomenology.[19] Gérard Lebrun argues that the book is inspired by an ardent refusal of Husserl and the interpretation of the latter propounded by Merleau-Ponty, whose lectures at the Ecole normale between 1947 and 1949 Foucault had, according to Eribon, followed assiduously.[20] Lebrun is emphatic, though, that the book owes nothing to Heidegger. Now despite Lebrun, I follow those critics who take it as read that Heidegger was important for Foucault. Jürgen Habermas sees an affinity between Foucault's archaeology and Heidegger's critique of metaphysics.[21] Alan Megill opines on the issue of Foucault's Heideggerianism in general that it seems 'almost wilfully concealed', adding that commentators have maintained 'an equally deafening silence', broken only by Dreyfus and Rabinow (Megill, p.185).[22]

I have found no reference either by critics or by Foucault himself to *What Is a Thing?*. Dreyfus, Megill himself (Megill, p.230) and then During (During, p.102) have pointed to the Heidegger essay 'The Age of the World

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[19] Merleau-Ponty gives credence to the existence of such a tradition, referring to the phenomenological conception as a new definition of the Kantian a priori. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945), p.255.

[20] Lebrun, 'Notes on Phenomenology in *The Order of Things*', in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, trans. by Timothy J. Armstrong (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp.20-37. Lebrun states that the book was not viewed as the beginnings of a new method but as an act of aggression against phenomenology (p.20). But the two things are hardly mutually exclusive; Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault (1926-1984)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), p.49.

[21] *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. by Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p.266.

[22] Cf. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), p.38.

Picture' as an important source for Foucault, and with good reason.[23]

However, as During observes, 'The Age of the World Picture' is but one

formulation of a theme which occupied Heidegger repeatedly – both in a series

of lectures on Nietzsche in the late thirties and in subsequent work. Indeed,

in order to avoid postulating *The Order of Things* as the fruit of just one prior

text, the question of a precise source-text necessarily remains open.

Nevertheless, the decision to work with *What Is a Thing?* in preference to 'The

Age' imposes itself because the latter essay from 1938 (published in 1950)

does not dwell on the detail of the 'revolution' in thought, except, that is, for

its analysis of Descartes' contribution, which is already to be found in the

earlier/later piece. *What Is a Thing?* also offers a more extended contribution

to Heidegger's ongoing reflection on Kant that began in *Being and Time* and

continued in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.[24] And it is important not

to lose sight of the Kantian context in which Heidegger's thought is embedded.

Heidegger and the mathematical

Before turning to Heidegger, and certainly before reaching Kant, we

need first of all to state something quite unequivocally. When Heidegger

posits in *What Is a Thing?* the existence of a veritable revolution in thought

which took place in European natural science during the sixteenth and

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[23] In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp.115-154. Bizarrely, especially given the title of the article, Dreyfus claims that 'Foucault is not interested in how *things* show up but exclusively in *people's actions*' (Hubert Dreyfus, 'On the Ordering of Things', in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, pp.80-95 [p.81]).

[24] The point is Heidegger's. Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. by Richard Taft, 4th edn enlarged (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.xix.

seventeenth centuries (which precisely looms large in *The Order of Things*), he thereby follows a well-trodden path. Likewise, it should be clear that the explanation Heidegger adumbrates to account for the revolution – viz, that it was due to the mathematization of nature – itself belongs to a certain tradition, one which includes Duhem, Cassirer, Koyré, Husserl and, of course, Kant before them.[25] In that same tradition, which finds its powerful modern expression in phenomenology, we find certain accompanying themes that will be of importance to us in the context of our discussion of Foucault. These themes include: the place of mathematics, the enabling power of abstract thought (and the role of construction), the concomitant relegation of experience, the power of the human mind (often expressed in the form of outright Platonic idealism). For its part, *The Order of Things* may be regarded as an attempt to follow this traditional path only so far, as a 'yes' to the first three and a refusal of the last. Without denying Foucault's challenge to that tradition (these pages represent a mini defence of *The Order of Things* on the subject), our attention will be brought to bear more on the power of that

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[25] Pierre Duhem, *To Save the Phenomena: an Essay on the Idea of Physical Theory from Plato to Galileo*, trans. by Edmund Doland and Chaninah Maschler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); originally 'ΣΩΖΕΙΝ ΤΑ ΦΑΙΝΟΜΕΝΑ: Essai sur la notion de théorie physique de Platon à Galilée', *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* 79/156 (ser. 4, vi) (1908), 113-138, 277-302, 352-357, 482-514, 576-592; Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. by Mario Domandi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963); originally *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (1927); Alexandre Koyré, *Metaphysics and Measurement: Essays in Scientific Revolution* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1968); Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis*. I am grateful to Julián Jiménez Heffernan for the above suggestions. Foucault mentions Duhem fleetingly in his 'Introduction' to Canguilhem's *On the Normal and the Pathological*, trans. by Carolyn R. Fawcett (Dordecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1978), pp.ix-xx, wrote a review of Koyré's *La Révolution astronomique: Copernic, Kepler, Borelli* for *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, 108 (December 1961), 1123-1124, and covered with praise the French translation of a Cassirer text ('Un article de Michel Foucault dans la "Quinzaine" en 1966: Ernst Cassirer, *La Philosophie des Lumières*', *La Quinzaine litteraire*, 421, 16-31 July 1984, 23-24; first published as 'Une Histoire restée muette', *La Quinzaine littéraire*, 8, 1 July 1966).

tradition's allure. But we shall come to Foucault in good time. The immediate task is to dwell on the detail of Heidegger's exposé. It will take us close to what is at stake in Foucault's practice of archaeology.

For Heidegger, the fundamental characteristic of modern science, what he calls 'the manner of working with the things and the metaphysical projection of the thingness of the things', lies in its *mathematical* quality. The mathematical is not to be understood here as deriving from mathematics, 'because mathematics itself is only a particular formation of the mathematical' (p.249). (This reversal of a causality that one would otherwise expect is a tactic that will become germane to *The Order of Things.*) The word *mathematical*, Heidegger explains, stems from the Greek expression *ta mathēmata*, which means both what can be learned and what can be taught. *Manthanein* means to learn, whereas *mathēsis* is the teaching, in the dual sense of both studying and learning, and then the doctrine taught. For Heidegger, learning is a certain kind of taking:

> The *mathēmata* [what is learnable] are the things insofar as we take cognizance of them as what we already know them to be in advance, the body as the bodily, the plant-like of the plant, the animal-like of the animal, the thingness of the thing, and so on. This genuine learning is therefore an extremely peculiar taking, a taking where he who takes only takes what he basically already has. (p.251)

The mathematical, then, as the taking of what one already knows. This allows Heidegger to argue, phenomenologist that he is, that what we know of things does not simply emerge from things, but inheres in the positing. He can thus argue that number is something mathematical not because of the simple objective existence of, say, three chairs, but only because we already know 'three', and thereby expressly recognize 'something which, in some way, we

already have' (p.252).[26]

The mathematical is the evident aspect of things according to which we experience them as things at all. Heidegger recounts how Plato put over the entrance to his Academy the words: *Ageometrētos mēdeis eisito!* 'Let no one who has not grasped the mathematical enter here!'.[27] This is not designed to suggest that one study only geometry (which we know was the Greek form of mathematics par excellence); it signals that, in the eyes of Plato, 'the fundamental condition for the proper possibility of knowing is the knowledge of the fundamental presuppositions of all knowledge and the position we take based on such knowledge' (p.254). Of course, the ramifications of discerning Heidegger's own sentiments here, that is, the possibility that Heidegger is articulating his own belief vis-à-vis modern learning, are considerable. For this would mean that Heidegger locates among the ancients a principle that apparently belongs to later, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thought, thereby blurring the distinction between epochs and throwing into doubt the revolutionariness of the 'revolution'. His next step, though, is to argue that the

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[26] For many, mathematics would not be a taking of what one already has at all, but a process of transformation producing new concepts and patterns of thought, which in turn produce new problems. See the entry in *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, ed. by Alan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass and Stephen Trombley, 2nd edn (London: Fontana Press, 1988), pp.509-510. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, theories of mathematics generally divided into three camps: Logicism, Formalism, Intuitionism. Since then, the first two have gained the ascendancy. See *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol.23, pp.595-633 and Stephen F. Barker, *Philosophy of Mathematics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964). Morris Kline, *Mathematics in Western Culture* (London: Penguin Books, repr. 1990), pp.20-29, describes mathematics in numerous ways: postulational, creative, a practical tool, the rational organization of natural phenomena, product of curiosity, the search for beauty, a symbolic language, beacon light to the sciences.

[27] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari adapt this expression apropos of the International Psycho-Analytic Association: 'Let no one enter here who does not believe in Oedipus'. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), p.45.

basis of modern thought and knowledge may be said to be essentially mathematical for a slightly different reason, namely, because the natural world itself, not just learning, is given in advance. How is this so?

In the Aristotelian conception, the motion of bodies is *kath' auta*, according to them, themselves. That is to say, a body moves according to its nature, by virtue of qualities or forces which have their basis in the body itself. 'This basis is *archē*, which has a double meaning: that from which something emerges, and that which governs over what emerges in this way' (p.260). So, what is the difference introduced by Newton? Heidegger's argument runs as follows, starting from an abridged form of Newton's first principle, his First Law of Motion: 'Every body left to itself moves uniformily in a straight line.' Newton's axiom begins with *corpus omne* ('every body'), underlining that the universe is no longer, as in Aristotle, divided between the earthly and the celestial realms, and that all natural bodies are essentially of the same kind. Accordingly, motions are now not determined by a body's nature, but by that fundamental universal law of motion itself. Motion is henceforth seen as a change of relative position, as distances between places. 'Therefore the determination of motion develops into one regarding distances, stretches of the measurable, of the so and so large.' The difference between natural and against nature (the *bia*, violence) is similarly eliminated, since violence is now only a measure of the change of motion and no longer special in kind. As a consequence the concept of nature in general changes:

> Nature is no longer the *inner* principle out of which the motion of the body follows; rather, nature is the mode of the variety of the changing relative positions of bodies, the manner in which they are present in space and time, which themselves are domains of possible positional orders and

determinations of order and have no special traits anywhere. (p.264)

This change in the concept of nature corresponds closely, as we shall see, to the passage in Foucault from the Renaissance to the Classical *episteme*.

Heidegger then moves on to deal with the paradox that in speaking of the body which is left to itself, modern science comes up against the fact that there is no such body. Modern science, which is supposed to be based on experience, is thus left with a law that speaks of a thing that does not exist, a law demanding 'a fundamental representation of things which contradict the ordinary'. And here is where Heidegger turns to the mathematical. For the mathematical, it transpires, is based precisely on 'the application of a determination of the thing which is not experientially derived from the thing and yet lies at the base of every determination of the things, making them possible and making room for them' (p.265). In this respect, Galileo's (proverbial?) experiment with falling bodies at the leaning tower of Pisa is instructive.[28] For Galileo maintained that all bodies fall equally fast, and that any differences in the time of fall are due to air resistance, not to different inner natures of the bodies. So, despite the fact that bodies of different weights did not take precisely the same time to fall, and therefore really against the evidence of experience, Galileo upheld his proposition, thereby antagonizing perplexed witnesses even more. Galileo and his opponents saw the same 'fact' but made this same happening visible to themselves in different ways. Where did Galileo see this fact? The following proposition, which

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[28] In fact Koyré is adamant that Galileo never performed and certainly never mentioned any such experiment. 'Galileo's Treatise *De Motu Gravium*: the Use and Abuse of Imaginary Experiment', in *Metaphysics and Measurement*, pp.44-88 (first publ. in *Revue d'histoire des sciences*, 13 (1960), 197-245).

Heidegger says may be considered the antecedent of Newton's First Law, is crucial for Heidegger. Galileo says in his *Discorsi* (1638): *Mobile ... mente concipio omni secluso impedimento.* "'I think in my mind of something moveable that is left entirely to itself.'":

> This 'to think in the mind' is that giving oneself a cognition about a determination of things. It is a procedure of going ahead in advance, which Plato once characterized regarding *mathĕsis* in the following way: *analabŏn autos ex autou tĕn epistĕmĕn* (*Meno* 85d), 'bringing up and taking up – above and beyond the other – taking the knowledge itself from out of himself.' (p.267)

This is what Heidegger understands by the essence of the mathematical, though of course he is here giving expression to an old idea in philosophy, according to which one cannot ask what something is unless in a sense one already knows.[29]

The mathematical is a project of thingness which 'skips over the things'. Barton and Deutsch provide a footnote, quoting from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, on the meaning of the word *project [Entwurf]*:

> 'When Galileo experimented with balls whose weight he himself had already predetermined, when Torrecelli caused the air to carry a weight which he had calculated beforehand [...] they learned that reason only gains insight into what it produces itself according to its own projects [*was sie selbst nach ihrem Entwurfe hervorbringt*]; that it must go before with principles of judgment according to constant laws, and constrain nature to reply to its questions, not content merely to follow her leading strings' (B XIII). (*What Is*, pp.88-89)

In fact, Heidegger is very close to Kant at this juncture, who also touches on the 'revolution'. And this moment, and the sense of projection here outlined, will be crucial for Foucault. In this projection things are in a sense evaluated beforehand. 'Such evaluation and taking-for is called in Greek *axioō*. The

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[29] See Paul Grice, 'Postwar Oxford Philosophy', in *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 1989). Grice calls this kind of thought 'conceptual analysis'.

anticipating determinations and assertions in the project are *axiōmata.'* Whence Newton's section title *Axiomata, sive leges motus* (The Axioms or Laws of Motion).[30] As axiomatic, the mathematical project anticipates the structure of every thing and its relation to every other thing. Nature is now the realm of the uniform space-time context of motion. And 'mathematics' in the narrow sense is born because the project establishing a uniformity of all bodies also makes possible and requires a universal uniform measure as an essential determinant of things, that is, numerical measurement. Heidegger restates the 'reversal' from ancient to modern natural science: 'The new form of modern science did not arise because mathematics became an essential determinant. Rather, that mathematics, and a particular kind of mathematics, could come into play is a *consequence* of the mathematical project' (p.269).

Heidegger says that the mathematical project is only truly grasped, though, as a deeper 'execution and consequence of a mode of historical Dasein, of the fundamental position taken toward Being and toward the way in which beings are manifest as such, i.e., toward truth' (p.271). Here is where Heidegger's signature impresses itself on the debate and where we perceive a seemingly fundamental difference between his project and the later one of Foucault, unless, of course, one thought that the word *episteme* was a differently inflected variant of Dasein. The new mode of historical Dasein in question entails a detachment from revelation as the first source of truth and

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[30] Husserl rehearses the same argument on Galilean physics: 'Things "seen" are always more than what we "really and actually" see of them. Seeing, perceiving, is essentially having-something-itself [*Selbsthaben*] and at the same time having-something-in-advance [*Vor-haben*], meaning-something-in-advance [*Vor-meinen*].' His unease, though, is that this method comes to usurp the place of true being, that the life-world assumes a (fallacious) geometrical aspect. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis*, p.51.

a 'rejection' (though given the capacity of Descartes and of the Enlightenment to juggle with both science and God, perhaps it would be better to say 'questioning') of tradition, of the tradition of the Church, as the authoritative means of knowledge.[31] (Heidegger suggests these rejections are negative consequences of the mathematical project, not vice versa.) If, in the tradition of *divinatio*, it was the case that natural knowledge did not have its own grounds for itself, and less still from out of itself, the mathematical project, on the other hand, gives itself just such a 'self-grounding'. As a result, 'he who dared to project the mathematical project put himself as the projector of this project upon a base which is first projected only in the project.' For Heidegger, there is not only a liberation in the mathematical project, but also a new experience and formation of freedom itself, that is, 'a binding with obligations which are self-imposed'. Foucault, in contrast, will highlight the other side of the project, according to which these obligations do not come simply from the self, but are demanded by the mathematical itself.

Foucault and *mathesis*

Now at this juncture, where Heidegger has just determined to show how modern natural science, modern mathematics, and modern metaphysics all sprang from the same root of the mathematical in the wider sense, we turn to Foucault. There are strong parallels with his account of the same 'revolution' (always understood that Foucault's reach will take him beyond

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[31] Kenneth Clark speaks of mathematics becoming 'the religion of the finest minds of the time'. *Civilisation: A Personal View* (London: BBC & John Murray, 1969), p.208.

natural science), though the revolution becomes, in Foucault's idiom, the supersession of the Renaissance *episteme* by the Classical configuration from which sprang three disciplines – natural history, the analysis of wealth, and general grammar – sharing a common root. Across the next three sections, I shall highlight three aspects of the Foucaultian project, the first two of which are Heideggerian elements, the third being the attempted step beyond Heidegger. They are: 1. The reversal of an expected causality; 2. The question as to what determines the basic movement of knowledge; 3. A radicalization of the Heideggerian position. At stake in all three, as we shall see, are the fortunes of the subject, that awkward creature with which Foucault will maintain a turbulent relationship throughout the next decade. The following sections will show how this subject comes to be constituted and the role played in that constitution by a would-be axiomatic thought.

In order to demonstrate Foucault's treatment of the passage from the Renaissance to the Classical *episteme*, we may take one exemplary encounter, that of a non-meeting of naturalists, Ulisse Aldrovandi, a Renaissance naturalist and physician from Bologna and Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, a French eighteenth-century naturalist. Buffon, Foucault explains, was baffled at how a naturalist like Aldrovandi could mix so indiscriminately in his study of creatures such apparently diverse aspects of the object of his attention. In Aldrovandi's *Historia serpentum et draconum*, the chapter 'Of the Serpent in General' proposes to deal with, among other things: meanings of the word *serpent*, anatomy, death and wounds caused by the serpent, monsters, gods to which it is dedicated, miracles, historical facts, dreams, use in food. The

question, then, is how could this pot pourri possibly be considered scientific knowledge? To answer this question, let us reconstruct Foucault's argument apropos of the Renaissance *episteme*.

In the second chapter of *The Order of Things*, 'The Prose of the World', Foucault concentrates on a Renaissance *episteme* predicated on the reign of resemblance. He elects to comment on four of the essential figures by which things might resemble one another. *Convenientia* designates the proximity of one thing to another, whereby influences, passions and properties are communicated. *Aemulatio* is a sort of 'convenience', but freed from the law of place, such that things imitate each other across the universe. *Analogy* superposes the former two, with the power to offer up an infinite number of relationships (of living creatures to the world they inhabit, of blemishes on the skin to the body which they mark). Finally, there is the play of *sympathies*. Nothing in this is predetermined. Sympathy ranges freely and instantaneously across the greatest spaces, exciting the movement of things in the world and drawing the most distant together, attracting what is heavy to the heaviness of the earth, making 'the great yellow disk of the sunflower turn to follow the curving path of the sun' (p.23). To prevent sympathy from collapsing things into a tyrannical 'featureless form of the Same', it is balanced by antipathy, which maintains every species 'within its impenetrable difference and its propensity to continue being what it is' (p.24), and thereby prevents their assimilation. The sympathy-antipathy couple gives rise to all other forms of resemblance, it is the sovereign of them all.

In order to rein in what appears to be an infinitely indeterminate play,

Foucault explains that the circle of resemblances would remain open and entirely elusive were it not for some mark which would betray the trace of kinship. 'Would we ever know that there is a relationship of twinship or rivalry between a man and his planet, if there were no sign upon his body or among the wrinkles on his face that he is an emulator of Mars or akin to Saturn?' (p.26). There must, then, be a visible mark of invisible analogies. No resemblance without a signature. From which it follows that knowledge is based on the unearthing and the decipherment of these signatures, the world to be known forming a great open surface composed of images and words, a crossing of sight and language.

The 'indefinite zigzag' of resemblances produces a Renaissance knowledge which is at once plethoric and absolutely impoverished. For one resemblance leads to another which leads to another which... But here is where the microcosm comes into its own. As a category of thought, it guarantees that each thing will find its mirror in the higher macrocosm (and that the order of the highest spheres will be reflected on earth). As a general configuration of nature, it establishes real limits to that otherwise indefatigable to-and-fro of similitudes and allows nature to close in upon itself somewhat. One does not really need to be an archaeologist, though, to see that in this theological order the relations of macrocosm and microcosm appear as a mere 'surface effect', necessary to curtail the endless spiral of signs and similitudes.

It is now possible to appreciate why Renaissance thought was able to embrace both magic and erudition in the same movement. This is not attributable to illogic but to the fact that the underlying figures of resemblance

called forth quite logically the two hermeneutics of *divinatio* and *eruditio*. Be they marks of nature or graphisms of the Ancients, 'the truth of all these marks — whether they are woven into nature itself or whether they exist on parchments and in libraries — is everywhere the same: coeval with the institution of God' (p.34).[32] Deposited in the world by God, language is fundamentally written, there to be read and deciphered.[33] Inscribed in things themselves, it calls forth a knowledge which makes no distinction between what one sees and what one reads in a nature which is a 'single, unbroken surface in which observation and language intersect to infinity'. And to return to the non-meeting of naturalists, it is precisely this *entrecroisement* which is at work in Aldrovandi. We can now appreciate why, when Buffon says of Aldrovandi's work: '"There is no description here, only legend"', Foucault simply says, yes indeed, 'for Aldrovandi and his contemporaries, it was all *legenda* — things to be read' (p.39).[34] This is because nature is an uninterrupted tissue of words and marks, discourse and forms. Writing about a serpent, then, involves collecting together in a single form of knowledge all that has been *seen* and *heard* on the one hand, all that has been *recounted* by tradition on the other.

Foucault draws from this comparison the following conclusion, which

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[32] Not only the Christian God. Compare the Jewish tradition of the Cabbala. Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Kabbalah', appendix to Jaime Alazraki, *Jorge Luis Borges* (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), pp.54-61.

[33] Jacques Derrida's chapter, 'The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing', *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp.6-26, examines the same phenomenon but not to proclaim epochal relativism.

[34] He returns to 'legend' in Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, trans. and ed. by James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p.22.

simultaneously eschews and embraces evaluation, and as such is the quintessence of the archaeological project:

> Aldrovandi was neither a better nor a worse observer than Buffon; he was neither more credulous than he, nor less attached to the faithfulness of the observing eye or to the rationality of things. His gaze was simply not linked to things by the same system, nor the same arrangement of the *episteme*. For Aldrovandi was meticulously contemplating a nature which was, from top to bottom, written. (p.40)[35]

Quite simply, the two belong to different systems, to different epistemological arrangements. But the question remains as to how this is so. What has supervened between Aldrovandi and Buffon? Let us follow Foucault's version of the shift from the Renaissance to the Classical *episteme*. We will see that the idea of *mathesis* plays an important part in the new configuration, though Foucault pushes hard at Heidegger's understanding of it with a view to reinflecting that phrase of Heidegger's, according to which 'he who dared to project the mathematical project put himself as the projector of this project upon a base which is first projected only in the project'. In the process, Foucault questions both the (for him) inflated place assigned to the subject and Heidegger's belief that there is a new experience and formation of freedom in the mathematical project.

Foucault argues that whereas since stoicism the system of signs in the West had been essentially ternary (signifier, signified and 'conjuncture'), from the beginning of the seventeenth century this arrangement becomes binary. Instead of the spiral of *entrecroisement*, a little more order makes itself felt:

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[35] This refusal of progress places Foucault squarely in the tradition of thinkers like Canguilhem, for whom that which hangs over the conception of the 'progress of the human mind' is the 'mirage of a definitive state of learning (*savoir*)'. Quoted in Dominique Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology: Bachelard, Canguilhem and Foucault* (London: New Left Books, 1975), p.171.

Things and words were to be separated from one another. The eye was thenceforth destined to see and only to see, the ear to hear and only to hear. Discourse was still to have the task of speaking that which is, but it was no longer to be anything more than what it said. (p.43)

'New arrangement', 'immense reorganisation of culture'. What does Foucault say about the onset of modern knowledge (again, it is not exclusively a matter of science)? He says that Descartes' analysis is premissed on identity and difference. In the analysis the act of comparison is universalized and has two forms: that of measurement and that of order. Measurement of sizes or multiplicities both presuppose that one is able to analyse such things according to a common unit. Comparison by measurement thus comes down to the arithmetical relations of equality and inequality. The comparison of order is established without reference to an external unit. One cannot know the order of things in their isolated nature, but only by first discovering the simplest entity and then working up gradually to the most complex. One thereby establishes a series where the first, and simplest, term is a 'nature that we may intuit independently of any other nature' (p.53) and where the other terms are established according to increasing degrees of difference. Now arithmetical measurements can always be ordered in a series and herein is the advance of this method, since it permits every measurement to be brought into a series which makes differences appear as degrees of complexity. Yet, because this order is established only on the basis of the linking process in knowledge, as a result 'the absolute character we recognize in what is simple concerns not the being of things but rather the manner in which they can be known' (p.54).

A new *episteme* thus takes shape, one in which the activity of the mind consists in discerning identities and differences. And by virtue of the place of

discernment history and science are separated out. On the one hand there is erudition, the reading and weighing up of scholarly opinions; on the other stand those assured judgements which alone constitute science. This completes the new arrangement.

> The written word ceases to be included among the signs and forms of truth; language is no longer one of the figurations of the world, or a signature stamped upon things since the beginning of time. The manifestation and sign of truth are to be found in evident and distinct perception. It is the task of words to translate that truth if they can; but they no longer have the right to be considered a mark of it. Language has withdrawn from the midst of beings themselves and has entered a period of transparency and neutrality. (p.56; trans. mod.)

This phenomenon, he says, is more general than the singular fortunes of Cartesianism. Despite the fact that for the last six pages Foucault has been summarizing a particular text by Descartes (*Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, 1701) and not Cartesianism or seventeenth-century culture in general, it is important to grasp that this thing is not reducible to Descartes.

Foucault then repeats the move made by Heidegger. Historians of ideas, he says, bandy around incantatory expressions like 'Cartesian influence' or 'Newtonian model' and in fact simply confuse the rise of mechanistic thought and the efforts at a mathematization of the empirical with the more fundamental relationship which Classical knowledge enjoyed with *mathesis*, understood as a universal science of measurement and order. Now what is at stake in this relationship?

Since, we recall, the problems of measurement can always be reduced to those of order, this relation of knowledge to *mathesis* presents itself as the possibility of establishing an ordered succession between things. For that reason, analysis quickly assumes the value of universal method. And along

with the search for a *mathesis* there appear a number of new empirical domains which, though all dependent on Analysis in general, have as their particular instrument not the algebraic method but the system of signs. The idea here is that in the seventeenth century the domain of the sign is distributed entirely, according to Foucault, between the certain and the probable. (That breathing designates life is certain, while pallor is only probably a sign of pregnancy.) Which means that there can no longer be an unknown sign or a mute mark, for there is only ever a sign from the moment one *knows* of the possibility of a relation of substitution between two already *known* elements. 'The sign does not wait in silence for the coming of someone capable of recognizing it: it can be constituted only by an act of knowing.'

This, of course, marks the break with *divinatio*. The latter presupposed signs which were anterior to it, signs plump with knowledge which God had previously distributed across the face of the earth. But now the sign begins to signify within, rather than point to, knowledge itself, and it is from that same knowledge that it will borrow its certainty or probability.[36] In order to function, this sign must at once be part of what it signifies and distinct from it. For it to be a sign at all it must be given to knowledge at the same time as that which it signifies. Condillac remarks that for a child a sound would never become a verbal sign of a thing unless the child had heard it at least once before while perceiving the object. But for one element of a perception

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[36] Derrida would say that the tradition and trajectory of the cipher continue. I shall return later to this differance between the theoretical account a culture gives of itself and the functioning of its practice.

to become the sign of it, it must be distinguished *qua* element from the overall impression with which it is linked. The constitution of the sign is thus inseparable from analysis.

The tradition of the mathematical

At this point, it is appropriate to interrupt the discussion of Foucault in order to remark upon the existence of a tradition of mathematics and *mathesis* which predates the Classical era. Before turning, then, to comment on the place and role of the subject in Foucault's scheme, which will be the burden of the next section, brief consideration of this tradition will help to contextualize the important relationship between experience and the *a priori*.

Ernst Cassirer's *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* preempts Foucault's attempt to drive a wedge between the Renaissance and the Classical *epistemes*. Although in one sense Cassirer perpetuates the desire to see a fundamental break between the two world views, he nevertheless pushes the break back in time by making Nicholas Cusanus, a scholar from the mid-fifteenth century, 'the first modern thinker'. Cassirer argues that although Cusanus does not overtly criticize the teachings of Neo-platonic, Christian medieval learning, according to which the cosmos is a fundamentally and strictly graduated order in which the infinite heavens lie over the finite world of man and matter, Cusanus does refrain from positing the opposition dogmatically. For Cusanus the opposition must, rather, be conceived of through the conditions of human knowledge. 'This position towards the problem of knowledge makes of Cusanus the first modern thinker.

His first step consists in asking not about God, but about the possibility of knowledge about God' (p.10). Cassirer's account of Cusanus' critique of Aristotelian scholasticism repays attention, albeit here in a much bastardized form.

Cusanus holds that all knowledge presupposes comparison, which in turn presupposes measurement. Since, and in accordance with the classical position, the absolute object (God) must by definition lie beyond the possibility of measurement, and thus of knowledge, 'rational' theology, that is, Scholastic theology, is of little use. Cusanus replaces this logical theology with a mystical theology, albeit a mysticism informed by knowledge since, for him, no-one should have blind faith in something about which he has absolutely no knowledge. This mystical theology Cusanus incorporates under the umbrella of his principle of *docta ignorantia*, 'knowing ignorance'. Furthermore, if the distance between the sensible world and God is infinite, as Scholasticism suggests, then for Cusanus all finite differences are annihilated, every element, every natural being is equally distant from and equally near to that origin. Since the truly perfect cannot be encountered as such, the earth cannot be determined with absolute mathematical precision. And since the earth shares this fate with all other existents, it may no longer, as was the case in the Scholastic tradition, be considered base and detestable. This is part of the attempt by Cusanus to give new value to *humanitas*. We shall return to this shortly.[37]

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[37] See the wonderful pages on Cusanus' arguments concerning the reciprocal worth of God and man, the interdependence of the universal and the particular (pp.28-33, 36-37); on redemption (p.40); on the power of the human intellect and the emergence of something like

If Cusanus accords maximum value to measurement and, above all, proportion (Cassirer argues that the concern with proportion is at the same time a speculative-philosophical, a technical-mathematical and an artistic concern, and that this convergence makes the problem of form central to the Renaissance), it is, not surprisingly, mathematics which is to provide the means by which we raise ourselves above the sphere of mystical feeling into intellectual vision. Again, since the spiritual remains unattainable in itself, we can only hope to approximate it by means of a sense-image or symbol. But, for Cusanus, we may at least demand that the symbol contain nothing unclear. 'This is the novelty: he requires of the symbols in which the divine becomes graspable by us not only sensible fullness and force but also intellectual precision and certainty. With that, the character of the relationship between the world and God, between the finite and the infinite, undergoes a complete transformation' (p.53). As a result, if Cusanus uses the metaphor now familiar to us from Foucault of nature as God's book, he demands by the same token that it be investigated and deciphered rigorously and systematically.

While at one level this example obviously confirms Foucault's point about *divinatio* and *eruditio*, especially in what relates to tradition and to the Book, it also suggests the stirrings of *scientia* long before the advent of the Classical *episteme*. While one does not need to proclaim the arrival of a science unencumbered either by scriptural or doxographical tradition (on those grounds the claim would be difficult to maintain even, and especially, for Descartes), the evidence adduced by Cassirer, Koyré and Duhem does suggest

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a subject (p.41).

that the spirit of *scientia* was already at work in Cusanus, Leonardo, Galileo and Kepler (and perhaps the absence of French names is significant here). Koyré, for one, insists on the sheer disdain felt by Leonardo, and especially by Galileo, for the lay, unscientific opinions expressed by the uninitiated. For both thinkers, nature must be understood logically and in this respect mathematics furnishes an unequivocal standard of logic over and against the arbitrariness and uncertainty of opinions. If Galileo continues to adhere to the tradition of revelation, it is principally to the tradition of *works* rather than *words*, 'for the word is something of the past and of tradition, whereas the work, as something at hand and enduring, stands before us, immediate and present, ready to be questioned' (Koyré, p.55).

But we risk missing the essential. The expressions 'at hand and enduring, stands before us, immediate and present' evoke the priority of experience and experiment.[38] Crucially, however, one should guard against believing here that *scientia* emerges from, is the natural product of, unmediated experience. For this appeal to experience, according to Cassirer, Koyré and Duhem, is itself mediated by a still older tradition — that of Platonism. According to Cassirer (and neither Koyré nor Duhem would dissent), Cusanus and the 'great empiricists'

> saw no contradiction between 'apriorism' and 'empiricism'; because what they seek in experience is necessity — it is reason itself. When Leonardo refers to experience, it is to discover there the eternal and unchangeable order of reason. His true object is not experience itself but the rational principles, the *ragioni* that are hidden and, so to speak, incorporated in experience. And he emphatically states that nature is full of 'rational

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[38] In the Romance languages the words experience and experiment are normally encapsulated in the same word, deriving from the Latin *experiri*. *The Archaeology*, p.16, mistranslates *expérience* as 'experiment' rather than 'experience'.

> principles' that have not yet been part of experience: *la nature è piena d'infinite ragioni che non furono mai in isperienza.* Galileo follows the same path. Though he considered himself a champion of experience, he nevertheless emphasized that the mind can only create true, *necessary* knowledge by its own principles (*da per se*). (p.58)

Reason is the immanent, unbreakable law governing nature. And only thought, the work and the imagination of thought, rather than sensation, proves capable of grasping the eternal and immanent laws of nature. 'The creative power of the artist, the imagination that creates a "second nature", does not consist in his inventing the law, in his creating it *ex nihilo*; it consists in his discovery and demonstration of the law' (p.163). Creative power and imagination. We are back with Galileo and the mind's eye. This time Cassirer:

> Every experiment, every questioning of experience, presupposes an intellectual 'sketch' of the thought, a *mente concipio*, as Galileo calls it, within which we anticipate a regularity within nature. Then we raise the 'sketch' to certainty by testing it through experience. Objective regularity, i.e., the permanent, basic measurements that determine and govern all natural phenomena, are not simply taken from experience; rather, they are placed at the base of experience as 'hypotheses', to be confirmed or refuted by it. The whole science of nature, according to Galileo, rests upon this new relationship between understanding (*discorso*) and sense, between experience and thought. (p.164)

Cassirer's expression 'not simply taken from experience' holds out the possibility of an interaction between the hypothesis and experience which seems denied by others. Kant was adamant that no *a priori* should be contaminated by experience, even if it had necessarily to alight on an empirical content. He states that the expression '*a priori*' is often loosely used to refer to empirical knowledge which, while not derived from experience as such, is derived from a universal rule which is itself borrowed from experience. The example he provides bears (like so many of his examples) on the activity of building, though here it is more a matter of demolition:

> Thus we would say of a man who undermined the foundations of his house,

> that he might have known *a priori* that it would fall, that is, that he need not have waited for the experience of its actual falling. But still he could not know this completely *a priori*. For he had first to learn through experience that bodies are heavy, and therefore fall when their supports are withdrawn. (Kant, *Critique*, p.43)

Given this misapplication, Kant insists that he will reserve the expression *a priori* knowledge, not for knowledge independent of this or that experience, but for knowledge 'absolutely independent of all experience' (p.43).

It is difficult to see how any knowledge in the domain of natural science could ever be *a priori* according to these criteria. Be it rolling balls down slopes or removing building supports, would not every experimenter have had to learn something about the phenomena through experience (that bodies fall, say)? I suspect that Kant's building comparison harbours an archaeology of its own, a discourse of origins which maintains the independence of the *a priori* only by circumscribing experience as something belonging to the past (for instance learning once upon a time that bodies are heavy) but which somehow does not impinge on the present scene of intuition. Thus, in the case of Galileo we can acknowledge that he has already conducted experiments before and even that he has learnt from these experiences. But when confronted with a particular instance in which Galileo actually comes to cast his weights into the diaphanous Pisa air, Kant will want to block out that past and that experience: at this moment and in this place Galileo knows what will happen in advance, therefore experience counts for nought. It is telling that Kant describes the Greek discovery of the mathematical road to science in the singular (a single revolution, a single thought, a single man, a single experiment, a single path, a single science), attributing it to a *'revolution*

brought about by the happy thought of a single man, the experiment which he devised marking out the path upon which the science must enter' (p.19). No less telling is a footnote from the passage on Galileo and Torrecelli (the passage, we recall, reproduced by the editors of Heidegger's *What Is a Thing?*): 'I am not, in my choice of examples, tracing the exact course of the history of the experimental method; we have indeed no very precise knowledge of its first beginnings' (p.20). Beginnings plural.

For his part, and perhaps the spirit of Kant looms large here, Koyré is even more of a purist, insisting on the temporal and logical precedence of the *a priori*: 'Experience is useless because before any experience we are already in possession of the knowledge we are seeking for.'[39] Putting it thus rather undermines Koyré's purpose, for he gives the impression with this phrase that the effort of thought is no effort at all, that we truly, comfortably, and even unquestioningly already know what we seek to know. And again, even the following more forthright invocation of the power of thought sells thought short precisely, and paradoxically, by lauding its purity: 'it is thought, pure unadulterated thought, and not experience or sense-perception, as until then, that gives the basis for the "new science" of Galileo Galilei' (Koyré, p.13). On the contrary, it would be the very fact that thought was impure and adulterated, inevitably contaminated by tradition and the doxa, that would make Galileo's intellectual agonism all the more powerful, would allow scope for individual creativity and talent within the tradition.

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[39] 'Galileo and the Scientific Revolution of the Seventeenth Century', in *Metaphysics and Measurement*, pp.1-15 (p.13) (first publ. in *The Philosophical Review*, 52 (1943), 333-348).

It is precisely the emergence of *humanitas*, the rekindling of the creative powers and capacities of the human being after the slumber of Scholasticism and Averroism, fruit of the long theological debate over determination versus freewill, that Cassirer sees as the pivotal factor in the scientific revolution. The following from Cassirer (apropos of Pico della Mirandola's *In astrologiam libri XII*) condenses all that Foucault would find most objectionable:

> the astrological vision of the world was overcome, essentially, neither by empirical and scientific reasons, nor by new methods of observation and of mathematical calculation. The decisive blow had fallen before these methods were completely perfected. The agent of liberation was not the new view of nature but the new view of the value of humanity. The power of *Fortuna* is confronted with the power of *Virtus*; destiny is confronted with the self-confident and self-trusting will. What may be really and truly called the destiny of man does not flow to him from above, from the stars, but rather arises from the ultimate depths of his innermost self. We ourselves make of Fortune a goddess and raise her to the heavens; whereas, in truth, destiny is the daughter of the soul: *sors animae filia*. (p.120)

Man – the measure of all things. A variation on Protagoras' claim, Cassirer finds the topos already at work in Cusanus. As Cassirer puts it: '*Mens* and *mensura* belong together; whoever has understood the nature of measurement has also seen the true meaning and depth of the mind' (p.177).

Quite simply, Foucault tellingly recasts Cassirer's narrative and the measurement trope, invoking experience and experiment while gesturing to a form of apriorism, drawing attention instead precisely to the *tradition* of the individual (and this is also why the target of the book is a tradition of greater compass than phenomenology). And if he shares with Hannah Arendt a fundamental mistrust of everything merely given, his interest lies in a different constitution, though in both cases it will be a question of creation versus

discovery.[40]

The *subjectum* and the 'historical *a priori*'

We are now in a position to remark on a certain absent presence in Foucault's presentation of the Classical *episteme* and to divine what is at stake in this relationship to *mathesis*. Maria Daraki, giving voice to one of the prime criticisms levelled at Foucault, describes the work as a '*tour de force* which treats Cartesianism without mentioning the *subject*; [...] explicating the Port-Royal Logic and forgetting that it was the first psychological reflection cognition' (sic). *The Order of Things*, she continues, is animated by 'a firm will to remove the subject's right to exist'. It is true that thus far in the chapter on 'Representing', the word *subject* has appeared on just three occasions, though in none of these does it refer to *res cogitans*. Yet despite this absence of thinking 'subjects' (the word *subjectivity* is also completely absent), these pages are filled with descriptions of acts of cognition, with the semantics of a certain decisive power of the mind. ('Act of comparison', 'to consider', 'to analyse', 'intuition', 'the activity of the mind', 'to discern', 'evident and distinct perception', 'the sign [...] is constituted only by an act of knowing', 'the mind'.) A fact that has not escaped Daraki:

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[40] 'Our new difficulty is that we start from a fundamental distrust of everything merely given, a distrust of all laws and prescriptions, moral or social, that are deduced from a given, comprehensive universal whole. This difficulty involves the sources of authority of law and questions the ultimate goals of political organizations and communities; it forces us not only to find and devise new laws, but to find and devise their very measure, the yardstick of good and evil, the principle of their source. For man, in the sense of the nature of man, is no longer the measure, despite what the new humanists would have us believe. Politically, this means that before drawing up the new constitution of the body politic, we shall have to create – not merely discover – a new foundation for human community as such.' Hannah Arendt, *Burdens of Our Time*, pp.435-436. I am indebted to Richard King for this passage.

> Cognition displays the mental operations of the subject Foucault refuses to name. Neither Classical science nor contemporary science will wrest from him one word on the subject. The approach which grounds the human sciences is transformed into an animistic fairy tale. (Daraki, p.91)

The following archaeological moment would seem to support Daraki. Foucault is arguing that it is the very system of signs in the Classical age which introduces such things as probability, analysis and combination into thought. At the level of a history of opinions one would doubtless get stuck in a discussion of the individual parts played by Hobbes, Berkeley, Leibniz, Condillac, and the 'Idéologues'. But at the archaeological level, that is to say, at the level of what made it possible, these new forms – probability, analysis, combination, etc. – emerge as a 'single network of necessities. And it was this network that made possible the personalities we call Hobbes, Berkeley, Hume, or Condillac' (p.63; trans. mod.). Deliberately scandalous, this is an example of the type of Heideggerian reversal of causality encountered earlier. But it represents a departure from the Heideggerian path in its radical refusal to dwell on the merits and powers of individual thinkers. In order to understand how such a reversal has come about and why the question of subjectivity should suddenly occupy centre stage in a discussion of *mathesis*, a return to Heidegger is demanded, for the final two subsections of that part of *What Is a Thing?* which we were following closely form a steely exposition of an argument whose logic underpins Foucault's own, but upon which Foucault does not elaborate in his treatment of the Classical *episteme*.

The penultimate subsection is called 'Descartes: *Cogito Sum*; "I" as a special subject'. In it Heidegger rejects the usual image we have of Descartes as the philosopher who issues in the I-viewpoint of modern times and its

subjectivism. For Heidegger, Descartes' work appears on the contrary in the midst of an era in which, for a century, mathematics had been embarking on a new assault upon reality, seeking to ground itself and also to explicate itself as the standard of all thought. Whence the two-fold nature of Descartes' fundamental philosophical position: a reflection on mathematics and on metaphysics. Heidegger opts to pursue this position in Descartes' *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, the text Foucault follows in *The Order of Things*.

If *Regulae* means basic and guiding propositions, *ad directionem ingenii* implies, for Heidegger, laying the foundation of the mathematical in order that it become the measure of the inquiring mind. Heidegger's discussion is a rich rehearsal of many of the themes we have already touched on in relation to Foucault (science versus *doxa*, the importance of method, the ordering and arrangement of that upon which the mind falls), but we shall confine ourselves to the essential point. If mathematics, as *mathesis universalis*, is to ground and form the whole of knowledge, then it requires the formulation of special axioms, which must be 'absolutely first, intuitively evident in and of themselves', and must also establish in advance 'from where and how the thingness of things is determined.' Until that time, tradition had dictated that this happen along the lines of the proposition. The proposition was what offered itself of itself, at the same time containing something of that about which it speaks.

But for a mathematical position there can be no pregiven things. The proposition cannot be arbitrary, but must itself be *the* basic principle.

> One must therefore find such a principle of all positing, i.e., a proposition
> in which that about which it says something, the *subjectum* (*hypokeimenon*),

> is not just taken from somewhere else. That underlying subject must as such
> first emerge for itself in this original proposition and be established. Only
> in this way is the *subjectum* a *fundamentum absolutum*, purely posited from
> the proposition as such, a basis and ground established in the mathematical.
> (p.278)

If anything is given at all, then, it is only the proposition, that is, the positing,

in the sense of a thinking that asserts. In other words, the positing has only

itself as that which can be posited. And insofar as positing directs itself

towards itself, it finds that over and above the question of what is asserted, this

asserting and thinking is always an '*I* think':

> Thinking *is* always an '*I* think,' *ego cogito*. Therein lies: I am, *sum*.
> *Cogito, sum* – this is the highest certainty lying immediately in the
> proposition as such. In 'I posit' the 'I' as the positer is co- and pre-posited
> as that which is already present, as the being. The Being of beings is
> determined out of the 'I am' as the certainty of the positing. (pp.278-279)

Heidegger adds that the formula which the proposition sometimes has,

'*Cogito ergo sum*', suggests the misunderstanding that it is a question of

inference. But the *sum* is not a consequence of the thinking; rather, it is the

fundamentum or ground of thinking. The proposition 'I posit' has the

peculiarity of first positing that about which it makes an assertion, the

subjectum, in this case the 'I'. The I is the *subjectum* of the very first

principle. 'The I is therefore a special something which underlies

[*Zugrundeliegendes*] – *hypokeimenon, subjectum* – the *subjectum* of the

positing as such.' For this reason the 'I' has been called the 'subject'.

Heidegger then draws the following conclusion, which encapsulates well

Foucault's argument about the Classical *episteme*:

> That the 'I' comes to be defined as that which is already present for
> representation (the 'objective' in today's sense) is not because of any I-
> viewpoint or any subjectivistic doubt, but because of the essential
> predominance and the definitely directed radicalization of the mathematical
> and the axiomatic.

Until Descartes every thing at hand for itself was a 'subject'; but because now they first receive their thingness only through the founding relation to the highest principle and its 'subject' (I), 'they are essentially such as stand as something else in relation to the "subject," which lie over against it as *objectum*. The things themselves become "objects"' (p.280).[41]

Returning to Daraki's criticism, we can perhaps now see that Foucault is not denying the activity of thinking and the power of the mind. He is suggesting, rather, that there is something more fundamental, a project or order which constitutes the subject (his argument is precisely about constitution). This is really the substance of the section of *The Order of Things*, 'Duplicated Representation', which immediately follows the last words we quoted from Foucault ('And it was this network that made possible the personalities we call Hobbes...'), and in which he explicates the fundamental property of Classical signs. He quotes from the *Logique de Port-Royal*: '"The sign encloses two ideas, one of the thing representing, the other of the thing represented; and its nature consists in exciting the first by means of the second"' (p.63). To become a true sign, it must represent, but also that representation must itself be represented in it. It is therefore no surprise, Foucault remarks, that the first example of a sign furnished in the *Logique de Port-Royal* should be that of the drawing, as map or picture, since 'the *tableau* has no other content in fact than that which it represents, and yet that content is made visible only because it

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[41] Whence the importance given by Heidegger in 'The Age of the World Picture' to the verb *vorstellen*, 'to represent', which means precisely 'to set out before oneself and to set forth in relation to oneself'. Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', p.132. It should be remembered that Nietzsche had already formulated this critique in volume two of *The Will to Power: An Attempted Transvaluation of All Values*, trans. by Anthony M. Ludovici, vol. II (Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1913), 481-485.

is represented by a representation.' Representation is thus at once a relation

to an object and a manifestation of itself.[42] Hence Foucault's forbidding

phrase: 'From the Classical age, the sign is the *representativity* of the

representation in so far as it is *representable*' (p.65). Thus, one of the

consequences of this arrangement, and this is really the crux of the matter, is

that a *theory* of signification is excluded. As Foucault says, if phenomena are

only ever given in a representation which, in itself and by its own

representability, is wholly a sign, then signification cannot constitute a

problem. What is more, it does not even appear:

> All representations are interconnected as signs; all together, they form, as it
> were, an immense network; each one posits itself in its transparency as the
> sign of what it represents; and yet – or rather, by this very fact – *no specific
> activity of consciousness can ever constitute a signification.* (p.80. My
> emphasis)

As we saw earlier, Foucault nowhere denies the role of the mind; he

simply rejects the capacity of consciousness to itself constitute meaning.

Meaning can never be more than the totality of signs arranged in a chain one

after the other; 'it will be given, it will give itself, in the complete *table* of

signs' (p.80; trans. mod.). And this *tableau* strives to represent as clearly and

distinctly as it can a pre-existing order of things determined by universal laws

which together determine the possibilities of human thought. At least,

Foucault would say, such was how Classical thought theorized its own activity.

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[42] François Wahl suggests that Foucault's version of Classical representation contains echoes of Husserl's account of the sign (as index and expression). In this important critique, Wahl argues that Foucault, across all *epistemes*, ultimately defers to representation, to the 'vécu représentatif' (p.349), which he attributes to the book's pervasive phenomenology. A phenomenology which is ultimately less Husserl and more Merleau-Ponty. Wahl omits to ask the extent to which Husserl's account of the sign itself echoes Classical deliberations on representation. 'La Philosophie entre l'avant et l'après du structuralisme', in Ducrot et al *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968), pp.301-441 (esp. pp.335-350).

The parallel with structural linguistics is not lost on Foucault, who ends the section with the following meditation:

> It was also necessary that Saussure, rediscovering the project of a general semiology, should have given the sign a definition that may have seemed 'psychologistic' (the linking of a concept and an image): this is because he was in fact rediscovering the Classical condition for conceiving of the binary nature of the sign. (p.81; trans. mod.)[43]

Alan Megill is therefore in error when he charges that Foucault's account of the distinction between representation and signification remains unclear, 'even after one has gone to the considerable effort of learning his somewhat idiosyncratic terminology and of grasping the architectonics of the book' (Megill, p.209); the exposition is clarity itself. The question is whether the respective systems actually functioned in such apparently distinct ways. If we accept the theoretical difference, and if we believe that Western culture did later evolve an *episteme* in which the subject would itself constitute signification, we will see the logic – an *axiomatic* logic – of Foucault's claim that man in the seventeenth century did not exist. The point about such a claim, and about the reversal of causality it implies (the 'single network of necessities [...] that made possible the personalities we call Hobbes...'), is that

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[43] François Wahl objects that, for all the talk of epistemological breaks, Foucault fails to distinguish adequately between Classical representation and modern semiology: what distinguishes the modern signifier from the Classical idea is that 'we shall never find the signified in it'. We must accept the disappearance of any parallel between the sign and the order of the idea (p.326). But Foucault never said that modern semiology still took the realm of ideas as its model. In addition, Wahl concludes that Foucault follows Saussure in offering a pyschologistic theory of the sign and that the pair of them are thus presaussurean. But what emerges from all this – from Wahl's insistence that *langue* be conceived as a '*logical machine* [...] the laws of which one would search for in vain in an analysis of psychic acts alone' (p.330); from his belief in the incommensurability of structuralism and the C17th psychological theory of representation – is that the misunderstanding is Wahl's. For not only is Foucault not arguing that structuralism is psychological (he says that Saussure gave a definition which *might* have seemed psychologistic), he is also arguing that neither were Classical theories of representation, at least in the sense of being predicated on a founding psyche which would bestow meaning independently of the functioning of the system. In striving to point up a clear difference, Wahl ends up demonstrating a certain unsuspected affinity between the models.

it strikes a blow at crude anachronism: the deployment onto one era of a concept of man and the subject belonging to a later age. This is the Foucault claimed by New Historicism.

Be that as it may, it is time to draw together some of the threads of the comparison between Foucault and Heidegger. When Heidegger discusses the fundamental characteristic of modern science he attributes it to the mathematical manner of working with things. The mathematical project is not born all at once and does not come from nowhere ('Its beginnings stir during the later Scholasticism of the fifteenth century; the sixteenth century brings sudden advances as well as setbacks; but it is only during the seventeenth century that the decisive clarifications and foundations are accomplished'). He considers the labours of some individuals more helpful than others, though his account is not exclusively about individual battles. Newton, Galileo, and their fundamental efforts at revising the ancient and medieval view of science are poured into the equation together with a mathematical project that must be grasped as 'the execution and consequence of a mode of historical Dasein'.

With Foucault's Classical *episteme* on the other hand, Newton read by Voltaire is just a 'sociological phenomenon', one which did not provoke 'the slightest alteration' in the history of thought (p.89).[44] If Foucault ignores these personalities, is it not because he is more faithful to that era's thought? Would not the very framework of his method be remarkably close in spirit to the thought of that age? Does not the *episteme* take the form of that which it aspires to know? Since the *episteme*, in this Classical age where things no

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[44] Cf. his parallel treatment of the *personnages* of the Physiocrats (p.200).

longer exist and move according to an inner principle, is what 'makes things possible', it closely resembles Heidegger's mathematical project. Heidegger, we remember, defined the mathematical as precisely based on 'the application of a determination of the thing which is not experientially derived from the thing and yet lies at the base of every determination of the things, making them possible and making room for them'. As such, at least in the Classical age, the concept of *episteme* – as that set of regulae which, in a historically determinate period, make things possible – would seem to translate the presence and functioning of the notion of *mente concipere*. That attitude of mind in which there is a prior grasping of what should be uniformily determinative of each body as such. In this figure of the mathematical projection which is the *episteme* is posited, in Heidegger's words, 'that which things are taken as, what and how they are to be evaluated beforehand'. Such evaluation and taking-for, we recall, is called in Greek *axioō*, and the anticipating determinations and assertions in the project are *axiōmata*.

But because the *episteme* would only be a prior grasping of what should be uniformily determinative of each body in a particular historical epoch (one recalls Foucault's insistence on the *episteme* as a 'historical *a priori*', integral to his claim that, since he does not deal in universal structures, he is not a structuralist), it would be the mathematical projection of – to travesty at least two languages – a historical axiomatics without history. Therefore, it would seem that Foucault, with his notion of *episteme*, is conceptually proximate and faithful to the (Classical) age he describes.

Something which is not lost on him.[45]

Kant and the construction trade and tradition

Thus far our interest has been exclusively in the Renaissance and

Classical epochs. But what happens when Foucault comes to the modern

(Kantian) *episteme*, when he takes us to a revolution squared by showing how

the first great revolution is in turn subject to a displacement?[46] Foucault's

intention, in discovering *epistemes* posterior to and different from the Classical

paradigm, is to radicalize the ground of knowledge by suggesting that the

project of *mathesis* in the seventeenth century did not mark a once and for all

coming to scientific knowledge – a move which would at the same time sully

the purity of Kant's reason. Furthermore, by coining an expression like

'historical *a priori*', a 'rather barbarous term' as he puts it in *The Archaeology*

(p.127), and even more so by immersing the term *episteme* in post-Classical

waters, Foucault signals his own historical affiliation to a certain tradition of

European thought (though without simply reproducing it) which at once

embraces and pre-dates Kant, a tradition in which, to boot, a very particular

understanding of mathematics is paramount.[47] Before moving to extract some

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[45] 'In a certain way, we come back to the point of view of the seventeenth century, with this difference: not putting man in the place of God, but an anonymous thought, of knowledge without the subject, of the theoretical without identity.' Foucault, 'Entretien', *La Quinzaine littéraire*, 5, 16 May 1966, p.15.

[46] The language of revolution is not inappropriate with respect to Kant, even before 1789. He describes his own project as an attempt to 'completely revolutionis[e]' metaphysics (Kant, *Critique*, p.25).

[47] Maurice Clavel, *Ce que je crois* (Paris: Grasset, 1975), believed fervently that with *The Order of Things* he was in the presence of a modern Kantianism. Foucault subsequently did little to refute that judgement, saying of himself (under a pseudonym shared with François Ewald) that if he is inscribed in a philosophical tradition, it is that of the critical tradition of

conclusions vis-à-vis Foucault on Kant, it will be worth reminding ourselves of some of the principal tenets of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, especially since, we recall, the latter half of Heidegger's *What Is a Thing?* concerns itself precisely with that work.

As Heidegger is keenly aware, the question of the thing is capital in Kant's system. What matters for Kant is not so much the objects of knowledge, as the possibility of an *a priori* mode of knowing objects. Heidegger:

> We are now not only not directed to the object of the assertion, but also not to the form of the assertion as such, but rather to how the object is the object of the assertion, how the assertion represents the object in advance, how our knowledge passes over to the object, *transcendit*, and how, thereby, and in what objective determination the object encounters. Kant calls this way of considering transcendental. (*What Is a Thing?*, pp.178-179)

In short, one must always already have a knowledge of what an object is, which Kant calls synthetic knowledge. And one must have it in advance, that is, *a priori*. As Heidegger says: 'Objects could never confront us as objects at all without synthetic judgments *a priori*; by these objects we "then" guide ourselves in particular investigations, inquiries, and proofs, in which we constantly appeal to them' (p.180).

One of the things to which Kant constantly appeals in order to illustrate *a priori* knowledge is mathematics. He writes in the Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason* that if an example of a pure *a priori* judgement from the sciences be desired, 'we have only to look at any of the propositions of mathematics' (p.44). This is then formalized into a rule: '1. *All mathematical*

Kant. Maurice Florence, 'Foucault', *Dictionnaire des philosophes*, ed. by D. Huisman (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1981), vol. 1, pp.942-944 (p.942).

judgements, without exception, are synthetic' (p.52), and promptly followed by

exempla from arithmetic and geometry (pp.52-54). Further on, pure

mathematics is made an exemplary example, a 'brilliant example' of such

knowledge (p.80). Barely three pages in to the Preface to the Second Edition,

an important connection is made between geometry and construction. Kant is

discussing the Greek demonstration of the properties of the isosceles triangle.

Note that the word 'construction' refers not to the geometrical figure but to the

mental representation of the figure formed in the mind:

> The true method, so [the first to demonstrate the properties] found, was not
> to inspect what he discerned either in the figure, or in the bare concept of
> it, and from this, as it were, to read off its properties; but to bring out what
> was necessarily implied in the concepts that he had himself formed *a priori*,
> and had put into the figure in the construction by which he presented it to
> himself. If he is to know anything with *a priori* certainty he must not
> ascribe to the figure anything save what necessarily follows from what he
> has himself set into it in accordance with his concept. (p.19)

With this sense of mental representation we touch once more on the *subjectum*

which Foucault wants to disavow.

To say too much in too short a space, it is with Kant's fourth group of

principles (the postulates of empirical thought), which correspond to the

categories of modality, that one reaches the heart of the matter. The categories

of modality (possibility, actuality, necessity), as opposed to the remaining three

groups of principles (axioms of intuition, anticipations of perception, and

analogies) corresponding to the categories of quantity, quality, and relation, do

not belong to the factual nature of an object; they assert something concerning

the modes according to which the existence of the object is to be determined.

The modalities are a synthesis. 'They put the object into a relationship to the

conditions of its standing-against (*Gegen-stehen*). These conditions, however,

are also those very ones of the letting-stand-against (*Gegenstehenlassen*) of experience, and, therefore, of the actions of the subject' (Heidegger, *What Is*, pp.240-241). This is the heart of the Kantian system and needless to say it is what Foucault would find most objectionable. Heidegger continues:

> The postulates, too, are synthetic principles, although not objective, but only subjectively synthetic. This is to say that they do not put together the content of the object, but they put the whole nature of the object as determined by the three first principles into its possible relations to the subject and to its modes of intuitively-thought representing. The modalities add to the concept of the object its relation to our cognitive faculty. (p.241)

It will be Foucault's task in *The Order of Things* to wrest this 'ground-laying' out of the hands of any transcendental subject whatsoever, Kantian or phenomenological, to insist that the subjective *a priori* is only the result of an anterior and more determining historical *episteme* – even if we suspect that the *episteme* assumes the constitutive powers of which Husserl speaks apropos of the transcendental subject of phenomenology.[48] In this question of foundations the metaphorics of the construction trade assume due importance. (The critique of Kant would presumably not stem from objecting to his wanting to establish foundations per se. If one is to build an edifice, the desire for foundations is understandable.)[49] Heidegger says in *Kant and the*

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[48] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p.85: 'Every sort of existent itself, real or ideal, becomes understandable as a "product" of transcendental subjectivity, a product constituted in just that performance.' In a later interview Foucault intimates that his historicization will not have done away with the transcendental: 'I try to historicize to the utmost in order to leave as little space as possible to the transcendental. I cannot exclude the possibility that one day I will have to confront an irreducible *residuum* which will be, in fact, the transcendental.' 'An Historian of Culture', in *Foucault Live*, p.79.

[49] Cf. Kant, *Critique*, p.46.

Problem of Metaphysics that the meaning of the expression 'laying the ground' (*Grundlegung*) is best illustrated if we consider the building trade. He continues:

> It is true that metaphysics is not a building or structure [*Gebäude*] that is at hand, but is really in all human beings 'as a natural construction or arrangement.'[50] As a consequence, laying the ground for metaphysics can mean to lay a foundation [*Fundament*] under this natural metaphysics, or rather to replace one which has already been laid with a new one through a process of substituting. However, it is precisely this representation which we must keep out of the idea of a ground-laying, namely, that it is a matter of the byproduct from the foundation [*Grunlagen*] of an already-constructed building. Ground-laying is rather the projecting of the building plan itself so that it agrees with the direction concerning on what and how the building will be grounded. Laying the ground for metaphysics as the projecting [*Entwerfen*] of the building plan, however, is again no empty producing of a system and its subdivisions. It is rather the architectonic circumscription and delineation of the inner possibility of metaphysics, that is, the concrete determination of its essence. All determination of essence, however, is first achieved in the setting-free of the essential ground. (p.2)

Strictly speaking, Kant is a good deal more ambivalent than Heidegger on this point. It is not necessarily, for Kant, a choice between an already-constructed edifice versus a project for a building. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* he speaks of the task of 'clearing' and 'levelling what has hitherto been wasteground' (p.14).

The significance of the metaphorics of the building trade emerges in Aristotle's distinction between divine and human knowledge (already seen in Cusanus) which exercises Heidegger and Kant before him. For Kant, all knowledge is intuition. The difference between infinite intuition (that is, divine knowledge) and finite intuition (human knowledge) consists in the fact that the former

> first brings [the] being into its Being, helps it to its coming-into-being (*origo*). Absolute intuiting would not be absolute if it depended upon a being already at hand and if the intuitable first became accessible in its

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[50] The footnote is to Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2d ed., p.21.

'taking the measure' of this being. Divine knowing is representing which, in intuiting, first creates the intuitable being as such.[51] But because it immediately looks at the being as a whole, simply seeing through it in advance, it cannot require thinking. Thinking as such is thus already the mark of finitude. Divine knowing is 'intuition (for all its knowledge must be intuition and not *thinking*, which always shows itself to have limits)'.[52] (Heidegger, *Kant*, pp.16-17)

For Kant, finite knowledge is noncreative intuition. The being must already have been 'at hand' in advance. 'Finite intuition of the being cannot give the object from out of itself. It must allow the object to be given' (Heidegger, *Kant*, p.17). Hence, a certain receptivity always characterizes finite, that is, human, intuition.

Human thought, though, is 'productive' in another sense. It produces concepts which allow us to extrapolate from a particular being and understand it, for example, as one of a species. Finite knowledge reveals the being which shows itself, that is, the appearance. Humans must content themselves with the appearance of the object since for them to claim to know the thing in itself would be to put themselves in the place of God as the absolute creator. Infinite knowing does not merely know an already-existing object, it is that which allows the being itself to stand forth. 'Absolute knowing discloses the being [in the act of] letting-stand-forth and possesses it in every case "only" as that which stands forth in the letting-stand-forth' (Heidegger, *Kant*, pp.20-21).

This takes us to an ambiguity at the heart of Foucault's practice of archaeology in *The Order of Things*. *On the one hand* it wants to historicize

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[51] A footnote refers to Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 72. The phrase 'taking the measure' will be encountered later in Foucault.

[52] A footnote refers to Kant, *Critique*, B 71.

Kant and the phenomenological patrimony, to suggest that the idea of a transcendental subject constitutes a historically local and contingent way of asking about the world, one which, moreover, is on the verge of disappearing.[53] It thereby refuses Kant's suggestion that there might be a 'fundamental constitution [*Grundbeschaffenheit*] of knowledge in general' and more specifically seeks to divest the subject of the constitutional powers that Kant bestows upon it.[54] Foucault wants to situate that figure of *man* which would have us believe it is the result of a gradual self-revealing of its essential groundedness in itself.[55] Foucault's critique of Kant is thus directed precisely at the idea of finitude. For Foucault, the modern *episteme* is characterized by the circularity implicit in a knowledge in which man is both subject and object. On the basis of the positive forms of his body, his desire and his language, man learns that he is finite, and this very finitude will be able to provide a foundation for the positivity of things. (It should be said that Foucault's exposition of how this analytic of finitude underlies the practice of the three disciplines of biology, economics and philology is mightily impressive. By the end of it, it is hard not to believe in the existence of *epistemes*.) But when Foucault argues that the three modern disciplines of ethnology, psychoanalysis

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[53] In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (in the Preface to the first edition), Kant speaks of 'the natural constitution [*Naturbestimmung*] of our reason' (p.10). Foucault will work precisely to disqualify that noun-adjective combination.

[54] See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.82, for an exemplary passage. The repetition of 'constitution' is actually the translator's approximation to *Beschaffenheit*.

[55] Compare Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, Part I, trans. by Helen Zimmern (London: Allen & Unwin, repr. 1924), 2, p.15: philosophers see man as an *aeterna veritas*. 'But everything that the philosopher says about man is really nothing more than testimony about the man of a *very limited* space of time.'

and linguistics all work to erode the limits and finitude of man, since their own respective domains are themselves subject to imprecise frontiers, he erodes the finitude and equanimity of the transcendental subject.

On the other hand, the transcendental subject is only made possible in the first place by an *episteme* which works according to analogy and succession. Despite arguing for historical contingency, Foucault deploys the notion of *episteme* as a general concept applicable to all eras, even if it seems to correspond closely to Classical *mathesis*.[56] Since each *episteme* is a historically specific configuration, the axioms would not be universal. Yet what is conserved across the changing epistemological configurations is a positing of the essentially axiomatic character of the mode of questioning and the cognitive determination of nature.[57] How far has Foucault managed to avoid the 'surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructed world of idealities for the only real world' that Husserl sees as the insidious legacy of physicists since Galileo?:

> It was a fateful omission that Galileo did not inquire back into the original meaning-giving achievement which, as idealization practiced on the original ground of all theoretical and practical life – the immediately intuited world (and here especially the empirically intuited world of bodies) – resulted in the geometrical ideal constructions. He did not reflect closely on all this: on how the free, imaginative variation of this world and its shapes results only in possible empirically intuitable shapes and not in exact shapes; on what sort of motivation and what new achievement was required for genuinely

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[56] Gillian Rose argues that Foucault construes modern thought as a kind of post-modern mathesis and that his thought is deeply allied to Marburg neo-Kantianism. *Dialectic of Nihilism*, pp.180-188.

[57] Sartre says that Althusser and Foucault prefer *concept* to *notion* because it smacks of atemporality. 'At bottom, behind this whole current of thought, one finds once more a very Cartesian attitude: there is the concept on one side, the imagination on the other. It's a *charge à fonds* against time. They don't want any overtaking (*dépassement*).' Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', p.94.

geometric idealization. (Husserl, *The Crisis*, pp.48-49)[58]

How far does the *episteme* avoid seeming not the logos of *arche* promising bedrock truths but a fabulous construction *more geometrico*?[59]

In fact – and this will be an observation made more than once throughout the thesis – in the deployment of his conceptual apparatus, Foucault is never far from a certain (one might even say mathematical) idealism which has to do with the elaboration of an extremely sophisticated theoretical armature and the concomitant insinuation that such an armature in some way corresponds to the *materia prima* under scrutiny. Pierre Duhem's *To Save the Phenomena* repays close attention in respect of this idealist tradition and especially in what concerns the activity of constructing explanatory schemata in order to 'save the phenomena'. This last, Platonic phrase (which Duhem shows recurring time and again throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and therein lies the book's brilliance) refers to the already mentioned argument according to which, and in the view of someone like Proclus, astronomy cannot grasp the essence of heavenly things, since such knowledge can only belong to God. Instead it merely furnishes us with (necessarily inexact) images of them. The best it can hope for is to provide a geometrical hypothesis which goes some way to furnishing conclusions that conform to observation. When such geometric 'constructions' have, for

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[58] *The Archaeology*, pp.188-189, discusses mathematics and ideality, warning against a too fond embrace of them (though the question remains as to whether Foucault heeds his own advice).

[59] Malcolm Bowie relates Freud's fascination with archaeology to two drives: Freud the seeker of bedrock truths; Freud the inveterate constructor of theories. *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), p.26.

instance, assigned each planet a path which conforms to its visible path, its hypotheses are then said to have 'saved the appearances, the phenomena' (*To Save the Phenomena*, p.6). (It would be worth looking at the words, or the variants of, 'construct' and 'constitute' in Duhem's study. From Plato to Copernicus, from Ptolemy to Galileo, there is hardly a use of the expression 'to save the phenomena' which is not marked by the co-presence of 'construct' or 'constitute'.) But, Duhem insists, and the insistence is Platonic, the geometric contrivances we use to save the phenomena are neither true nor likely; they are purely conceptual.[60] On the other hand, and challenging the Platonic line, stands Aristotle, and in particular the Averroist appropriation of Aristotle. This tradition maintains that the geometric principles one uses should actually describe how the heavens are. Duhem's argument is that the likes of Copernicus, Galileo, Leonardo and Kepler, while forming the richest vein of Renaissance mathematics and cosmology, and together *practising* a Platonic apriorism in their scientific experiments (largely in opposition to the Scholastic old guard), all make the mistake of believing themselves renovators of the Aristotelian line, whereas they were merely (if brilliantly) saving the phenomena (see pp.115-117). Does Foucault belong to that Aristotelian tradition, not least by virtue of the vital role played in his system by 'constructs' (conceptual, historical, social, legal, etc.), but also because of the failure to scrutinize their adequacy?[61]

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[60] Cf. Kant, *Critique*, p.46: contradictions can be avoided, 'if we are careful in our fabrications – which none the less will still remain fabrications'.

[61] According to Sokolowski, Husserl would be in a similar position. Husserl certainly does not believe that in apprehending phenomena we nonetheless leave the thing in itself untouched. The world that we intuit, the world that we constitute, is the real world, not just a concept or

Episteme en chantier[62]

As far as Foucault is concerned, it would be idle to talk of the concealed capacities of bodies or individualities since the realm of nature requires a mode of access appropriate to the axiomatically predetermined objects. Whence Foucault's repeated reversals of an expected causality. They are not idle semantics; they form the rhetorical and conceptual markers of an axiomatic thought which, in order to signal a new manner of proceeding, will always be accompanied by a reminder of the inadequacy of 'traditional opinions and concepts'.[63] The most revealing passage in this respect is the famous gibe at Marxism. With calculated malice, Foucault opines that at an archaeological level there is little difference between Ricardo's pessimism and Marx's revolutionary promise. 'Marxism exists in nineteenth-century thought like a fish in water: that is, it is unable to breathe anywhere else' (p.262). Foucault is correct, of course, to say that Marxism, at a strictly archaeological epistemological level, shared in a configuration comprising the historicity of economics, the finitude of human existence and the fulfilment of an end to history.[64] It is also perfectly logical, from an archaeological standpoint, to

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appearance. In other words, the theory of knowledge and the theory of being are inseparable. See the footnote from Levinas (Sokolowski, p.134).

[62] In *The Archaeology*, p.135, he says that he has 'set about constructing a whole series of notions'. The French expression is *mis en chantier*, 'set to work'. *Chantier* also means 'building site', 'roadworks'.

[63] See *The Order of Things*, pp.31, 63 and 89.

[64] François Wahl prefers Louis Althusser's conviction that there was a *coupure* between Ricardo and Marx. Once one realizes that Marx's problematic was different from the Economists', one has to concede that the two were dealing with different objects. Whence the object of *Capital*: 'not need, or even labour, or even production, but *the combination among them of different elements of production*' (p.361). Which in turn leads to a structure without depth. Which is what Foucault, according to Wahl, failed to realize, preferring to remain at

claim that Marxism had neither the intention to disturb nor the power to modify that epistemological arrangement. But then neither would any form of knowledge, as Foucault is well aware. If an *episteme* determines the emergence of certain *savoirs*, it follows that those forms of knowledge could never be disruptive of the *episteme*, since no knowledge which was not in harmony with the basic configuration could ever have been produced in the first place. In *epistemes* there are only fish in water. The sarcasm of the passage is aimed at those who have not realized this; it could not be a criticism of Marxism as such. Since, archaeologically speaking, no knowledge could by definition possibly disturb the peace of the *episteme*, there can be no upbraiding of any particular knowledge as such for its subservience. If one accepts the notion of *episteme*, then the question of ethical valorization and responsibility has no place in archaeology.

Yet valorization is what is at stake. And it is not, let it be said, a valorization which, in order to pronounce, retreats to a discrete, say, ethical or political ground. Instead, the judgements are made purely at the level of epistemology. Thus while one may incline towards a favourable view of the Classical *episteme*, which held out the possibility of a demotic natural history

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a level of inquiry concerned with depth, interiority, and foundations, that is, at an ideological level.

For its part, structuralism, as Wahl defines it, is precisely the practice which guards against all those pitfalls, against the return of ontology, empiricism and depth. And what calls our attention here is a certain lexical cluster. A cluster which wants to signal the particular difference and *scientificity* of the structuralist discourse, and therein explain the degree to which Foucault's project in *The Order of Things* falls short, is *en deça*, of this ideal. Yet a cluster which marks a strange resemblance between: (1) Wahl's structuralism and Foucault's project; (2) Wahl's structuralism and Classical thought: 'By designating along each of its borders the irreducibility of an *episteme* of structuralism, we have at least posed the limits on the basis of which the production of an *ensemble of regular utterances – axiomatized and deductive –* on the sign becomes possible' (Wahl, p.377; my emphasis).

in which any individual should be able to produce the same description of the ordered world, Foucault does not. His evaluation of both the Classical and the modern *epistemes* is inferred negatively from his marked empathy with the Renaissance configuration. And this is where his archaeology rejoins traditional continuist, non-relativist, evaluative histories of ideas – in those same intimations that a new order would correspond more faithfully to the being of language and knowledge.

In truth, and as Foucault says, the archaeologist cannot ignore opinions. His only means of access to a past culture will be through the texts of that time, together with subsequent commentaries: no *doxa*, no archaeology. Indeed, the engagement with tradition and learning is the very condition of the possibility of intelligibility, that is to say, the possibility of achieving some kind of proximate understanding of previous *epistemes*. And this should be borne in mind when it comes to Foucault's own discourse regarding the taking of one's object of study, in particular when it is a question of the cut. Foucault wants to be on the verge of a new *episteme*; the brilliant practice of *The Order of Things* (which exceeds the theory) violates this separatist wish.

The archaeologist is bound to the *doxa* in a further sense. His labour entails reconstructing the conditions of possibility of thought from what a culture bequeaths to us. In order to systematize sufficiently what a culture thinks, one first has to assume that those thoughts which were made possible were the same as those thoughts which actually got thought, which means collapsing the difference between what a culture thinks and what a culture thinks it thinks. This implies a great act of faith, a preparedness to take a

culture at its word and a corresponding preparedness to believe in the capacity

of words to represent faithfully the act of thought – hallmarks of a

doxographical habit.[65] Occasionally he queries this faith, as when he declares

that Classical thought was wrong in believing it had successfully excluded

resemblance. If things were either wholly identical or wholly different, he

says, there would be neither memory nor imagination, no chance of founding

a common noun and no language.[66]

Strictly speaking, the notion of *episteme* is not in itself sufficient to

radicalize anything; what counts is its functioning. For the most part, it

operates in a semantic field of rupture suggestive of its radical radicality. Only

thus can it open onto, and close off, the question of historical relativism, the

incommensurability of epochs.[67] A prime example of these semantics is

found in the opening paragraph of 'The Limits of Representation', at the

beginning of the second part of the book, where Foucault is recapping the

epistemological break between the Classical and the modern ages. A list will

have to suffice: 'broken' (*rompues*), 'discontinuity' (*discontinuité*) x 2,

'smashed' (*brisé*), 'dislocated' (*disloquées*), 'to come undone, to disintegrate'

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[65] Cf. Foucault, *The Order of Discourse*, p.65: 'Ever since the sophists' tricks and influence were excluded and since their paradoxes have been more or less safely muzzled, it seems that Western thought has taken care to ensure that discourse should occupy the smallest possible space between thought and speech.'

[66] Derrida applies a similar logic to criticize the very notion of the 'mythical *episteme*'. His book is ostensibly about Condillac but may also be read, from the first epigraph to the last words of the last page, as a critique of Foucault's archaeology. Jacques Derrida, *L'Archéologie du frivole* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1973; repr. Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1976), especially p.28.

[67] See Foucault's 'Introduction' to Georges Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, p.xiii: for Canguilhem, marking discontinuities is a '"way of doing", a process which is an integral part of the history of science because it is summoned by the very object which must be treated by it'.

(*se défaire*), 'new space' (*espace nouveau*), 'tearing' (*déchirement*), 'suddenly' (*brusquement*). Foucault then asks the archaeologist's question:

> What event, what law do they obey, these *mutations* that suddenly decide that things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way, and that it is no longer wealth, living beings, and discourse that are presented to knowledge in the interstices of words or through their transparency, but *beings radically different from them?*' (p.217; my emphasis).

They are radically different because they must always obey some law or other which determines them as objects for thought but which will not always be the same law. Whence the only true law: there is always a law, but that law will not be for always. Foucault's *episteme* offers itself as an instrument of critique of the thing-in-itself, which would exist independently of any mediating relation or practice.[68] But because he proffers no cause of the *episteme*, no explanation of how one *episteme* mutates into another, as that which is without origin or cause the *episteme* would become the *causa sui* par excellence.[69]

One can derive fascinating insights from the book's historical analysis of the differences between, say, natural history and modern biology, but the radicality of these differences is overstated. He speaks of the modern disciplines filling the space 'left blank' by Classical knowledge. And again: 'The object of knowledge in the nineteenth century is formed in the very place where [*là où*] the Classical plenitude of being has fallen silent' (p.207; trans.

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[68] A variant of this rationale is behind the change of title from the 1954 *Maladie mentale et personnalité* to the 1962 *Maladie mentale et psychologie*. See Hubert Dreyfus, 'Foreword to the California Edition', Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p.xxx.

[69] David Carroll, in saying that Foucault makes the *episteme* into the subject, makes a similar point. 'The Subject of Archaeology or The Sovereignty of the Episteme', *Modern Language Notes*, 93 (1978), 695-722.

mod.).[70] Absolute 'muteness' of the past is certainly not as for-giving as 'mutation', the word he uses earlier.[71] To be sure, if one maintains the radical incommensurability of the 'là où', then the question of the comparative value of knowledges from one *episteme* to another is at once radicalized and volatilized. This is precisely what Foucault does when comparing the systems of Aldrovandi and Buffon.[72] Moreover, this allows Foucault to take his distance from Heidegger on the issue of freedom. Heidegger, we recall, conceives of the mathematical project as not only a liberation (from the authority of the Church and tradition), but as 'a new experience and formation of freedom itself'. For Foucault, it is a matter of passing from the clutches of one tradition to those of another. A sense of freedom would be but the clearest sign of enslavement.[73]

There has been a near evangelical campaign to save Foucault from accusations of totalizing in regard to the *episteme*. Robert Young provides a

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[70] Cf. Heidegger, 'Science and Reflection', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp.155-182: 'The objectness of material nature shows in modern atomic physics *fundamental characteristics completely different* from those that it shows in classical physics. The latter, classical physics, can indeed be incorporated within the former, atomic physics, but not vice versa. Nuclear physics does not permit itself to be traced back to classical physics and reduced to it' (p.172). But note what does *not* change: 'the fact that nature has in advance to set itself in place for the entrapping securing that science, as theory, accomplishes' (pp.172-173).

[71] Foucault had suggested earlier, in the context of medicine, that the break from the Classical to the modern era was not absolute. Although the gaze was 'ordered in a new way', the naturalist model 'remained active'. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, p.89.

[72] Cf. Georges Canguilhem: 'Before putting two distances on a road end to end, it is advisable to be sure that it really is the same road.' Cited in Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology*, p.168.

[73] Cf. Foucault's 'Introduction' to Binswanger's *Le Rêve et l'Existence* where he is much more lyrical about the freedom to be had through the 'oneiric experience' (pp.64-66).

recent instance of this.[74] Young writes that the *episteme* does not offer a new way of describing a historical period, since the concept articulates 'only the structure of certain specific forms of knowledge rather than some single overarching principle'. The *episteme* delineates instead what Foucault calls a 'cluster of transformations'. Young cites a lengthy passage from Foucault, where the latter stresses that the *episteme* is a 'space of *dispersion*', 'an *open field of relationships and no doubt indefinitely specifiable*', '*a simultaneous play of specific remanences*' (Young, *White Mythologies*, p.76; Foucault's emphasis). The problem here is that in defending the Foucault of *The Order of Things*, Young takes his cue from a later article, 'Réponse à une question' (1968), in which Foucault qualifies and justifies the earlier book.[75] And we are asked to make the hasty assumption that the *episteme* described in this reply to criticisms of his thought was all along identical with the notion evoked by Foucault in the pages of his earlier work. Young makes the assumption that Foucault's thought and the *episteme* are unified entities or ideal truths independent of the discourse in which they are articulated, and that people plain failed to grasp them first time round.[76] We might say that

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[74] *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), ch.5. James Bernauer provides another, slightly ambivalent case. Although he suspects Foucault of trying to re-write the history of what was an obviously totalizing approach, he still concedes that Foucault's archaeology is in the business, albeit at a particular rather than a general level, of discerning 'ruptures'. The door is thereby still held open to a relativism. James Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Towards an Ethics for Thought* (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1990), esp. p.115 and p.217, n.141. O'Farrell is suitably sceptical on Foucault's change of mind over the meaning of *episteme*. Clare O'Farrell, *Foucault: Historian or Philosopher?* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp.59-62.

[75] Young actually refers to the English translation, 'Politics and the Study of Discourse', *Ideology and Consciousness*, 3 (Spring 1978), 7-26.

[76] Cf. *The Order of Discourse* precisely on philosophy's promotion of a 'ideal truth as the law of discourse' (p.65).

Foucault displays a will to totality, even if the instrumentality of the concept will always resist totalizing.

Alongside intimations of the *episteme*'s sovereignty, another lexicon ('disposition', 'configuration') undermines such visions of homogeneity. And indeed *The Order of Things* itself acknowledges that the status of discontinuities is problematic. The section called 'Order' from the chapter 'Representing' contains an astute meditation on the *partage* and the *limite*. A dividing-line or limit 'may perhaps be no more than an arbitrary division in a constantly mobile whole', conjuring up a suspect 'unitary system'. Where, in that case, would the cause of its existence lie or even that of its disappearance? What does it mean, no longer being able to think a thought? But there is a telling withdrawal from these liminal musings. Perhaps, he says, it is not yet time to pose this problem:

> perhaps we should wait until the archaeology of thought has been established more firmly, until it has better got the measure [*pris la mesure*] of what it is capable of describing directly and positively, until it has defined the singular systems and internal connections it has to deal with, before attempting to encompass thought and to investigate how it contrives to escape itself. For the moment, then, let it suffice that we accept these discontinuities in the simultaneously manifest and obscure empirical order where they present themselves. (pp.51-52; trans. mod.)

Perhaps archaeology is sufficiently frank to know that it is not yet assured enough to interrogate thought on the way in which it escapes itself. Indeed, perhaps archaeology knows its own limits. But would that not be a kind of assuredness in itself? In fact, although it has not yet defined those singular systems, perhaps archaeology's assuredness lies in the knowledge firstly, that they exist, and secondly, that it is to them that it will direct itself. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* speaks of the notion of discontinuity as

'paradoxical' because it is both an analytical instrument and a property of the field or domain under scrutiny.) Archaeology's 'empiricism' would thus finally not reside in its having definitively got, or taken, the measure of what it is able to describe directly and positively; but, like Newton, Galileo and Descartes, in a certain way of knowing in advance what it is that it is looking for.

Constituting and encountering the thing

When one is concerned with method and persuaded that the manner of taking the thing determines its nature, the quiddity of the thing can easily fall from view. In this final section, and by way of a bridge into the next chapter, which deals with the *prise* or 'grip' of a power that does more than take the measure of the body, it is worth recalling that other task of phenomenological thought, and of thought influenced by that tradition, which lies in approaching 'the thing' from another angle. That is to say, inquiring about that which encounters us prior to its objectification into an object of experience. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault's stance towards 'things' hardens. Rejecting the phenomenological thematic of the search for an immediate grasp of the object, he ends up not only suppressing the stage of 'things themselves' (p.48), but rendering 'things' too beholden to discourse, as when he speaks in the same book of the discourses on madness each constituting their object and working it to the point of 'transforming it altogether' (p.32). At other moments the text is more equivocal. It speaks of substituting for the 'enigmatic treasure of "things" anterior to discourse, the regular formation of

objects that stand out, take shape, are traced [*se dessinent*] only in discourse' (p.47; trans. mod.). At bottom, though, the ground is provided by *regulae*: 'The "given", the datum [*donné*] of language is not the mere rending of a fundamental silence [...] but, before all – or in any case before it (for it depends on them) – the conditions according to which the enunciative function operates' (p.112).

But a minimum appreciation of the thingness of the thing remains important for Heidegger. In 'The Thing', where it is certainly not a question of returning to 'things in themselves', Heidegger argues that one must think the possibility that a thing things. This dimension of the thing which touches us has been obscured by our particular understanding of the thing. The Romans called a matter for discourse *res*. *Res publica* therefore means that which concerns everyone and is hence deliberated in public. Heidegger shows how this idea of concern or bearing upon becomes buried, only for the thing to come to mean something-in-itself without reference to the human act of representing, that is, 'without the opposing "ob-" by which it is first of all put before this representing act'.[77] Heidegger is obviously still interested in the relation between human beings and things, but concerned to allow for a certain phenomenality of the thing.

Strictly speaking, Foucault does not ignore this aspect of the thing. In the preface to *The Order of Things* he writes of the dual task of applying a 'prior [*préalable*] criterion' to things but also of letting oneself be led by

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[77] Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p.177.

'qualities and forms':

> Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given, gives itself [*se donne*] in things as their inner law, the secret network according to which they in some way look at one another, and that which exists only through the grid of a gaze, an attention, a language. (p.xx; trans. mod.)[78]

Certainly it is not a matter of a naive empiricism. The use of *se donne*, with its simultaneously passive and reflexive possibilities, and the problems of translation it poses, prevents that.[79] And even if the thing were to give itself, Husserl on retention and protention would go some way to disrupting the self-presence, the self-presencing of the object and, by extension, the neatly-periodized giving implied by the *episteme*.[80] However, the word *attention*, which means 'attention', 'examination' but also 'care', rediscovers something of that subjective, concerned dimension to which Heidegger alludes, and it is this 'ordering', as an activity, that will consume Foucault's attention. (The distance that this marks from the earlier piece on Binswanger, where man is the object, is apparent.[81]) This is why we dissent from Paul Veyne's conviction that Foucault's central insight is that things are the correlates of

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[78] The official translation ('the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another') is too decisive here, coming down more on the side of order giving itself.

[79] Derrida explores this in his piece on 'the Gift'. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[80] Husserl, *Crisis*, p.160.

[81] Foucault writes of 'a form of analysis [...] whose principle and method are, in a word, determined from the beginning only by the absolute privilege of their object: man or rather, Being-man, the *Menschsein*' (p.10). If there is to be a detour through 'a more or less Heideggerian philosophy', it should be clear that although such philosophical problems are indeed present, 'they are not prior to [this man]' (p.14). The point about the *Daseinanalyse* is that it does not seek to apprehend a positivistic *homo natura* (p.10). If its theme is to be the human 'fact', this is to be understood as 'the real content of an existence which is lived and experienced, and is recognized or lost in a world that is simultaneously the plenitude of his project and the "element" of his situation' (p.11). Foucault, 'Introduction' to Binswanger, *Le Rêve et l'existence*.

practices, an object is only an object for the practice which objectivizes it: practice and object are one.[82] In Foucault practice wants to precede object.

In *What Is a Thing?* Heidegger talks about the Neo-Kantian depreciation of intuition and its privileging of concepts. The Marburg school, he says, went so far as to eliminate intuition altogether as a foreign body alien to the project of pure reason. Opposing this doctrine, Heidegger argues that in fact we often only grasp that which precedes the thing *after* taking account of some of the most obvious qualities of the thing. 'In the order of explicit apprehension, what objectively *precedes is later*' (p.166). Likewise, in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' Heidegger questions our ordering of things:

> What could be more obvious than that man transposes his propositional way of understanding things into the structure of the thing itself? Yet this view, seemingly critical yet actually rash and ill-considered, would have to explain first how such a transposition of propositional structure into the thing is supposed to be possible without the thing having already become visible. The question as to which comes first and functions as the standard, proposition-structure or thing-structure, remains to this hour undecided. It even remains doubtful whether in this form the question is at all decidable.[83]

For Husserl, too, according to Derrida, the facticity of things remains important:

> Bodies, transcendent and natural things, are others in general for my consciousness. They are outside, and their transcendence is the sign of an already irreducible alterity. Levinas does not think so; Husserl does, and thinks that 'other' already means something when things are in question. Which is to take seriously the reality of the external world.[84]

Merleau-Ponty addresses the same theme in *Phénoménologie de la perception*:

> Even then the thing presents itself to that same someone who perceives it as

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[82] Paul Veyne, 'Foucault révolutionne l'histoire', in his *Comment on écrit l'histoire suivi de Foucault révolutionne l'histoire* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978), p.218.

[83] In *Basic Writings*, pp.143-212 (p.150).

[84] Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics', p.124.

a thing in itself and poses the problem of a veritable in-itself-for-us. We do not usually take any notice of it because our perception, in the context of the things with which we busy ourselves, falls on things just enough to find once more their familiar presence and not enough to rediscover the inhumanness that hides there. But the thing ignores us, it rests in itself. (p.372)

Derrida, reading Husserl against Levinas, considers it a matter of refusing the opposition between 'constituting' versus 'encountering' the other. To say, with Sartre, that '"One *encounters* the Other, one does not constitute it"' (*Being and Nothingness*), is, Derrida writes, 'to understand the word "constitution" in a sense that Husserl often warns his readers against'.

Constitution is not opposed to encounter. It goes without saying that constitution creates, constructs, engenders, nothing: neither existence, nor the fact, which is evident, nor even meaning, which is less evident but equally certain, provided that one takes some patient precautions, and provided that one distinguishes the moments of passivity and activity within intuition, in Husserl's sense, and the moment in which the distinction becomes impossible. That is, in which the entire problematic opposing 'encounter' to 'constitution' is no longer meaningful, or has only a derivative or dependent meaning. [...] Let us simply recall this warning of Husserl's, among so many others: 'Here too, as concerns the alter ego, the "constitution of consciousness" (*Bewusstseinleistung*) does not mean that I invent (*erfinde*) and that I *make* (*mache*) this supreme transcendence.' (In question is God.)

Inversely, does not the notion of encounter – a notion to which one must refer, if one rejects all constitution, in the Husserlian sense of the term – aside from being prey to empiricism, let it be understood that there is a time and an experience without 'other' *before* the encounter? The difficulties into which one is driven can be imagined. Husserl's philosophical prudence on this matter is exemplary. The *Cartesian Meditations* often emphasize that in *fact, really*, nothing precedes the experience of Others.[85]

This is an important passage. In the next chapter, and in others besides, it will be seen that the relationship of constitution to encounter, which Foucault will tend to construe precisely as an opposition, comes to occupy a critical position in his thinking. For Foucault, going beyond Husserl, the impetus will indeed lie with human inventing and making, with constitutional powers, not with that which encounters. (In question is godlikeness.)

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[85] Derrida, 'Violence', pp.315-316, n.44.

The most brute thing encountered in *The Order of Things* is language. The modern, Kantian *episteme* is to be superseded by a new Renaissance-like arrangement in which the 'proper existence of language', 'this brute being' forgotten since the sixteenth century, would be recaptured in a movement led by the counter-discourse, literature. Megill is correct to say that this idea of language owes much more to Mallarmé and Blanchot than to Saussure. It is language which, refusing easy referentiality, instead coils up on itself into a 'capsule' or pocket of energy.[86] There is a sense in which a brute ontological realm is being gestured to, a Heideggerian thematic in which language and the experience of being are yoked together.[87] The fundamental characteristic of this literature would be precisely that nothing rules and determines its basic movement. Not even itself. It would seem to offer itself, in other words, as a non-axiomatic configuration. Language as the ontogenetic work of art. One would need to question Foucault's tendency to think of literature in the singular, as if there were but one and as if the being of avant-garde literatures would always and everywhere produce the same definable effects. One would also need to query – especially since it operates in our own time – what Megill calls Foucault's *metabasis*, which consists in transferring on to areas other than avant-garde literature, 'where everything is indeed at the call of our creativity and our language' (Megill, p.177), the peculiar effects wrought in that space.

The invocation, rather than the being, of literature functions

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[86] See Tomás Abraham, *Los senderos de Foucault* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1989). In a piece called 'L'Arrière-Fable', in *L'Arc*, 29 (1966), 5-13, Foucault writes that it is the 'ardent games' of fiction which restore to language the disequilibrium of its sovereign powers (p.11).

[87] Wahl also highlights the parallel with Heidegger (Wahl, p.320, n.6).

strategically in the book, a 'yes, yes' to a non-realm in which man is dissolved. As with the call to literature in *Histoire de la folie*, it responds to the obvious question 'what next?' with an answer which would appear to avoid prescription while gesturing with Nietzschean affirmation to a beyond-man. Foucault is conscious that an inquiry into the new order is, archaeologically speaking, impossible, since no culture is capable of circumscribing the general system of its knowledge. This is why, together with the call to literature, the end of *The Order of Things* takes the form of speculation: 'if... then might not...?'. If this language is now emerging with ever greater insistence in a unity which we must think but which, as we know, we cannot yet think, is this not the sign that the entire current configuration is about to topple and that man is in the process of perishing? But these are questions to which answers cannot be given. They are an opening, though, onto a future thought (p.386).[88] As yet the disappearance of man announced by this new unity of language cannot be thought, must remain the object of speculation. Yet this is precisely what will have been thought and affirmed. Not just thought and affirmed here but also in future projects, even where, apparently abandoning archaeology, Foucault has supposedly given up his concern with that future unity of language. The disappearance of the subject becomes a working

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[88] Foucault's famous image of man being erased like a face in the sand finds an obvious precursor in the Nietzschean overcoming of present day man and merest glimpse of the overman, specifically in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No one*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1969), p.41: 'Do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals rather than overcome man?' Derrida is similarly engaged in articulating the thinking of the closure of the age of the sign: the need to 'designate the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed' (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.14). I think an important difference between Foucault and Derrida relates to their respective attitudes towards thinking the *end*. I shall return to this point in Chapters 3 and 4.

assumption, one of those things that Foucault will take in advance. The risk, then (and I repeat that the book's detail and weave are much richer than its theory), consists in laying down a method in *The Order of Things* that seems concerned with a way of proceeding, where *way* is understood as a path already known in advance, not as movement opening up an unknown one.[89] Foucault more or less knows the way, is already on the way, in position to see clearly and distinctly those things which he has already pictured in his mind's eye.[90]

Robert Sokolowski stoutly defends Husserl from the suggestion that mathematical entities and categorical objects form the basic model for constitution. He argues that although such objects did represent the first instance of constitutional analysis, the schema which dominates Husserl's first systematic conception of constitution is that of sense data apprehended or interpreted by intentions, sensory 'matter' animated by intentional 'form' (Sokolowski, p.202). It is thus incorrect, he continues, to say that Husserl first develops his theory of constitution for categorical objects and then expands it from them to all reality. Such an opinion would suggest that Husserl tries to treat all of reality in a manner analogous to the way he treats logical, and

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[89] Cf. Heidegger on philosophy: 'It spreads only indirectly, by devious paths that can never be laid out in advance' (cited in Megill, p.177). Megill points to the titles of three of Heidegger's more important essay collections: *Holzwege* (*Woodpaths*); *Wegmarken* (*Trail Markers*); and *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (*On the Way to Language*).

[90] Compare Pierre Rivière, who writes his account long after his murderous deeds but underlines that his memoirs were 'already completely written in advance in his head'. Michel Foucault, 'Les Meurtres qu'on raconte', in *Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma soeur et mon frère...: Un cas de parricide au xix* siècle*, ed. by Michel Foucault *et al* (Paris: Editions Gallimard/Julliard, 1973), pp.265-275 (p.267).

among them mathematical, entities. No such expansion occurs.

In the next chapter, I shall examine Foucaultian genealogy, the methodological treatment of sociological as opposed to narrowly epistemological subject matter. Exploring what might be involved in the difference between *constitution* and *construction*, I shall suggest that a certain 'expansion' of constitutionalist analysis, such as that denied by Sokolowski apropos of Husserl, does in fact take place in *Discipline and Punish*, extending its reach from the narrowly conceptual to 'reality' as a whole.

CHAPTER 2

DISCIPLINE, THE MACHINE, AND THE DIFFICULTY OF

BECOMING NIETZSCHEAN

Introduction

I sought to show in the first chapter that what underwrites Foucault's theory of archaeology in *The Order of Things* is a form of apriori conceptualism. The present chapter moves away from archaeology to Foucault's practice of genealogy, though one of its contentions will be to suggest that the movement from one to the other is far from simply 'away'. If, with a book like *Discipline and Punish*, we appear to have stepped out of the epistemological narrowly defined and into a form of social epistemology, the work of constitutionalist thinking becomes, for Foucault, all the more urgent. In the first chapter, I used Heidegger to gain a purchase on Foucault. In this chapter, it will be Nietzsche. The chapter will consider *Discipline and Punish* in the light of Nietzsche's thought, especially the second essay of his *Genealogy of Morals*, which represents an obvious source-text for Foucault's book. It will look particularly at the relationship that Foucault's text traces between power and the body in the constitution of subjects. Perhaps 'construction' is the more appropriate term. For there are strong grounds for

believing that *Discipline and Punish* represents a literalization of the guiding metaphor of modern social 'constructionism'. Foucault's text takes the figurative sense of a 'construct' as defined by a mentalist tradition and seeks to literalize the metaphor, suggesting that bodies and individuals are themselves constructed, in the sense of made or fabricated, not merely imagined, and that much less does this construction take place in the mind. Nonetheless, if Foucault's depiction of the disciplines is structured by the modern conceptual and semantic horizon of construction (with all its connotations of the architectural and of geometricity), it is also marked by two older traditions: 1. By a Classical thematics which accords the eye an undue, but, for the maintenance of its logic, necessary, privilege (and this emerges most strongly in his treatment of the Panopticon); 2. By the inescapable tradition of logos. In other words, Foucault's literalization of constructionism is figured precisely by the *metaphor* of the machine, albeit a machine with a necessarily congenital flaw. Paradoxically, by analysing the theme of exemplarity I shall show how the machine can function only on condition that the principal example of disciplinary subjection, namely, prisoners, be in reality the least exemplary.

In all of the above, I shall also be questioning the extent to which Foucault's practice might accurately be termed Nietzschean. Is Foucault, as Said maintains, the 'greatest of Nietzsche's modern disciples'?[1] An early reply would be to suggest that the word 'disciple', and specifically the

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[1] Edward Said, 'Michel Foucault, 1926-1984', in *After Foucault*, p.1.

'discipline' which being a disciple would entail, is precisely at issue.[2] (The mathematical, as taking and learning, has not left the scene.) I shall argue that despite marked affinities, Foucault diverges from Nietzsche in certain very significant respects. My main argument towards the end of the chapter will be that Foucault practises a laundering of Nietzsche, such that the Nietzsche who said many (for our refined sensibilities) shocking things about many social groups (the French were one of the few groups to emerge relatively untouched), can suddenly be appropriated for the ends of a 'socialist sympathy' which Nietzsche, whose expression this is, would have scorned. At the root of this laundering, I detect an Apollonianism in Foucault which cannot think the plural demands and the variegated effects of discipleship and discipline, which cannot brook the suggestion made by Nietzsche that 'the essential and invaluable element in every morality is that it is a protracted constraint'. Of course, in one respect Foucault would not want to be Nietzschean. He would say that his theory of disciplinary technology goes beyond Nietzsche's idealist conception of the formation of consciousness. The question I shall address throughout this chapter, though principally in the final section, is whether this modification, this updating of the Nietzschean apparatus, merits the patent.

Does Foucault even want to be Nietzschean and if so why? What is at stake in being, or better in becoming, Nietzschean? If it will take the length of the chapter to answer the second question, the first one is more straightforward. Although hardly garrulous about influences, as we saw in

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[2] Disciple is from the Latin *discipulus* 'learner', from *discere* 'to learn'. Discipline is from the Latin *disciplina*, itself from *discipulus*.

Chapter one, Foucault unambiguously lays claim to Nietzsche's mantle. In 'Prison Talk', he speaks of giving his general project the title of 'the genealogy of morals'.[3] In another interview, he specifies that the Nietzschean texts which most appeal to him are *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Genealogy of Morals*.[4] Likewise, when he aims at a 'genealogy of the modern "soul"' in *Discipline and Punish*, the Nietzschean strain is unmistakable.[5] The essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' is perhaps the greatest rallying cry of all and as such offers itself as an obvious point of entry into a Nietzsche-Foucault comparison.[6] What the essay certainly makes clear is that it is not Nietzsche *tout court* who holds Foucault's attention but Nietzsche *qua* genealogist ('Why does Nietzsche challenge the pursuit of the origin (*Ursprung*), at least on those occasions when he is truly a genealogist?'). No less clearly it stakes out the opposing historiographical traditions: that is, the pursuit of the origin ('an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities; because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession' [p.78]) versus the practice of genealogy, which is

> to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the
> accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the

[3] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 37-54 (p.53).

[4] Michel Foucault, 'An Historian of Culture', in *Foucault Live: (Interviews, 1966-84)*, trans. by John Johnston, ed. by Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), pp.73-88 (p.77) (first publ. as 'Un Dibattito Foucault-Preti' in *Il Bimestrein* (1973)).

[5] *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Editions Gallimard, 1975); *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977; repr. 1986), p.29.

[6] In *The Foucault Reader*, pp.76-100.

errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. (p.81)[7]

The essay, with its proliferating oppositive structures and powerful eloquence, moves to the rhythm of the manifesto and it becomes difficult to imagine how anyone could ever have believed in stable continuities, could ever not have been a genealogist. As Foucault says of the search for descent, 'What convictions and, far more decisively, what knowledge can resist it?' (p.82). But for all its suasive power, the essay limits itself to speaking about something it does not itself practise.[8] And for that reason, and in order to offer a respectful resistance to genealogy, a resistance it thrives on, I leave the essay in favour of Foucault's most explicit practice of genealogy, that is, *Discipline and Punish*, though not without first guarding against the decidedly ungenealogical position of reducing the genealogical method to a pure origin and proper name 'Nietzsche'.[9]

Nietzsche, Foucault and the example

Let us remind ourselves of the content of *Discipline and Punish.* Foucault's basic contention in that text is that the nature of punishment underwent profound change around the end of the eighteenth, beginning of the

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[7] A footnote shows Foucault is glossing Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, III, 17.

[8] Rabinow remarks alongside his reproduction of the essay that 'its importance, in terms of understanding Foucault's objectives, cannot be exaggerated' (*The Foucault Reader*, p.76). Fine. But Foucault would say that objectives and practice are different matters.

[9] Dominique Lecourt shows that at least one other influence on Foucault could just as well be considered a philosopher of the descent of concepts: Georges Canguilhem. Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology*, pp.176-177.

nineteenth, century and not only in France. This change could not be attributed neatly to any process of humanization but implied, rather, an altered tactics of power and a mutation of the very target of punishment. (That said, there is arguably not a word Foucault pronounces on the subject of prisons and punishment which does not have as its aim the amelioration, the rendering more humane, of both these things.)[10] The disappearance of the *supplice* ('torture', 'public execution' or 'scaffold') in France is but one sign that the body also disappeared as the major target of penal repression. The body is subsequently replaced by the soul and 'the expiation that once rained down upon the body must be replaced by a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations' (p.16).

But this throws up the obvious problem: if this new regime was so preoccupied with the idea of making an example of offenders, why does it witness the virtual takeover of the prison, that '"place of darkness in which the citizen's eye cannot count the victims, in which consequently their number is lost as an example"' (p.115)?[11] The answer, traced out across more than a hundred pages, is precisely genealogical: only from that point of view which mistakenly assumes the prison to have evolved naturally and strictly from within the penal system does there look to be a sudden break and an irreconcilable logic of the prison form and the example. In point of fact, the prison form takes shape *outside* the judiciary apparatus; it is born of the

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[10] And especially the abolition of the death penalty in France. See Michel Foucault, 'Les Deux Morts de Pompidou', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 4 December 1972, pp.56-57.

[11] Foucault quotes from C.E. Dufriche de Valazé, *Des lois penales* (1784), pp.344-345.

formation of a disciplinary society, a generalization throughout the social fabric of disciplinary techniques for seizing, classifying, observing and working on the body. This, then, is his third regime of punishment, which returns once more to the body. The great difference from the punishments imagined by the Reformers, and also, as we shall see, from Nietzsche's narrative of the formation of memory and conscience through punishment,

> is to be found in the procedure of access to the individual, the way in which the punishing power gets control over him [*se donne prise sur lui*], the instruments that it sets to work in order to achieve this transformation; it is in the technology of the penalty, not in its theoretical foundation (p.127)

Now, the majority of this chapter will concern itself with questions of this procedure and this technology. But before I move to explore those aspects at length, I should like to highlight what I believe is a sleight of hand on Foucault's part regarding the division of punitive regimes. This will involve analysing the theme of the 'example' as it runs its course and meets its untimely demise in the chapter called 'The Spectacle of the Scaffold'. It will also entail an initial approximation to Nietzsche's second essay from the *Genealogy of Morals*, '"Guilt," "Bad Conscience," and the Like', though it should be noted that in the book Foucault refers neither to this text nor to any other by Nietzsche.[12]

Nietzsche's essay throws the discussion of souls, conscience and memory back beyond the point at which Foucault takes up the cudgels, back to a primeval scene. Nietzsche's argument is that the development of the conscience can be attributed to two processes: that of forgetfulness as an active

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[12] *The Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, trans. by Horace B. Samuel (London: Allen and Unwin, 1910; repr. 1923).

power allowing a temporary shutting of the doors and windows of the mind, so as to make room for the more noble functions such as foresight and predetermination; and that of memory as a check on forgetfulness, ensuring that where promises are made there arises an active refusal to get rid of the indented impression. Nietzsche surmises:

> How thoroughly, in order to be able to regulate the future in this way, must man have first learnt to distinguish between necessitated and accidental phenomena, to think causally, to see the distant as present and to anticipate it, to fix with certainty what is the end, and what is the means to that end; above all, to reckon, to have power to calculate - how thoroughly must man have first become *calculable, disciplined, necessitated* even for himself and his own conception of himself, that, like a man entering into a promise, he could guarantee himself *as a future*. (pp.62-63)

But this is the end of the process, the sovereign, wilful, dominating individual. For Nietzsche the anterior problem was how a memory was to be made for the animal-man. '"How is an impression to be so deeply fixed upon this ephemeral understanding, half dense, and half silly, upon this incarnate forgetfulness, that it will be permanently present?"' (pp.65-66). Though Nietzsche is silent on this point, were this question articulated by a contemporary of animal-man it would itself betray the workings of a thinking, calculating being who was already, paradoxically, a later man. It would thus not be the natural birth of man's conscience that was at stake in this already differentiated social field, but its formation by virtue of a deployment of tactics and a strategy of power. Which is why Nietzsche will be of such importance to Foucault. Man was not born with a conscience, Nietzsche is saying; one was fashioned for him. But to return to the question of making a memory, something must be burnt in, Nietzsche says, 'only that which never stops *hurting* remains in his memory' (p.68).

In Foucault's scheme, memory is certainly in play, but with an important difference. Let me select certain elements of 'The Spectacle of the Scaffold', since they will help us to understand the equivocation in that chapter on the question of the example. The *supplice* must, firstly, produce a certain amount of regulated pain, such that there is a correlation between the pain inflicted and the gravity of the crime. The *supplice* must also make its mark both on and around the victim's body and on the memory of those present. In addition, the truth of a crime must form part of the ceremony of the *supplice*, that is to say, the criminal must proclaim his crime and publically confess his guilt. It is important to grasp that because the law represents the direct extension of the sovereign's will, in every offence 'there was a *crimen majestatis* and in the least criminal a potential regicide' (pp.53-54), which means that the *supplice* is therefore to constitute reparation for the sovereign as much as the immediate victim. The execution of the sentence is thus not supposed to be a measured extraction of pain in proportion to the original injury caused; it should be a display, a theatrical enactment, of dissymmetry and excess, an emphatic affirmation of the sovereign's natural superiority and physical force. The body is thus simultaneously the point of application of the punishment and the locus of extortion of the truth. However, the interpretation of this procedure offered by the jurists of the eighteenth century ('if severe penalties are required, it is because their example must be deeply inscribed in the hearts of men') Foucault describes as 'restrictive' and '"modernist"'. In fact, he says, what had underpinned the practice of the *supplice* was not an economy of example, as the *idéologues* would have understood it, but a policy

of terror – to make everyone aware of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign.[13] But a few pages later the example is allowed back in. For the theatre must have an audience. In fact Foucault suggests that in the ceremonies of the *supplice* the people were the main actors. An execution in secret would scarcely have had any meaning: 'The aim was to make an example, not only by making people aware that the slightest offence was likely to be punished, but by arousing feelings of terror by the spectacle of power letting its anger fall upon the guilty person' (p.58).

Three things suggest themselves. First, to insist on this aim of making an example of the condemned is to target the workings of some kind of internal process, a basic calculation, a triggering of memory or a process of reasoning redolent of Nietzsche's 'conscience'. Second, despite the workings of a lexical network in the chapter around the mass and bodyliness of the *corps supplicié* (note especially the adjectives 'real', 'immediate', 'corporal', 'material'), it is not simply a matter of a brute, zero-degree body in isolation, but of a spectatorial apprehension of it. (Nietzsche writes that ancient man 'only knew how to find a meaning in suffering from the standpoint of the spectator'. Whence, too, the importance of the eyes of God as bestowers of meaning on the process of suffering [p.77].) Third, then, the point of application of the penalty and the point at which the effects of punishment are aimed are not the same. If anyone's soul is in play, it is the soul of others.

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[13] Nietzsche makes a similar point about rewriting the past in the light of modern concerns. For him, punishment has historically been overloaded with utilities, which 'makes it all the more permissible to eliminate one *supposed* utility, which passes, at any rate in the popular mind, for its most essential utility' (p.95), namely, punishing in order to excite 'bad conscience', guilt, remorse.

And that difference is decisive. Foucault is describing a body-for-others: Damiens is executed so that *others* may be terrified, so that the memory of others may be sharpened.

This is important for Foucault's case concerning reform. For the people's role in the *supplice* was ambiguous. In this festive spectacle there is always room for identification with the condemned, there is always the possibility of saturnalian carnival and of revolt. And it is the suppression of this possibility, Foucault argues, that will in part determine the movement for reform. Hence, the critique of the *supplice* is rooted first and foremost not in a movement of humanization (though he does not deny this factor), but in an economic principle: the old regime was irregular, arbitrary, lacunary, unpredictable; it was at core a poor economy of power. In the face of a rising tide of illegalities the issue was thus: 'Not to punish less, but to punish better; to punish with an attenuated severity perhaps, but in order to punish with more universality and necessity; to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body' (p.82).

In this altered punitive economy it is a matter of calculating the punishment with a view to preventing a repetition of the crime. Now, this 'exemplary function' of punishment had been around for centuries:

> But the difference is that the prevention that was expected as an effect of the punishment and its spectacle — and therefore of its excess [*démesure*] — tends now to become the principle of its economy and the measure [*mesure*] of its just proportions. One must punish exactly enough to prevent repetition. (p.93; trans. mod.).

This passage makes it clear that there is no quantum leap involved in the shift from one punitive regime to another. It is, rather, a matter of measure and

proportion, of economy. 'The example,' he writes, 'is no longer a ritual that manifests; it is a sign that serves as an obstacle.' What he calls 'The rule of sufficient ideality' elucidates the link between sign and economy:

> If the motive of a crime is the advantage expected of it, the effectiveness of the penalty is the disadvantage expected of it. This means that the 'pain' at the heart of punishment is not the actual sensation of pain, but the idea of pain, displeasure, inconvenience — the 'pain' of the idea of 'pain'. Punishment thus has to set to work not the body, but representation. Or rather, if it sets the body to work, it is insofar as it is less the subject of a pain than the object of a representation: the memory of pain must prevent a repetition of the crime, just as the spectacle, however artificial it may be, of a physical punishment may prevent the contagion of a crime. (p.94; trans. mod.)

There is thus a displacement in the point of application of this new power: no longer the body but the mind (*l'esprit*) or rather 'a play of representations and signs circulating discreetly but necessarily and evidently in the minds of all'.[14] The sign-obstacles must be as natural, intelligible and calculable as possible such that the mere idea of the offence will be enough to arouse the sign of the punishment in the mind of he who dreams of the crime. Whereas formerly the example rested on terror, it now rests on the lesson, the discourse, the decipherable sign, the reactivation of the code.

All well and good, but if this regime was so preoccupied with the example, why does it witness the rapid spread of the prison, that place where the example is, by definition, lost from sight? When Foucault looks at three early models of punitive imprisonment, he sees that the three (the *maison de force* at Ghent, the English model, the Walnut Street Prison, Philadelphia) evinced a number of characteristics little different in general terms from the punishments imagined by the reformers: importance of the work ethic;

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[14] Cf. *The Order of Things* (p.146) on Classical representation.

techniques of isolation to foster remorse; strict timetabling and surveillance of activities. But what he also sees, as we have noted, is the disparity at the level of the *technology* of correction. Not signs and representations, then, but an altogether different apparatus. 'The point of application of the penalty,' he writes, 'is not the representation, but the body, time, everyday gestures and activities; the soul, too, but in so far as it is the seat [*siège*] of habits.' And to achieve this control over the prisoner, not signs but timetables, compulsory movements, silence, good habits, observation. All of which not only renders the dimension of the spectacle useless: it excludes it. In fact the prison's coercion of individuals gains in efficiency and consistency in proportion to the secrecy and autonomy of its workings.

Now to take stock, the purpose of including a discussion of the reformers' 'soul' is perhaps twofold. First, it allows him to stress the importance of economy and thereby counter the argument of humanization and progress: they were not being more humane, just aiming, for reasons of efficacy, at a different target. Second, it drives a wedge between the two eras in which the body is targeted and thereby suggests a fundamentally different technology of power. However, the difference between the reformers' aim and that of the new disciplinary technology is aggrandized by a sleight of hand regarding bodies and souls. The body in fact never disappeared as the target of punishment: people continued to be chastised, shackled and manhandled during the reforms. Foucault simply speaks, makes the reformers speak, of another object, that is, the souls of those on whom punishment is not exercised directly. To say that the point of application of the penalty was signs and

representations is to pass over the one who is punished while taking his body as an object for others (if the body is set to work, 'it is insofar as it is less the subject of a pain than the object of a representation'). Naturally the 'soul' rises to prominence here, but the soul of others, more economically targeted in a two-for-the-price-of-one deal, whereby the authorities not only punish the offender but also allow the effects of that punishment to work on others. Small wonder that the example is at the heart of this regime. The difference in the new regime, therefore, is not that the body is suddenly, albeit differently, targeted once more, but that the point of application of the penalty and the effects of that application are to fall on the body and soul of the same person, that is, on the punished one himself. In other words, the prisoner is made an example *for himself*; this time it is his memory and his conscience which are brought into play. And if, as a result, the question of the example *for others* disappears almost completely from the book, it is not that the example disappears *de facto* from punishment. In speaking of codes, writing and lessons, Foucault has already shown wherein lies the example for others; representation does not disappear, it coexists with the new technology. It is simply that it is put in abeyance, Foucault preferring to concentrate on the body-for-itself in an advanced form of the constitution argument which holds that the new punitive technology itself produces a new object.

Discipline and the body

The question of exemplarity, and of a telling break in the circuit which would otherwise hold apart the example for himself from the example for

others, will be taken up at a later stage. For now, the question of discipline imposes itself. The new, disciplinary mode of operating on the body forms the main substance of the book and marks Foucault's distance from Nietzsche. It is not that Nietzsche shows no interest in the body. In the section entitled 'Of the Despisers of the Body' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he writes:

> But the awakened, the enlightened man says: I am body entirely, and nothing beside; and soul is only a word for something in the body.
> The body is a great intelligence, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a herdsman.
> Your little intelligence, my brother, which you call 'spirit', is also an instrument of your body, a little instrument and toy of your great intelligence.
> You say 'I' and you are proud of this word. But greater than this – although you will not believe in it – is your body and its great intelligence, which does not say 'I' but performs 'I'.[15]

It is, rather, that when it comes to the means of taming the body's 'great intelligence', Nietzsche will firstly place much heavier stress than ever Foucault does on the realm of ideas;[16] and secondly, when he does speak of the work of social forces and organizations, as in the Second Essay from the *Genealogy* (pp.99-104), it will be without the attention to detail that Foucault insists is proper to the disciplines, without an exploration of the precise 'technology' of subjection. Strictly speaking, though, the difference between the two thinkers is not confinable to the difference between an idealist and a materialist theory of subjection.

I shall cover in five schematic points what I take to be the central

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[15] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1961; repr. 1969), pp. 61-62.

[16] 'THE GOLDEN MAXIM:– Man has been bound with many chains, in order that he may forget to comport himself like an animal... these chains, however, are, as I repeat again and again, the ponderous and significant errors of moral, religious, and metaphysical ideas.' Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and his Shadow* in *Human, All-Too-Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. by Paul V. Cohen, 2 vols (London: Allen and Unwin, repr. 1924), II, 350, pp.362-363.

features of Foucault's argument in the section 'Discipline', which stands as a

great genealogical tapestry, a complex constitutional weave: of power, of

knowledge, of subjects. 1. The section has the odour of *bricolage*. Foucault

eschews the discourse of pristine origins and historical continuity. He will

assert repeatedly the contingent, opportunistic nature of the new technology

which, to gain a purchase, borrows 'whatever is at hand' (in Lévi-Strauss'

phrase). Thus, the eighteenth century's disciplinary methods, Foucault is quick

to concede, had long been in existence. Their peculiarity, however, lies in

their capacity to increase the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility)

while diminishing those same forces (in political terms of obedience).

Likewise, the 'invention' of this new 'political anatomy' should not be

understood as a sudden discovery, but grasped as 'a multiplicity of often minor

processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap [...]

converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method' (p.138).

These processes were already at work in secondary education, then in primary

schools, hospitals, military organizations. Again, the 'detail' of the disciplines

had long since been a category of theology and asceticism (in the eyes of God,

no detail is insignificant), but the laicized version of discipline values detail

'not so much for the meaning that it conceals within it as for the hold [*prise*]

it provides for the power that wishes to seize it' (p.140).[17] This colonization

of life's mundane details reads like a cynical, if brilliant, variation on

Nietzsche's aphorism that the priest and metaphysician's reverence for the

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[17] Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989) on the move of Christian asceticism out of the monastery and its methodical penetration of the 'market-place of life' (p.154).

most important things does not stop us thinking the despised everyday things more important.[18]

2. The methodological presupposition is anti-Cartesian, challenging that tradition's tendency to purify notions of the body and the soul, to demarcate thing from consciousness, object from subject. For Foucault, process and object are correlatives. An object does not lie around in stately autarky, but is in some sense 'produced' by the process seeking to apprehend it. The influence of work in the history of sciences on objectification is telling here. And also the opposition to phenomenology. Husserl speaks of having objects '*solely as the intentional correlates of modes of consciousness of them*' (*Cartesian Meditations*, p.37). Foucault reinscribes the words 'correlate' and 'correlative' between objects and practices rather than between objects and consciousness. This methodological tenet already informs *The Order of Things*; here, however, the practices are invested by power and *techne* as much as by theory.[19] Thus he says that the distribution of individuals in space, the assiduous control of their activities, and the whole disciplinary apparatus of observation, recording and training 'fabricates' individuals. In short, the body itself is directly involved in a political field; 'power relations effect [*opèrent*] an immediate hold [*prise immédiate*] upon it' (p.25; trans. mod.). I shall comment later on the use of the verb *prendre* – to seize, hold, grip, catch – to

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[18] Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, 5, p.185.

[19] Lecourt writes that Gaston Bachelard stressed that contemporary sciences contain a technique for the production of phenomena – 'phenomeno-technics' – which 'enables us to understand in what sense the word "production" is to be understood: not only the "theoretical" production of concepts, but indissociably the *material* production of the object of theoretical labour; of what can no longer be called its "data" or "givens" (*données*), but rather its "material".' Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology*, p.137.

describe the action of power. Again, as in *The Order of Things*, this touches

on the value of the subject. Power's hold on the body is undoubtedly to do

with the body *qua* force of production, he says, but the latter is only made

possible if the body is caught in a system of subjection (*assujettissement*).

Here Foucault tries to cut through what Mark Poster sees as the weakness of

Marx's theory of labour, namely, his adoption of the Hegelian subpremise

according to which the social field consists of subjects (labourers) and objects

(matter). Even if, in Marx's theory of alienation, the labourer under capitalism

becomes the object of the machine, the model of subject acting upon object

still smacks of a Judeo-Christian creationism and of the idealism characteristic

of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

> In that book the slave-worker represents human freedom not so much
> because he manipulates things, but because he establishes an idea of what he
> wants to make and then produces in the world a material artifact that
> represents that idea. The slave-worker in that way derives a sense of his
> powers, a confidence that his subjectivity can be the basis for the order of
> the world. [...] Things operate much the same way in Marx's texts. One
> can argue that the 'materialism' of the labor premise is deceiving, that it has
> rather a loud note of idealism, that Marx celebrates and analyzes not the
> grime of the body's activity but the power of the mind over it. The entire
> analysis of the organization and exploitation of labor is subordinate, in one
> sense, to Marx's conviction that the subject's freedom to act upon its ideas
> is violated under the capitalist mode of production.[20]

3.   Foucault targets Althusser (though he never names him). His

argument (following Althusser) is that the experience of being a subject is

itself produced but that (departing from him) this subjection is neither achieved

simply through violence nor simply through ideology.[21] Not everything need

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[20] Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism and History: Mode of Production Versus Mode of Information* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), pp.51-52. Cf. Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in *Basic Writings*, p.220.

[21] There is a mistranslation in the English version: 'Cet assujettissement n'est pas obtenu par les seuls instruments soit de la violence soit de l'idéologie' (*Surveiller*, p.31) becomes 'This subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology; it can also

pass by way of the dichotomy direct repression versus ideology (and we recall

that Althusser placed the prison under the rubric 'Repressive State

Apparatuses').[22]   Subjection can be direct, physical, bear on material

elements, yet not be violent; it can be calculated, subtle, and yet remain

physical. The following passage has the name 'Althusser' writ large across it.

The 'political technology of the body'

> is diffuse, rarely formulated in continuous, systematic discourse; it is often
> made up of bits and pieces; it puts to work a disparate set of tools or
> methods. In spite of the coherence of its results, it is generally no more than
> a multiform instrumentation. *Moreover, it cannot be localized in a*
> *particular type of institution or state apparatus.* For they have recourse to
> it; they use, select or impose certain of its methods. But, in its mechanisms
> and its effects, it is situated at a quite different level. What the apparatuses
> and institutions put in to play is, in a sense, a micro-physics of power, whose
> field of validity is situated in a sense between these great functionings and
> the bodies themselves with their materiality and their forces. (p.26; trans.
> mod.; my emphasis)

Although Althusser did stress that the ideas making up ideology have a

material existence, so long as ideology continues to be posited primarily as a

'system of representations', as 'images and concepts', what Foucault would

call the 'point of application' of ideology tends, in Althusser, to be 'a human

subject on the lines of the model provide by classical philosophy, endowed

with a consciousness which power is then thought to seize on'.[23]   A

consciousness (false or otherwise) which, as the target of control, would at any

rate always have the consolation of at least standing in the relation of executor

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...' (p.26).

[22] See Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault (1926-1984)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), p.50ff for
the friendship between Foucault and Althusser (who taught him).

[23] Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an
Investigation)', *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971),
p.156; 'Marxism and Humanism', *For Marx* (London: Penguin Press, 1969), p.233; Foucault,
'Body/Power', *Power/Knowledge*, p.58.

to its own body. And consequently the possibility of a different type of work on the body goes unexplored.

4. Closely allied to the above, power is not secondary; 'power produces; it produces reality [*du réel*]; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth'. This is the famous heart of his argument: power produces reality (*du réel* means some, not all). A heart without desire which nonetheless functions as desire does for Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*.[24] This technology of power produces (in fact he uses the verb *susciter*) the next best thing to a heart, namely a soul. And here Foucault follows Nietzsche, who argues that man's soul is the result both of a massive internalization, which takes place when he is forced into the constraints of social organization, and of the ensuing formation of 'bad conscience' or guilt. Nietzsche is scathing about the modern subject and its soul, both of which have been believed in, he says, because they make possible to the weak and oppressed the sublime self-deception that interprets weakness as freedom and something meritorious.[25] Elsewhere he argues that the concept of free will has been invented by theologians essentially for the purpose of punishment. 'Men were thought of as "free" so that they could become *guilty*: consequently, every action *had* to be thought of as willed, the origin of every action as lying in the consciousness'.[26] Nietzsche calls this the most rudimentary form of

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[24] 'If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality' (Deleuze and Guattari, p.26).

[25] Nietzsche, '"Good and Evil," "Good and Bad"', first essay of *Genealogy of Morals*, 13.

[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols: or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.63.

psychology, that finds support in a metaphysics of language 'which sees

everywhere deed and doer; [...] which believes in will as cause in general'

(*Twilight*, p.48). He stresses that throughout the better part of human history

> no suggestion of having to do with a 'guilty man' manifested itself in the
> consciousness of the man who judged and punished. One had merely to deal
> with an author of an injury, an irresponsible piece of fate. And the man
> himself, on whom the punishment subsequently fell like a piece of fate, was
> occasioned no more of an 'inner pain' than would be occasioned by the
> sudden approach of some uncalculated event, some terrible natural
> catastrophe ('"Guilt"', p.97)[27]

Foucault adopts this scheme in *Discipline and Punish* (and in *Histoire*

de la folie and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* alike). In the penal

system, one judges the individual as much as the crime. This is what he

means when he remarks that 'one punishes acts of aggression, but through

them, aggressivity; rape, but at the same time perversion; murders that are also

drives and desires' (p.17). It is difficult, in truth, to see how the criminal

justice system could dispense with the individual and judge solely the crime.

But Foucault's task is to indict the massive abuse of this tendency. That is to

say, the fashioning by a powerful scientifico-juridical complex of an entire

teratology of criminal 'species' – generically gathered under the rubric of the

'delinquent' – with a view to locating the essential origin and explanation of

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[27] Nietzsche argues similarly that throughout the longest part of human history the value
of an action was derived from its consequences. Over the past ten thousand years, on the other
hand, the value of an action has gradually come to be determined by its origin. But a fateful
new superstition took root whereby men came to confuse origin with intention, thinking and
thus valuing the intention as the whole origin and prehistory of an action: 'it is under the sway
of this prejudice that one has morally praised, blamed, judged and philosophized on earth
almost to the present day.' Nietzsche suspects, on the contrary, that the decisive value of an
action 'resides in precisely that which is *not intentional* in it'. And when he continues that 'all
that in it which is intentional, all of it that can be seen, known, "conscious", still belongs to
its surface and skin – which, like every skin, betrays something but *conceals* still more'
(Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. by R.J.
Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1973; repr. 1990), p.63), we are not only standing on
the threshold of the extra-moral period, but waiting for Freud and Foucault.

criminal acts in the will or anatomy (phrenology's famous bumps) of the individual *qua* delinquent. The idea of this normalizing, pathologizing order is to get a hold 'not only on offences, but on individuals; not only on what they do, but also on what they are, will be, may be'. What it manages to get a hold on is what he calls the 'soul supplement' (*supplément d'âme*). The difference from Nietzsche is that this internalization is accomplished by *techne*. And he insists, in a remarkable passage of which I cite just a part, that this soul is real enough:

> This real, non-corporal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery [*l'engrenage*] by which power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces power-effects. On this reality-reference, various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out [*découpé*]: pysche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc.; on it have been built scientific techniques and discourses, and the moral claims of humanism. But let there be no misunderstanding: it is not that a real man, the object of knowledge, philosophical reflection or technical intervention, has been substituted for the soul, the illusion of the theologians. The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor [*pièce*] in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. (pp.29-30; trans. mod.)

The remainder of the book is dedicated to showing exactly how that soul and that disciplinary individual are produced by power. But, and to anticipate the critique I shall attempt shortly, when Foucault affirms that power 'produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production' (p.194), much rides on the value of the word and concept 'production'. At a theoretical level, Foucault will understand production as both process and ensemble produced. In terms of his analysis, however, he will intimate that the latter, with its sense of completion, carries the day.

5. Finally – and he is patently not the first – Foucault links this process of disciplinary individualization to the technical emergence of the human sciences, for the two share the same instruments, techniques of measurement, and general knowledge of populations.[28] For a long time, he writes, ordinary individuality remained below the threshold of description: it was the privilege of kings and the doers of great deeds. The disciplinary methods reversed this relation, lowering the threshold of describable individuality. Whence the importance in Foucault's scheme of the examination (the presence of which gestures also to the moment of the book's composition, to the on-going student militancy in the aftermath of May '68), whose great apparatus of writing allowed it to open up two 'correlative possibilities', recto and verso of a dialectical model of constitution:

> firstly, the constitution of the individual as a describable, analysable object [...] under the gaze of a permanent corpus of knowledge; and, secondly, the constitution of a comparative system that made possible the measurement of overall phenomena, the description of groups, the characterization of collective facts, the calculation of the gaps between individuals, their distribution in a given 'population'. (p.190)

In other words, the examination echoes the legal system in making each individual a 'case', an object of knowledge and a hold (*prise*) for power. Without ever mentioning Nietzsche, Foucault's genealogy of the human sciences' ignoble origins follows Nietzsche in challenging the fundamental faith of metaphysicians, that is, the faith in antithetical values. Nietzsche, mimicking the voice of a metaphysician:

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[28] Owen Chadwick recounts that the growth of historical determinism in the nineteenth century was bound up with new collections of statistics in modern censuses and the origins of the social sciences. *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975; repr. 1990), p.203.

'the things of the highest value must have another origin *of their own* – they cannot be derivable from this transitory, seductive, deceptive, mean little world. In the womb of being, rather, in the intransitory, in the hidden god, in the "thing in itself" – *that* is where their cause must lie and nowhere else!'[29]

Theoretically, *Discipline and Punish* foregrounds its refusal of one great antithesis in the formula *power-knowledge*.[30] Practically, it follows the pairing precisely into that 'mean little world'.

The Panopticon and a Classical thematics of the eye

I turn now to explore more closely the problems thrown up by Foucault's understanding of the relationship between the body and the new technology of power. Broadly speaking, I shall argue two things: first, that a network of themes surrounding panopticism (including the eye, ideality, individuation) suggests an Apollonian conceptual framework; second, that in order for Foucault to argue that the disciplined, subjected condition of prisoners is but an exemplary instance of a general condition found in modern society at large, he is forced to demonstrate that the example must necessarily be the least exemplary instance of subjection, that within the economy of his theory delinquents constitute an example for others only on condition that they do not follow their own example. This second point will become clearer in due course. I begin by returning to Foucault's first point concerning the examination.

The examination links four themes: the body, visibility, power and

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[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp.33-34.

[30] Max Weber traces a similar dialectic between capitalism and the techniques of modern science. *The Protestant Ethic*, p.24.

technology. The following paragraph merits full transcription:

> 1. *The examination transformed the economy of visibility into the exercise of power.* Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown and what was manifested and, paradoxically, found the principle of its force in the movement by which it deployed that force. Those on whom it was exercised could remain in the shade; they received light only from that portion of power that was conceded to them, or from the reflection of it that for a moment they carried. Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold [*l'emprise*] of the power that is exercised over them. [...] And the examination is the technique by which power [...] holds them in a mechanism of objectification. (p.187)

We could take issue with this account of traditional power, the power of the sovereign régime. Who or what bestowed such power upon the sovereign, if not the representatives of a theocentric order and, through them, God himself? And what was God if not the great seer never seen? Nietzsche writes of the endeavour to find sense in suffering: 'In order to get the secret, undiscovered, and unwitnessed suffering out of the world it was almost compulsory to invent gods and a hierarchy of intermediate beings, in short, something which wanders even among secret places, sees even in the dark, and makes a point of never missing an interesting and painful spectacle' (p.77). And has not Foucault's own depiction of the *supplice* already acknowledged the role of God as all-seeing witness? If Foucault overlooks eyes here, he will overstate the importance of the eye for disciplinary power, and with good reason.

It is no coincidence that the chapter on 'Panopticism' follows close on the heels of his discussion of the examination, for Bentham's famous architectural figure embodies this new power. We recall the Panopticon's design. A series of cells round the periphery of a ring-shaped building which give on to a central tower. Each cell houses a window on the outside wall and

another that faces the tower. The tower is itself pierced with windows that open onto the cells. From this central point it is possible to gaze into any cell at any time and for that gaze to fall on a neatly isolated individual. The apparatus's ingeniousness (and it is really so simple) is that the visibility is one-way. The inmate 'is seen but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication' (p.200). This theme of the gaze of others, a non-reciprocal gaze linked to the themes of Surveillance and Judgement (Foucault's capitals), is already present in *Histoire de la folie* (p.506). Likewise in *The Birth of the Clinic*, where doctors' gazes come to form, around the time of the French Revolution, a network of 'constant, mobile, differentiated supervision' (p.31). Here, it clearly reworks the psychoanalytic primal scene of the formation of the super-ego.[31] Though Foucault's insistence that at stake is the very constitution of the subject(ed) confuses matters, since the scene would then seem to offer itself as an amalgam of Lacan's Imaginary and Symbolic. Nonetheless, working on the assumption that the scene is really to do with the super-ego (questions of judgement, morality, the work ethic, reflection and remorse weigh heavily in the book), there is at its heart a vital, eerie dissymmetry, because the gaze of the other, like God, is hidden from view. The exchange of gazes is interrupted. It is not quite, then, a matter of a 'universal visibility'. Elsewhere, Foucault describes Bentham as 'the complement to Rousseau':

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[31] Cf. Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966), p.122: 'The super-ego is based on "incorporation through the eye" or "ocular introjection"; it is the sight of a parental figure that becomes a permanent part of us; and that now supervises, watches us. In other words, the super-ego is derived from the primal scene.' Foucault refers fleetingly to the influence of Lacan in Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, p.73.

> What in fact was the Rousseauist dream that motivated many of the revolutionaries? It was the dream of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, [...], zones of disorder. It was the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men's hearts should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles, and that opinion of all reign over each. [...] Bentham is both that and the opposite. [...] He effects the project of a universal visibility which exists to serve a rigorous, meticulous power.[32]

The Panopticon institutes a dissymmetrical, controlled visibility and communication both between guard and prisoner and between prisoners. No lateral communication, no crowd, therefore no disruption: 'The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities.' There is an entire Apollonian metaphorics here which predates the Enlightenment - Apollo the Greek god and source of light, the god of plastic powers, the god of knowledge who is also associated with the principle of individuation, the god called 'most powerful eye' in Sophocles's *Trachiniae*.[33] A.D. Nuttall argues that Nietzsche eschews this characterization of Apollo because he believes the principle of individuation to be an illusion. Which is why Foucault adopts it. His endeavour in *Discipline and Punish* is to show how, technically, it was hoped to realize this Apollonian order in a modern context.[34] I stress the role of aspiration here. It is important to bear in mind that the Panopticon was never actually built. Foucault's argument is

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[32] Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp.146-165 (p.152).

[33] A.D. Nuttall, 'The Game of Death', *London Review of Books*, 14:11, 11 June 1992, 14-16 (p.14).

[34] For a brief discussion of the Apollonian complex of justice, truth and politics see his summary of a course given at the Collège de France in 1970-71. Michel Foucault, 'History of Systems of Thought', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp.199-204 (p.204).

that it was the ideal form of an otherwise very real power.

Now a number of themes coalesce in this description of the Panopticon. Ideality (the Panopticon is 'the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form'); purity ('its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, can be represented as a pure architectural and optical system'); adequation between power and knowledge (it constitutes 'a mixed mechanism in which relations of power (and of knowledge) may be precisely adjusted, in the smallest detail, to the processes that are to be supervised'); finally (though I am sure there are more), the eye as the instantaneous instrument of omniscience ('An inspector arriving unexpectedly at the centre of the Panopticon will be able to judge at a glance [*d'un seul coup d'oeil*], [...] how the entire establishment is functioning'). Again, though, it is worth remembering that despite an overwhelming sensation of 'fit', the scheme is crucially dissymmetrical, especially at the level of the eye: 'The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad' (pp.201-202). And it is this dissymmetrical position of the inmate that assures his subjection (*assujettissement*).

At this juncture, my analysis is carried forward by two related points about this scheme of the Panopticon. The first concerns the preeminence accorded the eye. The second bears on a certain Cartesianism.

Two observations concerning the eye impose themselves. Firstly, there seems no good reason either to reduce the workings of the Panopticon exclusively to a question of sight or to consider *panoptisme* as the disciplinary form of power above all others. We could perhaps say of *panoptisme* what

Norman Bryson says of the Natural Attitude in art and criticism. In both cases

it is a question of dualism:

> From the material and muscular body, continuous with physical reality and
> capable of performance within physical reality, a reduced and simplified
> body is abstracted. In its classical and Albertian formulation, this body of
> perception is monocular, a single eye removed from the rest of the body and
> suspended in diagrammatic space.[35]

In fact, and in a sense against his own theory, Foucault's depiction of

disciplinary technology suggests that its unremitting power-effects are achieved

precisely because it is exercised on and through all the senses.[36] The drills,

timetables and constant training implicate the body's sense of touch;

alimentary regimes play with taste and smell à la, albeit avant, Pavlov; finally,

his master's voice must be heard. Kant states that touch is the only sense in

which external perception is immediate.[37] As such, it would seem

particularly well suited to characterize Foucault's disciplinary power, which,

we recall, is persistently evoked by variants of the verb prendre as a prehensile

power. The difference between Kant and Foucault lies in a certain

deanthropologization. Compare Kant:

> Man is easily distinguished from all other natural beings by his *technical*
> predisposition for manipulating things (a mechanical predisposition joined
> with consciousness), by his *pragmatic* predisposition (for using other men
> skilfully for his purposes), and by the *moral* predisposition in his being (to
> treat himself and others according to the principle of freedom under laws).
> (*Anthropology*, p.183)

As to the first of these, Kant says that 'the characterization of man as a

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[35] *Vision and Painting: the Logic of the Gaze* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.10.

[36] Foucault says elsewhere that the procedures of power in modern societies are 'much more numerous, diverse and rich' than the Panopticon would suggest. 'The Eye of Power', p.148.

[37] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. by Mary J. Gregor (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

rational animal is already present in the form and organization of the human

hand' (p.184).[38] For Foucault, on the other hand, Kant's three aspects

migrate into the machine. It is not man or the sovereign or even the

bourgeoisie who stretches out the hand of power. It is not the figure of the

doctor, 'the priest of the body', as it had been in *The Birth of the Clinic*. Not

even God ('As one reads him one wonders who he is putting in the tower. Is

it the eye of God? [...] In the last analysis one is forced to conclude that

Bentham himself has no clear idea to whom power is to be entrusted' ['The

Eye of Power', p.157]). Power itself effects its own grip, holds an individual

in its own clutches, '*se donne prise sur lui*' (p.127). The metaphorics of

taking, grasping, seizing, helps connote the unmediated nature of this

corporeal, material technology of power which would not need to pass by way

of consciousness and representation.

The second observation, which is closely allied to the privilege

accorded the eye, concerns a certain Classical, Cartesian imprint. It should be

remembered that the passion for light and the fascination with optical

instruments were inseparable from Classical thought (Clark describes Spinoza

as the finest lensmaker in Europe). It is thus not insignificant that disciplinary

technology emerges in the Classical age, that the latter discovered the body as

object and target of power:

> The great book of Man-the-Machine was written simultaneously on two
> registers: the anatomico-metaphysical register, of which Descartes wrote the

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[38] Jacques Derrida explores this thematic of the hand in relation to Heidegger in '*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger's Hand', trans. by John P. Leavey, Jr., in *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida*, ed. by John Sallis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp.161-196; and *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp.11ff.

> first pages and which the physicians and philosophers continued, and the technico-political register, which was constituted by a whole set of regulations and by empirical and calculated methods relating to the army, the school and the hospital, for controlling or correcting the operations of the body. (p.136).

And we find a lexical and conceptual scheme which is eminently Cartesian. On the subject of the handling of plague, for example, in which Foucault sees an anticipation of the disciplinary scheme, he speaks of its techniques of analysis, *partage*, and order guaranteed by 'the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct [*distincte*] way on all individual bodies' (p.198). On the Panopticon itself, Foucault speculates as to whether Bentham was influenced by Le Vaux's menagerie at Versailles. The two projects manifest a similar preoccupation with individualizing observation, with characterization and classification, with the analytical arrangement of space. We recall the lengthy overview in *The Order of Things* of the Classical *episteme*, with its concern for the enumeration, tabulation and classificatory ordering of the universe according to a comparative analysis of differences and identities. And it is this same process which Foucault sees at work in the new, disciplinary institutions.[39] Again, though, it is less a question of ideology than of a technological Cartesianism. We have already seen the decomposition of the crowd into a 'collection of separated individualities' (p.201). The important point about the Panopticon is that it individualizes at one end as it disindividualizes the workings of power. He writes:

> There is a machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference. Consequently, it does not matter who exercises power. Any individual,

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[39] Foucault highlights the importance of the Classical age for his archaeologies in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.176.

> taken almost at random, can operate the machine:[40] [...] The more
> numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk
> for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of
> being observed. The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever
> use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power. A
> real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. (p.202)

One senses that the apparatus rather gets the better of Foucault and that

the countless missed opportunities to acknowledge resistance to disciplinary

power can be attributed to a certain grip exercised on his thought by the

mutually reinforcing principles of sight and dissymmetry. If it is possible to

prevent the inmate's visual communication with his companions, it is more

difficult to control both his ears and also what goes into them, as Bentham

recognized. One of Foucault's footnotes reads:

> In his first version of the *Panopticon*, Bentham had also imagined an
> acoustic surveillance, operated by means of pipes leading from cells to the
> central tower. In the *Postscript* he abandoned the idea, perhaps because he
> could not introduce into it the principle of dissymmetry and prevent the
> prisoners from hearing the inspector as well as the inspector hearing them.
> (p.317, n.3)

Above and beyond the visual, dissymmetry is one of the key principles

deployed by the system to prevent feedback or interference. If one takes his

discussion of the isolation of inmates, for instance, where he looks at the

debate in the U.S. between a regime of absolute solitude (Philadelphia) and a

regime of nocturnal solitude (Auburn), we note that beyond the obvious

differences of the two institutions they share 'this primary objective of carceral

action: coercive individualization, by rupturing any relation that is not

supervised by authority' (p.239). As I began by saying in relation to the essay

'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', an objective and the realization of an

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[40] A variation this on the tradition of the insane *qua* public spectacle, *monstres montrés*.
Cf. *Histoire de la folie*, p.162.

objective are not homologous. It is difficult to believe that the disciplines are so complete as to assure a '*tête-à-tête*' of the convict and power in which the latter effects on the former a *tabula rasa* to match his shaven head.[41] Would not some of the calculation and reflection involved in understanding the idea of surveillance be channelled into self-reflection, into a technology of the self, amounting to sentiments of revolt as well as remorse? Nietzsche maintains that punishment seldom produces remorse in its victims; rather, it 'hardens and numbs, [...], it sharpens the consciousness of alienation, it strengthens the power of resistance.' It also, he says, sharpens the criminal's sense of prudence, lengthens his memory, and hones a peculiar form of self-criticism.[42] In fact, a footnote to the American debate, which Foucault appears not to want to feed back into his main argument, reveals that at least one whisper of rebellion was transmitted, that the system was short-circuited at least once (p.318, n.6).

Constructing machines (both marvellous and beautiful)

But let us return to that passage cited above, with its 'real subjection born mechanically from a fictitious relation'. Who speaks thus? Bentham or Foucault? This passage throws up the question of enunciation. It is a standard technique of Foucault's to anchor his basic account in sources contemporary

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[41] This echoes his description of the mad as 'passive instruments' of internment (*Histoire de la folie*, p.419).

[42] Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power: An Attempted Transvaluation of All Values*, trans. by Anthony M. Ludovici, 2 vols (London: T.N. Foulis, 1913), I, 233, p.191: 'The criminals with whom Dostoiewsky associated in prison, were all, without exception, unbroken natures, – are they not a hundred times more valuable than a "broken-spirited" Christian?'

to the debate in question. Indeed, much of this passage is taken straight from Bentham – though one can never be sure just how much, since a solitary page reference does not compensate for the absence of those indicators 'Bentham adds', 'he then postulates', etc.. What is more, Foucault almost always avoids the use of the first-person singular and of those deictic markers indicating the author's intention ('it seems to me', 'from which I conclude').[43] Of course, much of the passage is entirely in line with the question of the Panopticon's ideal quality. Whether or not the inmate is under surveillance is immaterial; the important thing is that he believe he may be. Doubly ideal in a sense, in that the Panopticon Bentham writes about, though based on an actual design of his brother's, was, as we have observed, really a project 'for a society to come' (p.209), as Foucault puts it. However, the final sentence is interesting. What begins as a 'fictitious relation' ends 'mechanically' in a 'real subjection'. What is the status of this 'real'? I should like to hold this question over just long enough to look at the workings of the marvellous machine and of the machinic metaphor. At stake in their functioning is once more (as in Chapter one) a question of a victory played out in advance:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound, permanent and incessantly relayed are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any confrontation and which is always decided [*jouée*] in advance. (pp.202-203; trans. mod.)

When Foucault writes in *Histoire de la folie* that the combat between reason

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[43] The exception is the (arch-conventional) third chapter from *The Use of Pleasures*.

and unreason is 'always already decided [*jouée*]', that the defeat of unreason is 'inscribed in advance' (pp.508-509), we must understand that the voice which speaks of 'defeat' might almost be that of Samuel Tuke, the founding father of the York Retreat for the insane; Foucault does not believe the victory was complete. In the later text, however, that reserve seems to disappear.

The marvellous machine's production of a fictitious subjectedness of the subject or, what amounts to the same thing, power's 'perpetual victory', is predicated on two related things: 1. The existence of a proper species of power with specific power-effects; 2. A model of the subject as fully constituted by that power. *Discipline and Punish* maintains the first of these positions in turn by positing one of two things. Firstly, by suggesting that panopticism is but one instance of a larger disciplinary power that is always already in place in society at large, and not just in the Panopticon, prior to the individual's entry onto the scene. In fact, he says, it owes its origins to the gradual formation throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of a disciplinary society. The prison, in other words, which is the realization of the Panopticon, is but one form of 'the carceral':[44]

> Prison continues, on those who are entrusted to it, a work begun elsewhere, which the whole of society pursues on each individual through innumerable mechanisms of discipline. By means of a carceral continuum, the authority that sentences infiltrates all those other authorities that supervise, transform, correct, improve. [...] The power to punish is not essentially different from that of curing or educating. (pp.302-303)

(This image of an increasingly policed society needs to be questioned, without conjuring up in its stead the image of a universally-felt gain in freedom. Jean-

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[44] Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.374: 'There is no metaphor here: the factories are prisons, they do not resemble prisons, they *are* prisons.'

René Treanton provides evidence, in a discussion in which Foucault participated, that the seventeenth century in France was arguably a much more policed society than our own.)[45] On the other hand, if Foucault can suggest the existence of more than one modality of power, the totalization is held in place by intimating that disciplinary power has colonized the others, 'has infiltrated the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them and above all making it posssible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements' (p.216). In other words, by subsuming the fictitious Panopticon under a more real generalizable carceral power which nonetheless reproduces all the effects of Bentham's machine, Foucault can harness the beauty and perfection of all those flawless written projects (architectural plans, handbooks of rules and regulations, etc.) out of which he constructs the book – as opposed to actual accounts of practices and experiences – to infer that from a fictitious 'fictitious relation' is born 'mechanically' a real 'real subjection'.[46]

Elsewhere, Foucault is anxious to refute the charge that there is in his work a sort of 'ideal type'.[47] He replies that the rational schemas of the

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[45] He recounts how the 1670 census conducted in Lille asked inhabitants if they were born in the town, the motive for such a question being the fact that those not born in the town could be expelled by the authorities at will. 'Table ronde', Numéro spécial: Pourquoi le travail social? *Esprit*, 40 (1972), 678-703 (p.682).

[46] See Michael Walzer, 'The Politics of Michel Foucault' in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. by David Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp.51-68.

[47] Foucault, 'Questions of Method', *Ideology and Consciousness*, 8 (Spring 1981), 3-14 (first publ. as 'Débat avec Michel Foucault: table ronde du 20 mai 1978', in *L'Impossible prison: Recherches sur le système pénitentiaire au xix* siècle, ed. by Michelle Perrot (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980), pp.29-56).

prison, the hospital or the asylum are not general principles but explicit programmes. He argues convincingly that to view such programmes and schemas as somehow less real than, say, institutions is an impoverished notion of the real. 'These programmes,' he says, 'induce a whole series of effects in the real (which isn't of course the same as saying that they take the place of the real): they crystallise into institutions, they inform individual behaviour, they act as grids for the perception and evaluation of things.' But the following sentence rather confirms what Foucault is trying to deny.

> It is absolutely true that criminals stubbornly resisted the new disciplinary mechanism in the prison; it is absolutely correct that the actual functioning of the prisons, in the inherited buildings where they were established and with the governors and guards who administered them, was a witches' brew compared to the beautiful Benthamite machine. ('Questions of Method', p.11)

One's impression is confirmed that what prevails in *Discipline and Punish*, since it is the beautiful Benthamite machine in contradistinction to the 'actual functioning' of the prisons, is something approaching, not an ideal in the sense of imagined but never implemented programmes, but the ideal functioning of undoubtedly real strategies. In another interview, Foucault maintains that Bentham 'describes, in the utopian form of a general system, particular mechanisms which really exist' ('The Eye', p.164). Though that is not before acknowledging that the effective resistance of inmates to the penitentiary system 'is another of the factors which shift Bentham into the domain of the unreal' (p.162).

The question of enunciation, or the voice which tells the story, weighs heavily in all this. Foucault remarks that all the sentences in the book saying things like 'the disciplinary apparatus produces power', 'it matters little who

exercises power', etc. are not his personal conception of power. Rather, they describe projects – mostly Bentham's.[48] Yet there is a revealing passage which complicates matters. In it Foucault virtually summarizes Bentham's 'Letter XXI. Schools', which treats of the pedagogical experiments dreamt of by enthusiasts of the Panopticon.[49] Foucault's text reads:

> one could bring up different children according to different systems of thought, making certain children believe that two and two do not make four or that the moon is made of green cheese, then put them together when they are twenty or twenty-five years old; one would then have discussions that would be worth a great deal more than the sermons or lectures on which so much money is spent. (p.204; trans. mod.)

However, Foucault omits to put on record a certain spirited playfulness in the original *Panopticon* which makes us think that there is indeed more Foucault invested in the enunciation of *panoptisme* than we might otherwise have believed. The final paragraph of the 'Preface' to Bentham's *Panopticon* reads as follows:

> The concluding Letter on Schools is a sort of *jeu d'esprit*, which would hardly have presented itself in so light a form, at any other period than at the moment of conception, and under the flow of spirits which the charms of novelty are apt enough to inspire. As such, it may possibly help to alleviate the tedium of a dry discussion, and on that score obtain the pardon, should it fail of receiving the approbation, of the graver class of readers. (Bentham, *Panopticon*, p.40)

In short, Bentham's posture is highly tongue-in-cheek at this juncture. He speaks of the Panopticon's ability to ensure the purity of damsels ('with what eagerness gentlemen who are curious in such matters would crowd to such a school to choose themselves wives, is too obvious to insist on' [p.62]); to stir even the most slothful ('nor would the pride of *Toboso* have been so long a-

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[48] Foucault, 'La Poussière et le nuage', in *L'impossible prison*, pp.29-39 (p.37).

[49] Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. by John Bowring, 11 vols (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), IV.

disenchanting, could her *Knight* have put his coward *Squire* into an inspection-house' [p.63]). Again, on the dangers of 'constructing a set of *machines* under the similitude of *men*' his only comment is: as long as they are happy machines, who cares? And most tellingly: 'If the idea of some of these applications should have brought a smile upon your countenance, it won't hurt you, my dear ****; nor should it hurt the principle.' This great instrument of government should not be condemned 'because some of the purposes to which it is possible to apply it may appear useless, or trifling, or mischievous, or ridiculous' (p.66). In the two parts of the Postscript to the *Panopticon*, the pages of which together far outnumber the original piece, Bentham never applies the principle to schools and one might call Foucault's misrepresentation of Bentham systemic, as though Foucault's serious-mindedness on the question of Diana and the eleven thousand virgins were programmed by a machinery interested in the production of virginity. In our society of surveillance, he says, 'it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies. We are much less Greek than we believe' (p.217). Not just colonization, therefore, but fabrication. In a high-fidelity apparatus.[50]

I must stress at this juncture that despite his obvious concern for the functioning of the machine, the question of its formation does not go

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[50] Foucault insists on the machine metaphor after visiting Attica: 'at first sight you have the impression you are visiting [...] a machine, the inside of a machine'. 'Michel Foucault on Attica: An Interview', *Telos* 19 (1974), 154-161 (p.155).

unaddressed.[51] He takes up the problematic outlined by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* – 'a machine [...] does not set itself into place any more than it forms or reproduces itself' (p.283). His argument is that disciplinary techniques are a response to the eighteenth century's great demographic expansion and concomitant growth in the apparatus of production. Such a concern with origins challenges the misunderstanding that in Foucault there is only one kind of power. On the contrary, there is the prolix disciplinary power and there is the power of the bourgeoisie to implement the former.[52] Nonetheless, and caveat apart, the structuralist dimension is strong here, though the concern with the sites and spaces of disciplinary power, with its constructions and architecture, would not be structuralist *per se*. What marks out this concern as structuralist is, paradoxically for a book on power, a reluctance to think the force within form, glimpsed in the insistent theme of simultaneity (we recall that 'an inspector arriving unexpectedly at the centre of the Panopticon will be able to judge at a glance [*d'un seul coup d'oeil*], [...] how the entire establishment is functioning'). Derrida writes: 'Simultaneity is the myth of a total reading or description, promoted to the status of a regulatory ideal. The search for the simultaneous explains the capacity to be fascinated by the spatial image'.[53] In actual fact, the depiction of panopticism corresponds closely to Foucault's own account of the Classical view of disease

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[51] Which is why, if we substitute 'disciplinary power' for 'discourse' in the following, *Discipline and Punish* would be, by his own definition, both structuralist and genealogical: 'Seek in the discourse not its laws of construction, as do the structural methods, but its conditions of existence' (Foucault, 'Politics and the Study of Discourse', p.15).

[52] Cf. *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, p.93.

[53] Jacques Derrida, 'Force and Signification', in *Writing and Difference*, pp.3-30 (p.24).

presented elsewhere.[54] He writes in *The Birth of the Clinic*:

> Disease is perceived fundamentally in a space of projection without depth, of coincidence without development. There is only one plane and one moment. The form in which truth is originally shown is the surface in which relief is both manifested and abolished – the portrait. (p.6)

And again: 'The ideal configuration of the disease becomes a concrete, free form, totalized at last in a motionless, simultaneous picture, lacking both density and secrecy, where recognition opens of itself onto the order of essences' (p.9). Derrida calls the structural consciousness 'a reflection of the accomplished, the constituted, the *constructed*. Historical, eschatological, and crepuscular by its very situation' ('Force', p.5), and this evokes well the sensation of a perfect, geometrical minting of machine-individuals which Foucault would have disciplinary power effect, rather as though Foucault's disciplinary individual becomes part of Heidegger's 'standing-reserve'.[55] (Again, it is not just the workings of an ideal Panopticon but the carceral texture of society itself which 'assures both the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation' [p.304].)

Fabrication and production. While they neither originate in nor belong to the modern industrial world, these words are immersed in the semantic hinterland of the modern machine age. That is to say, production in the post-Classical sense of a technological production rather than in the older meaning

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[54] Not the gaze of the post-Classical era, in which the 'normative observer is the totality of observers' (Foucault, *The Birth*, p.102).

[55] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings*, pp.287-317. Heidegger posits that modern technology is a form of revealing, a 'challenging' which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such. Everything is therein ordered to be immediately on hand, to be the standing-reserve, except man, precisely because he at least takes part in this ordering as revealing, even if he does not control it.

of production as revelation or uncovering of the already existent.[56] And if disciplinary individuals are 'fabricated' or 'produced', by the same token they would be 'constructions' (itself less ambiguous than 'constructs') rather than 'constitutions', insofar as in question is their production precisely by architectural, spatial, physical *techne*. *Discipline and Punish* literalizes the metaphor of social 'constructionism'. It assembles, builds, literally constructs architectonically. And in this respect it wants to leave behind the figurative meanings of the word, both the act, the elaboration or composition of something abstract (e.g. a thesis), and that which is elaborated (*Le Petit Robert*: '*C'est une simple construction de l'esprit. Une construction théorique, intellectuelle*). *Construct*: the name given to a concept

> to which it is thought that there is nothing corresponding in reality, so that it is merely a useful fiction. It may be useful for summarizing masses of detailed facts, or formulating explanatory theories. [...] Usually the alleged construct is contrasted with something else which 'really' exists, as opposed to being a useful fiction.[57]

In Foucault, it is the construction that really exists. We know that for the medieval mind geometry was a divine activity, and God the great geometer. And perhaps Godliness is what is at stake in Foucault's turn to architecture, in the would-be construction of the subject *ab origine*. (We should say that the complete *prise* of inmates marks an important difference both from *Histoire de la folie*, where knowledge does not manage to capture madness completely (p.481), and from Lacan, for whom the speaking subject can never

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[56] See Jacques Derrida, 'Psyché, Invention de l'autre', in *Psyché, Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), pp.11-61 (p.42).

[57] *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, 2nd edn, ed. by Alan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass and Stephen Trombley (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p.169.

totally possess meaning, just as the desiring subject can never possess the object.) Foucault's modern woodcut would not, though, be called *Melancholia*. Nowhere is it a question of brooding or futility.[58] Counterbalancing the sense of entrapment, it cannot help but inspire admiration in the constructive powers of man's ingenuity. While by rights it wants to be deterministic, the text in fact sings a powerful and intoxicating hymn to voluntarism.[59]

Origins and ends: an exemplary malfunction

The stress on dissymmetry, appropriating the ideal quality of Bentham's system, promotes a theoretical high-fidelity over a practice doubtless ridden with distortion. It reproduces, among others, a technique of the monastic model, but none of its effects ('"disciplines" of a monastic type [...], though they entail obedience to others, had as their principal aim an increase of the mastery of each individual over his own body' [p.137; trans. mod.]).[60] Which takes me to the question of whether the logic of this position on power is at all faithful to one of Nietzsche's most important tenets, found in the Second Essay? There, Nietzsche proclaims that 'there is no more pregnant principle for any kind of history than the following' (p.89):

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[58] Kenneth Clark writes of Dürer's engraving *Melancholia I*: 'This figure [of humanity] [...] sits in the attitude of Rodin's *Penseur*, and still holds in her hands the compasses, symbols of measurement by which science will conquer the world. Around her are all the emblems of constructive action: a saw, a plane, pincers, scales, a hammer, a melting pot, and two elements in solid geometry, a polyhedron and sphere. Yet all these aids to construction are discarded and she sits there brooding on the futility of human effort' (*Civilisation*, p.115).

[59] In response to accusations that the text was debilitatingly pessimistic, Foucault argues that certain prisoners who read it certainly did not think so.

[60] J.G. Merquior is incorrect in saying that Foucault does not stress enough the religious origin and motivation of many of the disciplinary techniques. *Foucault* (London: Fontana, 1985).

> The origin of the existence of a thing and its final utility, its practical application and incorporation in a system of ends, are *toto cælo* opposed to each other [...]. All ends and all utilities are only *signs* that a Will to Power has mastered a less powerful force, has impressed thereon out of its self the meaning of a function, and the whole history of a 'Thing,' an organ, a custom, can on the same principle be regarded as a continuous 'sign-chain' of perpetually new interpretations and adjustments, [...]. Similarly, the evolution of a 'thing,' of a custom, is anything but its *progressus* to an end, still less a logical and direct *progressus* attained with the minimum expenditure of energy and cost: it is rather the succession of processes of subjugation [...] which operate on the thing itself; it is, further, the resistance which in each case invariably displayed this subjugation, the Protean wriggles by way of defence and reaction, and, further, the results of successful counter-efforts. The form is fluid, but the meaning is even more so – even inside every individual organism the case is the same: with every genuine growth of the whole, the 'function' of the individual organs becomes shifted, – in certain cases a partial perishing of these organs [...] can be a symptom of growing strength and perfection. What I mean is this: even partial *loss of utility*, decay, and degeneration, loss of function and purpose, in a word, death, appertain to the conditions of the genuine *progressus*; which always appears in the shape of a will and way to *greater* power, and is always realised at the expense of innumerable smaller powers. (pp.89-91)[61]

This passage can be read on two 'scales' (bearing in mind what Foucault says about the 'scale' of disciplines) and depending on the scale Foucault can be viewed as either slipping into the logic of or perpetrating a violence on the Nietzschean system. On the macro-scale, *Discipline and Punish* appears quite faithful to Nietzsche's logic. The procedure, Nietzsche says, is anterior to its utilization in punishment ('The prison form,' Foucault says, 'antedates its systematic use in the penal system' [p.231]). The meaning of punishment in Europe, Foucault concurs with Nietzsche, has been historically variable.

On the second, micro-scale, one takes not punishment as a whole but the relation between a particular punitive procedure, the Panopticon, and a given end, namely the subjection of the inmate's body. Now, suddenly, there

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[61] For a brief discussion of the gap between objectives and effects see Foucault, 'What Calls for Punishment?', in *Foucault Live*, pp.279-292 (p.283); original interview with Foulek Ringuelheim, December 1983.

appears to be perfect transmission, an ideal *progressus* from the punitive

technique through to its end – a suitably docile, though useful, subjected body.

And the contingency which marks the relationship between the procedure and

the end at the macro-scale, hardens at the micro-scale into a necessity. One

witnesses this hardening in the following. Programmes of discipline, Foucault

writes,

> don't take effect in the institutions in an integral manner; they are simplified,
> or some are chosen and not others; and things never work out as planned
> [...]. In fact there are different strategies which are mutually opposed,
> composed and superposed so as to produce permanent and solid effects.
> ('Questions of Method', p.10).[62]

Changing strategies, solid effects. This play of scales is what permits

Discipline and Punish to claim, at one and the same time, and on the same

page, that it is a question of tactics and strategies, and also that disciplinary

power is essentially productive of subjected bodies (p.308).

Yet, and to return to the theme of the example which we left in

abeyance, it so happens that there is a peculiar malfunction at the very heart

of the machine Foucault describes, all the more unsettling because this same

flaw is structurally necessary to the functioning of the machine as a whole.

We recall that the book argues for the existence of a crucial transmission from

the Panopticon to society at large (since it is but a generalizable model within

a larger, disciplinary complex). En route, the theme of the Panopticon finds

in the prison its 'privileged locus of realization' (p.249) (in fact he even

describes the carriage which replaced the chain-gang as the 'mobile equivalent

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[62] Quoted by Dana P. Polan, 'Fables of Transgression: the Reading of Politics and the Politics of Reading in Foucauldian Discourse', *Boundary 2*, 10:3 (Spring 1982), 361-381 (p.368).

of the Panopticon' [p.263]). The prison is thus a 'prison-machine' (p.249)
making 'machine-men' (p.242). But at one vital point the machine
malfunctions – systematically. Foucault speaks of the prison as a 'carefully
articulated disciplinary mechanism', before adding the caveat '– at least in
principle' (p.264). He then proceeds to show how, from the very beginning,
the functioning of the prison was accompanied by the (in our own time)
familiar criticism that it was failing in its central mission of rehabilitating
criminals, that, if anything, it fostered recidivism and a nefarious prison
culture. He argues that in reality the prison's failure, its production of a
veritable species, the delinquent, forms an integral cog in the larger, 'carceral'
system. In short, the prison is not intended to eliminate offences but to
distribute them, to use them, to assimilate the transgression of the law into a
'general tactics of subjection' (p.272). The carceral system invests and
organizes delinquency; it 'produces' delinquency, produces the delinquent as
a pathologized subject. And this production in turn legitimizes the State's
intervention in and surveillance of the social field:

> Delinquency, with the secret agents that it procures, but also with the
> generalized policing that it authorizes, constitutes a means of perpetual
> surveillance of the population: an apparatus that makes it possible to
> supervise, through the delinquents themselves, the whole social field.
> Delinquency functions as a political observatory. In their turn, the
> statisticians and the sociologists have made use of it, long after the police.
> (p.281)

One can thus speak, he says, of an ensemble the three terms of which (police-
prison-delinquency) support one another and 'form a circuit that is never
interrupted' (p.282). A 'carceral archipelago' that spreads its 'net', widens its
circles, transports the penitentiary technique into the 'entire social body'. And
the carceral network 'has no outside' [*n'a pas de dehors*]', it 'economizes

everything' (p.301; trans. mod.), it is 'unwilling to waste even what it has decided to disqualify' (p.301). The machine is even more marvellous than was first imagined: it is a green machine. It runs on its own effluent, its own productive residue. But the systemic malfunctioning means that the only ones in effect not subjected, who cannot, in general, be subjected, are prisoners, the delinquents. And this is strictly correlated with our own subjection, for only on the basis of the non-subjection of prisoners do mechanisms for our own subjection operate, and with our blessing. And this is what I meant by the unexemplariness of the example of prisoners. If the ostensible contention of *Discipline and Punish* is that disciplinary power, in contradistinction to earlier punitive régimes, consists of an unremitting work on individuals carried out behind closed doors, with a view to making that individual an example for himself, that argument is necessarily undercut by a much older, a pre-modern, sense that punishment is primarily concerned with setting an example for others. In arguing that the subjected condition of prisoners is an exemplary instance of a general 'carceral' condition, Foucault demonstrates that this example must necessarily be the least exemplary instance of subjection, and that within the economy of his theory the best example to follow is the (least exemplary) one set by delinquents.[63]

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[63] In the light of what we have said about the constitutive failure of the machinery vis-à-vis prisoners, another way of approaching the question of the success or otherwise of power's grip is to take up the 'arms race' scenario, which Richard Dawkins discusses in his book *The Blind Watchmaker* (London: Penguin Books, 1988; repr. 1991). The exemplarity of this example supposes real dangers (principally of a vulgar social biologism) but one could offer it nonetheless in the spirit of a counter-example to suggest at least the theoretical possibility that progress in equipment (the disciplines) need not necessarily result in an increased success rate (of subjection). The principle of zero change in the success rate, despite possible leaps and bounds in equipment progress, is known as the 'Red Queen effect'. This theory strikes at what one commentator has called the 'meta-anthropological or meta-historical process of

Nietzsche and the bad conscience

In the final part of the chapter I assess the extent to which *Discipline and Punish* is a Nietzschean enterprise. This entails a brief look at Nietzsche's logic concerning the bad conscience, which clearly provides an important starting point for Foucault's model, before moving to speculate in more general terms on some of the similarities and, more especially, differences between the two. At that point we shall ask the question which has so far been taken for granted: why should one even want to be Nietzschean? What is at stake in being, or better, in becoming Nietzschean? First, though, Nietzsche on the bad conscience.

Nietzsche's hypothesis is that the bad conscience emerges when men are suddenly catapulted out of a primitive environment and imprisoned within a broadly peaceful social unit. Their regulative instincts are therein switched off and they are reduced to 'thinking, inferring, calculating', reduced to their consciousness. But the old instincts do not immediately cease their demands:

> All instincts which do not find a vent without, *turn inwards* — this is what I mean by the growing 'internalisation' of man: consequently we have the first growth in man, of what subsequently was called his soul. The whole inner world, originally as thin as if it had been stretched between two layers of skin, burst apart and expanded proportionately, and obtained depth, breadth, and height, when man's external outlet became *obstructed*. (p.100)

All the old instincts of wild, free man — cruelty, the delight in persecution, in surprises, change, destruction — turn inwards against man himself, who begins

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rationalisation' (Foucault, 'Questions of Method', p.8) found in Foucault's work, which is, I think, conveyed as much by a certain tone in Foucault's prose (elegy on the past, pathos/cynicism on the present) as by any content. The arms race analogy might suggest that a modern power that becomes more subtle, more molecular does so as individuals themselves get better at resisting power. As Dawkins says, 'it is precisely *because* there has been approximately equal progress on both sides that there has been so much progress in the level of sophistication of design' (Dawkins, p.186). If one side pulled too far ahead in the race, the other design would simply cease to be used.

to lacerate himself.

However, this herding of the population could be accomplished only through violence, only through a 'grinding ruthless piece of machinery', operated by 'blond beasts of prey, a race of conquerors and masters' (p.103), which relentlessly moulds the raw material of the semi-animal populace. This instinct of freedom forced into being latent and finally 'only able to find vent and relief in itself' is the beginning of bad conscience. But, says Nietzsche, and this marks a huge difference from Foucault, the material on which this instinct of freedom is let loose is 'man himself, his whole old animal self – and *not* [...] the *other* man, *other* men' (p.104-105). He speaks of

> This secret self-tyranny, this cruelty of the artist, this delight in giving a form to one's self as a piece of difficult, refractory, and suffering material, in burning in a will, a critique, a contradiction, a contempt, a negation; this sinister and ghastly labour of love on the part of a soul, whose will is cloven in two within itself, which makes itself suffer from delight in the infliction of suffering; this wholly *active* bad conscience. (p.105)

Glimpses here of the Freudian unconscious, Freud changing Nietzsche's temporality by pushing back the emergence of the unconscious into a repeated scene involving the most primary processes of socialization. But the difference between Nietzsche and Foucault is even greater. For Nietzsche, there is man's work on others and man's work on himself. The bad conscience is the product of the two labours, and its perfection owes much to the later intervention of a Christian priest, who manages to alter the direction of *ressentiment*.[64] Instead of looking for a cause for his suffering in others, reactive man is encouraged by the priest to find it in himself, in his guilt. With the impossibility of paying the debt to the deity is conceived the idea of the

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[64] The last word of Rivière's memoir is *ressentimens* (sic). *Moi, Pierre Rivière*, p.148.

impossibility of paying the penalty, its inexpiability – the idea of eternal

punishment.[65] In sum, we find in Nietzsche the existence of the conscience,

the bad conscience and the like; of a soul 'whose will is cloven in two within

itself'; souls plural. In Foucault, on the other hand, there is primarily the far

from sensational work of man and machines, of disciplinary power, on others.

Foucault does not altogether exclude the work of the individual on

himself. Instead, he gives Merleau-Ponty's theory of the lived world a

negative tweak. Merleau-Ponty's challenge to the strict subject-object division

of Cartesianism lies in his return not to some fallacious objective world but to

the lived world as experienced through the body.[66] Ultimately, this capacity

to contribute to constituting the world (never *ex nihilo*, since our consciousness

needs things in a sense to be already there in order to define itself), is what

distinguishes a being-for-itself (*être-pour-soi*) from the rather empty status of

the mere being-in-itself (*être-en-soi*). Now when Foucault says that an inmate

of the Panopticon makes the constraints of power play spontaneously upon

himself, thus becoming the principle of his own subjection, he makes him

collaborate in the process which effectively confirms his being-for-itself as it

prepares happily to appropriate that subjected condition. Terry Eagleton is

thus strictly speaking awry in viewing the body in Foucault as an object, even

if there is much truth in his conviction that Foucault's opposition to the

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[65] Deleuze and Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus*, p.217) rewrite this internalization and spiritualization of the infinite debt as the formation of the Oedipus. In their scheme, it is desire that is turned back against itself.

[66] *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p.231. He goes on to say that Descartes himself was aware of the distinction between the body of the lived world and the body conceived of by a purely intellectual understanding, but privileges the latter because of theological prejudice.

Marxist concept of alienation leads him all but to evacuate the notion of human interiority:

> The shift from Merleau-Ponty to Foucault is one from the body as relation to the body as object. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is 'where there is something to be done'; for the new somatics, the body is where something – gazing, imprinting, regimenting – is being done to you. It used to be called alienation, but that implies the existence of an interiority to be alienated – a proposition of which somatic criticism is deeply sceptical.[67]

Sartre rather confirms this with his third ontological dimension of the body from *L'Etre et le néant*.[68] In one sense – when the inmate cannot see the surveillant – Foucault's scheme introduces an important rupture into Sartre's model of subjectivity, which holds that '"Being-seen-by-the-Other" is the truth of "seeing-the-Other"' (p.257). But Sartre goes beyond sight narrowly envisaged to say: to the extent that I am conscious of existing for the Other I apprehend my own facticity. And we recall that the inmate of the Panopticon need only be *aware* of being seen. Sartre then reaches a telling conclusion about this Being-there-for-others and the body:

> Thus my body is not given merely as that which is purely and simply lived; rather this 'lived experience' becomes – in and through the contingent, absolute fact of the Other's existence – extended outside in a dimension of flight which escapes me. My body's depth of being is for me this perpetual 'outside' of my most intimate 'inside'. (p.352)

Of course, Foucault will precisely push at the possibility that such a perpetual outside must always erase the intimacy of the inside, that the 'soul' is not the most private of private properties but the correlative of a technology

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[67] The beginning of the paragraph is even less applicable to Foucault: 'For the new somatics, not any old body will do. If the libidinal body is in, the labouring body is out. There are mutilated bodies galore, but few malnourished ones, belonging as they do to bits of the globe beyond the purview of Yale.' Terry Eagleton, 'It is Not Quite True that I Have a Body, and Not Quite True that I am One Either' (review of Peter Brooks, *Body Work*), *London Review of Books*, 15, 10, 27 May 1993, 7-8 (p.7).

[68] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1966).

of power. Yet there is a sense in which the microphysics of power that characterizes disciplinary technology stops short of flowing into the body itself. When Foucault speaks of the human body entering a machinery of power that breaks it down (*désarticule*) and recomposes it, he thereby articulates a difference between bodies – their separation, individualization, classification, hierarchization – not the disarticulation and difference of one body from itself. In other words, *Discipline and Punish* is selectively molecular, not molecular enough. That Foucault's 'body' is, in Peter Dews' opinion, devoid of a Nietzschean strength, joy and terribleness strikes me as wayward reasoning, since there is not just one body for Nietzsche (indeed, one of Nietzsche's central points about the slave morality is that it carries round a shuffling, unjoyous and unterrible body). However, that the Foucault of *Discipline and Punish* lacks a general theory of drives or an interest in the internal complexity of the psyche – conditioned, Dews says, by his hostility to psychoanalysis – is undeniable.[69] When Foucault rules out desire, he rules out the positive force of the schizoid revolutionary pole of social libidinal investment which Deleuze and Guattari oppose to the paranoiac, reactionary, and fascisizing pole (which looks very much like the disciplines):

> The two poles are defined, *the one* by the enslavement of production and the desiring-machines to the gregarious aggregates that they constitute on a large scale under a given form of power or selective sovereignty; *the other* by the inverse subordination and the overthrow of power. *The one* by these molar structured aggregates that crush singularities, select them, and regularize those that they retain in codes or axiomatics; *the other* by the molecular multiplicities of singularities that on the contrary treat the large aggregates

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[69] Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 1987), p.163ff. See also Axel Honneth, 'Foucault et Adorno: deux formes d'une critique de la modernité', trans. by Christian Bouchindhomme, *Critique*, 471-472 (August-September 1986), 800-815 (p.815).

> as so many useful materials for their own elaborations. *The one* by the lines of integration and territorialization that arrest the flows, constrict them, [...] *the other* by lines of escape that follow the decoded and deterritorialized flows, inventing their own nonfigurative breaks or schizzes that produce new flows, always breaching the coded wall or the territorialized limit that separates them from desiring-production. [...] *The one* is defined by subjugated groups, *the other* by subject-groups. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp.366-367)

Contra Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari do not assign an entirely negative value to the notion of subject. The distinctions they make certainly run up against problems. 'In what sense does the schizoid investment constitute, to the same extent as the other one, a real investment of the sociohistorical field, and not a simple utopia? In what sense are the lines of escape collective, positive, and creative?' (*Anti-Oedipus*, p.367). But their point is that capitalism does not always get its own way. Foucault, however, ignoring Nietzsche's belief that the formation of the bad conscience is retarded by prison, infers that disciplinary power fabricates just one, essential bad conscience, one little soul (he writes of the 'little soul of the criminal, which the very apparatus of punishment fabricated as a point of application of the power to punish' [p.255]). And to that extent, the story of the bad conscience or little soul contributes to the myth of its constitution.

Becoming Nietzschean

For all the overstatement that we detect in the theory, Foucault's portrayal of disciplinary power remains a powerful evocation. Despite his desire to render the account contemporary, Foucault's model of subjection is best understood as applying to the early and mid-nineteenth century proletariat. He is certainly not talking about the formation of bourgeois consciousness.

There is no doubt that Foucault believed he was sketching a form of modern subjectivity (he speaks of 'our society of surveillance' [p.217] and of the prison revolts of 'these last weeks'), but aside from three or four pages, the focus never really gets beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. The historical sketches, prison cameos, architectural plans, reform bills, factory descriptions, factory regulations, hospital rules, workhouse timetables, virtually all the 'detail' relates to the period from the end of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the signs are that Foucault's personal (or would it be national?) frame of reference is heavily marked by that century. He responds thus to his visit to Attica in 1972: 'When you go through those long corridors which are – let me repeat – clean, a Frenchman has the impression of being in a somewhat austere private or parochial school; after all, nineteenth century *lycées* and *collèges* were not that much more pleasant' ('On Attica', p.156).[70] Thus the grinding detail, the marshalling of an illiterate populace and its moral coercion by a still overweeningly religious social machinery merits a due wariness of the adjective 'progressive' applied to capitalism and of a positive, voluntaristic account of subjectivity.[71]

But, caveat apart, and to address our main concern, does one detect what Nietzsche would call a 'socialist sympathy' running through Foucault's discourse? There is a kind of individual, Nietzsche writes, who 'will not be

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[70] 'It's often said in France that we're still living in the 19th century. When I looked at [the exhibition] "Paris-Berlin" and read the German authors of the years 1910-1930, I became conscious that the 20th century actually does exist with its own ideas, problems, specific cultural forms.' Michel Foucault, '*Spiegel* Interview with Michel Foucault on "Paris-Berlin"', *New German Critique*, 16 (1979), 155-156 (p.156); originally in *Spiegel*, 44, 30 October 1978.

[71] See Raymond Wiiliams, *The Country and the City* (St. Albans: Paladin, 1973), p.50.

responsible for anything, to blame for anything, and out of an inner self-contempt wants to be able to *shift off* his responsibility for himself somewhere else':

> This latter, when he writes books, tends today to espouse the cause of the criminal; his most pleasing disguise is a kind of socialist sympathy. And the fatalism of the weak-willed is indeed beautified to an astonishing degree when it can present itself as '*la religion de la souffrance humaine*'. (Nietzsche, *Beyond*, p.52)

Such an espousal marks out those who Nietzsche calls the 'levellers', men whose two 'most oft-recited doctrines and ditties are "equality of rights" and "sympathy for all that suffers"' (Nietzsche, *Beyond*, p.72). A doctrine shared by Christianity.[72]

But if we return to Foucault's argument we see that matters are not so clear-cut. Foucault maintains (and this has been an important strand of his case) that the development and generalization of disciplinary mechanisms represent the dark side of another process: the establishment of a juridical framework and a parliamentary regime by which the bourgeoisie became the politically dominant class in eighteenth-century Europe (the argument here is about the constitution of Constitution)[73]:

> The general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle was underpinned by these tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms, by all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical that constitute the disciplines. And if, in a

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[72] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, I, 246, p.202: 'All "souls" became *equal* before God: but this is the most pernicious of all valuations! [...] If the degenerate and sick man ("the Christian") is to be of the same value as the healthy man ("the pagan"), or if he is even to be valued higher than the latter, as Pascal's view of health and sickness would have us value him, the natural course of evolution is thwarted and the *unnatural* becomes law.'

[73] Likewise Bentham. A prime mover of disciplinary power but also and inseparably an indefatigable constitutionalist, eager to draw up a Code for the new republics of Spanish America. See Miriam Williford, *Jeremy Bentham on Spanish America: An Account of His Letters and Proposals to the New World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

> formal way, the representative régime makes it possible [...] for the will of all to form the fundamental authority of sovereignty, the disciplines provide, at the base, a guarantee of the submission of forces and bodies. The 'Enlightenment', which discovered liberties, also invented disciplines. (p.222; trans. mod.)

Although the expressions 'in principle' and 'in a formal way' suggest a scepticism *vis-à-vis* the actual functioning of the juridical form, Foucault nonetheless acknowledges that this representative régime can make it possible for a system of rights to be exercised. Not least by Foucault himself.[74] But also by North African immigrants in France, Tunisian students, Parisian students, Vietnamese boat people, all of whom Foucault threw his weight behind at one time or another.[75] It is fair to say that there is much truth in Terry Eagleton's claim that Foucault's near pathological aversion to the subject leads to a 'drastically undialectical attitude to Enlightenment' which 'eradicates at a stroke almost all of its vital civilizing achievements'.[76] I think at this point, though, one has to consider the historical and institutional moment of Foucault's work, notably the post-colonial situation and the consequent jarring on the ear produced by universalizing discourses; consider the possibility, too,

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[74] Even in death. James Bernauer makes this point (somewhat despite himself) with reference to the unpublished fourth volume on sexuality. 'Respecting Foucault's own wishes, this unfinished volume will never appear'. *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight*, pp.159-160. See Eribon (pp.346-347) for an example of how even these rights must pass through a machinery of interests, how Foucault's stated wish that there be *pas de publication posthume* is now being debated by friends, family and publishing houses alike.

[75] Eribon (p.296.) quotes a text delivered by Foucault in Geneva in 1981 on behalf of the boat people: 'There is an international citizenship which has its rights, which has its duties and which commits itself to rising up against all abuses of power, whoever the author, whoever the victims. After all, we are all governed, and as such united.'

[76] *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.389. Michael Walzer observes that Foucault cannot explain how or why our own society stops short of the Gulag because that would require some positive evaluation of the liberal state. 'The Politics of Michel Foucault'. My guess is that the Foucault of the mid-1970s would have said: because technically, economically, militarily, socially it had no need. Which need not be pure cynicism, but which is certainly sceptical about pure we-have-crossed-the-Rubicon liberalism.

that his overstated opposition is really aimed at a puffed-up post-Enlightenment version of the Enlightenment.[77] Foucault makes it clear that the disciplinary techniques were the underbelly of the juridical form and that this latter does not stand in a relation of antithesis to them. *Discipline and Punish*, like *Histoire de la folie*, is a condemnatory critique of those who do not see how closely bound to inequality is the social process they regard as fundamentally progressive, how closely bound to power are the workings of rationality.[78] This is why I do not see it as particularly 'ironic' that Foucault, as Eagleton says, began to discover late in his life that 'the Enlightenment was not so unreservedly monstrous after all' (Eagleton, *The Ideology*, p.389). Foucault would probably see their efforts as much more authentic than those of a later age which justifies its endeavours positivistically according to criteria established at the cost of much blood and toil by a former age.

The character of Foucault's work as primarily critical of the insouciant collusion involved in the production of inequality, rather than as affirmative of equality, thus makes it difficult to classify him as a 'leveller' or 'Tarantula', one of those 'preachers of *equality* [...] and dealers in hidden revengefulness'

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[77] In other contexts he was quite happy to make Enlightenment claims for the necessity of truth, justice, the role of the intellectual, etc. See Eribon (p.245) for Foucault's participation in the *comité Vérité-Justice* against police action in crushing the prison revolts of late 1971. According to A.D. Nuttall, Nietzsche himself, in his account of ethics in the *Genealogy*, propounds a myth of decline into Christianity which is actually an Enlightenment myth and as such his practice is as much an outgrowth from Enlightenment historiography as it is a subversion of it. 'The Game of Death', p.14.

[78] In this, Foucault echoes Nietzsche and Freud, while not exempting Freud from the same charge. Cf. Nietzsche, *Human*, I, 299, p.268: on advisers of the sick; cf. Freud on the doctor's feelings of unease in the face of hysterics (since they transgress the laws of his science). Sigmund Freud, 'First Lecture', *Two Short Accounts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Penguin Books, 1962; repr. 1991), p.34; Cf. *Histoire de la folie* (p.529) for Foucault's criticism of Freud.

in whom the urge to punish is strong (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke*, pp.123-124).

Such an urge strikes me as particularly unFoucaultian. The Foucault of

Discipline and Punish is not one of those who 'raise outcry against everything

that has power' (p.123); his work raises outcry against knowledge and

institutions that deny their power-effects. Thus, when Zarathustra affirms

men's inequality as a precondition of life itself:

> Life wants to raise itself on high with pillars and steps; it wants to gaze into the far distance and out upon joyful splendour – *that* is why it needs height!
> And because it needs height, it needs steps and conflict between steps and those who climb them! Life wants to climb and in climbing overcome itself...
> That there is battle and inequality and war for power and predominance even in beauty: he teaches us that here in the clearest parable. (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke*, p.125)

I would hold back from suggesting that Foucault shared this affirmative vision

of life but would maintain nevertheless that he posits power, certainly with less

joy than Nietzsche, as a fundamental force simultaneously productive of yet

premised on inequality.

Nietzsche, though, is much less sceptical and ambivalent than Foucault

on the question of law, because for him it is not the triumph of an insincere

equality-speak; it represents the fruit of power and will. (Nietzsche avoids

valorizing the will in a simple fashion. It is not a question of opposing the

bad unfree will term by term to a wholly positive will.)[79] Before Foucault,

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[79] 'In all willing there is [...] a plurality of sensations [...]. A man who *wills* – commands something in himself which obeys or which he believes obeys. But [...] inasmuch as in the given circumstances we at the same time command *and* obey, and as the side which obeys know the sensations of constraint, compulsion, pressure, resistance, motion which usually begin immediately after the act of will; inasmuch as, on the other hand, we are in the habit of disregarding and deceiving ourselves over this duality by means of the synthetic concept "I"; so a whole chain of erroneous conclusions and consequently of false evaluations of the will itself has become attached to the will as such – so that he who wills believes wholeheartedly that willing *suffices* for action. Because in the great majority of cases willing takes place only where the effect of the command, that is to say obedience, that is to say the action, was to be *expected*, the *appearance* has translated itself into the sensation, as if there were here a

Nietzsche had already argued that throughout the longest period of history punishment was based on a primitive economics according to which every injury has its equivalent price or quantity of pain, an idea which originates in the contractual relationship between creditor and ower. In the development of penal law, the social organization itself comes to stand to its members in the relationship of creditor to owers. Because *it* decides what is just and what is unjust, and because *it* treats violations of the law as a revolt against itself, it gradually trains people – though not without first waging war against the reactive feelings – to an increasingly impersonal valuation of the deed, so that they declare not only 'I have been injured' but 'That is unjust. It is against the law'.

I suspect that even these sentiments on a subject, the law, not especially close to Foucault's heart would not meet with his disapprobation. Nietzsche speculates on the *foundation* of law; Foucault's *bête noire* is the post-Enlightenment faith in the rationality of the *workings* of law. The following words from Nietzsche take us perhaps even closer to Foucault:

> conditions of legality can be only *exceptional conditions*, in that they are partial restrictions of the real life-will, which makes for power, and in that they are subordinated to the life-will's general end as particular means, that is, as means to create *larger* units of strength. ('"Guilt"', p.88)

Naturally, Foucault does not celebrate the life-will, which makes for power,

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necessity of effect. Enough: he who wills believes with a tolerable degree of certainty that will and action are somehow one – he attributes the success, the carrying out of the willing, to the will itself, and thereby enjoys an increase of that sensation of power which all success brings with it. [...] He who wills adds in this way the sensation of pleasure of the successful executive agents, the serviceable "under-wills" or under-souls – for our body is only a social structure composed of many souls – to his sensations of pleasure as commander. *L'effet, c'est moi*: what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth: the ruling class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth. In all willing it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as I have said already, of a social structure composed of many "souls"'. Nietzsche, *Beyond*, 19, pp.48-49.

but he nonetheless appears to see it spreading relentlessly throughout the social fabric in a Weberian vision of the unstoppable rationalization of society.[80] If Foucault charts the rise of that life-will, which he calls the carceral, it is with a sense of mourning: power for Foucault is productive, yes, but productive of a deleterious, near-inescapable subjection.[81] Foucault does not want Nietzsche to be right, but fears he is, when the latter declares:

> A legal organisation, conceived of [...] not as a weapon in a fight of complexes of power, but as a weapon *against* fighting [...] would be a principle *hostile to life*, a destroyer and dissolver of man, an outrage on the future of man, a symptom of fatigue, a secret cut to Nothingness. (p.88)

Thus, Foucault's relationship to Nietzsche is highly ambivalent. And, to address a Nietzschean question, the morality aimed at by the Foucault of *Discipline and Punish* is similarly difficult to decipher. Not a slave morality, but not one celebrating the will to power either; a critical morality perhaps, but one which cannot see its way to an overcoming. Foucault has been labelled a nihilist by some critics, though taken in a Nietzschean sense that need not be a criticism. Deleuze finds two meanings of nihilism in Nietzsche. First, there is the nihilism which depreciates life, assigning it a value of nil and opposing it to the idea of another, supra-sensible world bearing superior values. Second, there is the nihilism in which that supra-sensible world and its higher values are themselves reacted against and denied. After all, as Nietzsche says:

> have ye sufficiently asked yourselves how dear a payment has the setting up of *every* ideal in the world exacted? To achieve that consummation how much truth must always be traduced and misunderstood, how many lies must

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[80] See also Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p.372.

[81] Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* (p.181) on the 'iron cage' image.

> be sanctified, how much conscience has got to be disturbed, how many pounds of 'God' have got to be sacrificed every time? ("Guilt"', pp.115-116)

One could thus view *Discipline and Punish* as nihilism of the second kind. An atopic project which concentrates its attack on existing values and institutions rather than speculating on the creation of new ones.[82] In a similar vein, John Rajchman argues for the importance in Foucault of de-anthropologization, or the thesis that 'we are free not in having a nature (place in tradition, etc.) but in being able to reject and transform what is presented to us *as* our nature'.[83]

Arguably, though, the major difference between the two thinkers – and an important respect in which Foucault is tellingly, fatally, unNietzschean – lies in their respective relationship to Apollo. Nietzsche celebrates Dionysus but acknowledges the importance of Apollo and, as far as possible, straddles the two. Foucault advocates Dionysus, condemns Apollo but is an Apollonian child. Doubtless this has to do with personal ethos: Nietzsche's aristocratic frankness; Foucault's bourgeois concern to *épater le bourgeois* sitting alongside his wish to be loved by the majority. But it also has to do with their respective times and the eighty years which separate them. Years which have witnessed the growth of libertarianism and individualism, the challenge to European hegemony and the emergence of a European bad conscience. Years

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[82] 'Under no circumstances should one pay attention to those who tell you: "Don't criticise, since you're not capable of carrying out a reform." That's ministerial cabinet talk. Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in a programming. It is a challenge directed to what is.' Foucault, 'Questions of Method', p.13.

[83] *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.74, n.9.

which have made the words 'discipline' and 'morality' both too easy and too

hard to say. Thus, when Nietzsche writes that 'every morality is, as opposed

to *laisser aller*, a piece of tyranny against "nature"' (*Beyond*, p.110), the

proximity of Nietzsche and Foucault is striking. However, a difference begins

to make itself felt when Nietzsche qualifies the phrase: 'but that can be no

objection to it unless one is in possession of some other morality which

decrees that any kind of tyranny and unreason is impermissible'. The

ambivalence of Foucault's position is here anticipated by Nietzsche. What

drives much of Foucault's work is precisely the belief that 'any kind of

tyranny and unreason is impermissible'. Yet he would still not object to the

first statement. And this not because he remains sceptical about the possibility

of being in possession of some other morality. But, rather, because he is

sceptical about the desire to want to possess any morality at all, where the

latter, to be learnable and transferable, would harden into decrees, dictates and

directives.[84] The gap widens when Nietzsche writes, turning towards Apollo,

that 'the essential and invaluable element in every morality is that it is a

protracted constraint':

> the strange fact is that all there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety,
> boldness, dance and masterly certainty, whether in thinking itself, or in
> ruling, or in speaking and persuasion, in the arts as in morals, has evolved
> only by virtue of the 'tyranny of such arbitrary laws'; and, in all seriousness,
> there is no small probability that precisely this is 'nature' and 'natural' – and
> *not* that *laisser aller*! [...] Protracted unfreedom of spirit, mistrustful
> constraint in the communicability of ideas, the discipline thinkers imposed

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[84] Terry Eagleton opines that for Foucault what is objectionable is regime as such. Therein
a sophisticated relativism absolving one from the need to make explicit the values in the name
of which one's critique is deployed. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p.385ff. Peter Dews makes
the same point: if norms are bad, one cannot claim any greater truth or normative superiority
for one's own position. 'Foucault and the Frankfurt School' in *Ideas from France: The Legacy
of French Theory: ICA Documents*, ed. by Lisa Appignanesi (London: Free Association Books,
1989), pp.71-78 (p.75). *The History of Sexuality* goes some way to answering these charges.

on themselves to think within an ecclesiastical or courtly rule or under
Aristotelian presuppositions, the protracted spiritual will to interpret all
events according to a Christian scheme and to rediscover and justify the
Christian God in every chance occurrence – all these violent, arbitrary,
severe, gruesome and antirational things have shown themselves to be the
means by which the European spirit was disciplined in its strength, ruthless
curiosity and subtle flexibility: though admittedly an irreplaceable quantity
of force and spirit had at the same time to be suppressed, stifled and spoiled
(for here as everywhere 'nature' shows itself as it is, in all its prodigal and
indifferent magnificence, which is noble though it outrage our feelings). [...]
Regard any morality from this point of view: it is 'nature' in it which
teaches hatred of *laisser aller*, of too great freedom, and which implants the
need for limited horizons and immediate tasks – which teaches the
narrowing of perspective, and thus in a certain sense stupidity, as a condition
of life and growth. (Nietzsche, *Beyond*, pp.110-112)

The character and value of discipline in Nietzsche is entirely

overlooked by Foucault. Of course, it is fair to say that this passage certainly

does not take criminals as its paradigm case, in fact its exempla refer to

thinkers, artists, theologians. Furthermore, even when Nietzsche addresses

more directly the question of the body and a certain labour on it, one would

have to concede that this body is hardly that of a wretched inmate. He asks

how men attain to great power and to great tasks, and answers:

All the virtues and proficiencies of the body and the soul are little by little
laboriously acquired, through great industry, self-control, and keeping oneself
within narrow bounds, through a frequent, energetic, and genuine repetition
of the same work and of the same hardships. (Nietzsche, *The Will*, ii, 995,
p.385; the Fourth Book is called 'Discipline and Breeding')[85]

This is a logic which, above and beyond the question of the precise nature of

the individual produced, seems called for by Foucault's position – his

insistence that there is no outside the disciplinary, yet recognition of an

executive class able to profit from the increased power of the submissive

bodies of others; recognition, in other words, that discipline has brought

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[85] See *Histoire de la folie* for the eighteenth-century belief that madness could result from
the absence of constraint (p.385) and Tuke's conviction that religion was *the* form of constraint
best able to counterbalance insanity (p.502).

mastery to some. Marcel Mauss sees training as fine-tuning the body's own 'craft' and technical 'cleverness' for its own benefit, but does not shy away from stating that one of the reasons why what he calls 'physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions' may more easily be assembled where the individual is concerned 'is precisely because they are assembled by and for social authority'. However, whereas Foucault's vision is of a malevolent, all-embracing technology akin to the deterministic hand of God, Mauss does not rail against that authority; on the contrary, he points to the need for a 'determinate efficiency' as one of the 'fundamental moments of history itself'.[86] For his part, Foucault fights shy of this logic and when this great systematizer does admit it – in the later texts – its implications are offset by a massive shift of emphasis away from disciplining others to a less authoritarian-sounding fashioning of the self, for so long banished from the philosophical armoury.

In our own day the word 'discipline' raises hackles, largely by virtue of the negative semantic weight which attaches to it. It is perhaps this same weight that truly disarms us in advance with respect to Nietzsche. Foucault asks the Durkheimian question: 'How can society hold individuals together?' but sees in it only cynicism ('On Attica', p.156). This means his inquiries court the libertarian in us at the expense of posing the more complex (and doubtless unattractive) question of whether there could be *any* society without

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[86] Marcel Mauss, 'Body Techniques', in *Sociology and Psychology. Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

constraint.[87] Not to ask this question is to risk the naivety of an expression, which he takes from *Les Miserables*, such as crime is a '*coup d'état* from below' ('On Attica', p.161). On occasion the necessity of this question is not only intuited but experienced.[88]

Derrida comes closer than Foucault to this problematic of Nietzschean discipline in his analysis of Nietzsche's 'On the Future of Our Educational Institutions' (1872).[89] There, Nietzsche stresses the need for Germany's youth to eschew a democratic and equalizing education and reject a journalistic, vulgar German, in favour of constraint and linguistic discipline under the direction of a guide, a leader or *Führer*. Only on this condition can the German spirit be saved from its enemies. The Hitlerian resonances are obvious, Derrida says, but when Nietzsche's lecture recommends linguistic discipline as a counter to 'academic freedom', it is not in order to set constraint over against freedom. 'Behind "academic freedom" one can discern the silhouette of a constraint which is all the more ferocious and implacable because it conceals and disguises itself in the form of laisser-faire' (Derrida, *The Ear*, p.33). Through 'academic freedom' it is the State that controls everything. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Derrida adds, Nietzsche speaks of the State as a hypocritical hound. Derrida continues:

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[87] The Marquis de Sade was in no doubt about the alternative to society: 'Nature averse to crime, I tell you that nature lives and breathes by it, hungers at all her pores for bloodshed, yearns with all her heart for the furtherance of cruelty' (cited in Clark, p.192).

[88] See Eribon (p.221) on Foucault's disaffectation with the Vincennes students' permanent disruption of classes (his included).

[89] 'Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name', trans. by Avital Ronell in Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, ed. by Christie V. McDonald (New York: Schocken Books, 1985).

> The hypocritical hound whispers in your ear through his educational systems, which are actually acoustic or acroamatic devices. Your ears grow larger and you turn into long-eared asses when, instead of listening with small, finely tuned ears and obeying the best master and the best of leaders, you think you are free and autonomous with respect to the State. You open wide the portals [*pavillons*] of your ears to admit the State, not knowing that it has already come under the control of reactive and degenerate forces. Having become all ears for this phonograph dog, you transform yourself into a high-fidelity receiver, and the ear – your ear which is also the ear of the other – begins to occupy in your body the disproportionate place of the 'inverted cripple.' (Derrida, *The Ear*, pp.34-35)

We should be wary of the Apollonian clinicalness with which Foucault's work launders, folds and neatly parcels up ethics and moralities. The 'roughness' and 'mountain peasantness' he praises in Nietzsche do not characterize his own thinking.[90]

The laundering manoeuvre by which *Discipline and Punish* is less rigorous than Nietzschean logic consists in a neat distribution of human entities according to the respective systems: the juridical systems define juridical subjects, the disciplines disciplinary individuals. What could be read as a process of doubling, the fabrication of a two-in-one figure, emerges in the penal justice system as a neat separation: 'What is now imposed on penal justice as its point of application, its "useful" object, will no longer be [...] the juridical subject of an ideal contract; it will be the disciplinary individual' (p.227). One wonders if such a separation is not ultimately the result, on Foucault's part, of an immense act of freewill traditionally defined. Nietzsche writes:

> Our ordinary inaccurate observation takes a group of phenomena as one and calls them a fact. Between this fact and another we imagine a vacuum, we

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[90] Michel Foucault, 'On Literature', in *Foucault Live*, pp.113-119 (p.118); originally in *Le Monde sans visa*, 6 September 1986. Camille Paglia, to whom I shall return in Chapters five and six, is scornful of the comparison between Foucault and Nietzsche (*Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays*, p.187).

isolate each fact. In reality, however, the sum of our actions and cognitions is no series of facts and intervening vacua, but a continuous stream. Now the belief in free will is incompatible with the idea of a continuous, uniform, undivided, indivisible flow. This belief presupposes that every single action is isolated and indivisible; it is an atomic theory as regards volition and cognition [...]. We are still constantly led astray by words and actions, and are induced to think of things as simpler than they are, as separate, indivisible, existing in the absolute. Language contains a hidden philosophical mythology, which, however careful we may be, breaks out afresh at every moment. (Nietzsche, *The Wanderer*, 11, pp.191-192)

Is there a powerful modern Apollonian-Cartesianism in *Discipline and Punish* with its mastery of flux? Modern, because Foucault does not believe he is simply giving on to 'facts'; but, rather, on to a particular formation of power-knowledge. Apollonian-Cartesianism because, despite the complexity of the processes which have given birth to the disciplinary régime, its result can be apprehended clearly and distinctly: docility + utility = subjection. Powerful, because the analysis and ordering of the material, the systematicity of its organization, is awesome. In the play between system and nuance, the grand sweep and the detail, Foucault would be both Greek and modern.[91] Megill warns against thinking that Foucault's texts constitute a system or method, a notion he considers anathema to Foucault (Megill, *Prophets*, p.255). But Polan is closer to the spirit of *Discipline and Punish* when she remarks that Foucaultian discourse can readily turn tensions in the system into 'a new systematicity, a coalesced overdetermination' (Polan, p.368).

Nietzsche also speaks of philosophers' lack of historical sense, their

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[91] 'A sense for, and a delight in, nuances (which is characteristic of modernity), in that which is not general, runs counter to the instinct which finds its joy and its strength in grasping what is typical: like Greek taste in its best period. In this [...] the general rule, the law, is honoured and made prominent: conversely, the exception is laid aside, and shades are suppressed. All that which is firm, mighty, solid, life resting on a broad and powerful basis, concealing its strength – this "pleases"; i.e. it corresponds with what we think of ourselves.' Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, II, 819, p.262.

hatred of the idea of becoming, their 'Egyptianism':

> They think they are doing a thing *honour* when they dehistoricize it, *sub specie aeterni* – when they make a mummy of it. All that philosophers have handled for millennia has been conceptual mummies; nothing actual has escaped from their hands alive. (Nietzsche, *Twilight*, p.45)

Because they cannot get hold of what is, they hit upon the idea that it must be their senses that are deceiving them. Thus they declare: '"And away, above all, with the *body*, that pitiable *idée fixe* of the senses! infected with every error of logic there is, refuted, impossible even, notwithstanding it is impudent enough to behave as if it actually existed!' (Nietzsche, *Twilight*, p.45). It would appear that in its teaching of becoming (what else is genealogy if not the study of becoming?), which Nietzsche says is a hundred times more difficult than the teaching of Being, *Discipline and Punish* risks presenting us with a new *idéé fixe*: the body as a thoroughly constituted, logical volume subject to perfect control (power) and analysis (knowledge).[92] In Chapter four I shall show how the pressing task for Foucault becomes precisely that of thinking becoming.

But to conclude this assessment of Foucault's genealogical practice, we might say that if *Discipline and Punish* represents a remarkable literalization of the guiding metaphor of modern social constructionism, it is nevertheless marked by a pronounced classicism, which means that in certain important respects Foucault's genealogy falls short of the complexity of Nietzsche's transvaluation of all values. Nietzsche showed that concepts like 'good' and

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[92] 'The teaching of Being, of things [...] is a *hundred times more easy* than the teaching of *Becoming* and of evolution [...]. Logic was intended to be a method of *facilitating* thought: a *means of expression* [...]. Later on it got to *act* like truth'. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, II, 538, p.50.

'truth' are not pure, unsullied, Olympian ideals constitutively cut off from the base and the lowly; but that their historical emergence and the positive values which attach to them are caught up in and contaminated by a mean little world of intrigue, self-interest and power. Foucault appropriates this insight to tell a story of great verve and panache concerning the emergence of the European human sciences. But when he takes the idea and the practice of discipline, showing its relentless and unerring dressage of the body, both discipline and the body are evaluated in a revealingly unambivalent manner. Contemporary events patently weigh heavily here – the struggle for the reform of an outdated, repressive prison régime still operative in 1970s France, the continuing political and social fall-out from the events of May '68 – and a more extensive consideration of the historical moment of the book's composition than has been possible here would doubtless lead to a less critical conclusion. My limited purpose, by contrast, has been to examine with due wariness the call to Nietzsche, to suggest the non-simplicity of an expression like 'I am simply Nietzschean',[93] and to urge the necessity of thinking the truth and propriety of a title such as 'Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze want to return to Nietzsche his true face'.[94]

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[93] 'The Return of Morality', in Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, p.251.

[94] 'Michel Foucault et Gilles Deleuze veulent rendre à Nietzsche son vrai visage', in *Dits et écrits*, I, pp.549-552 (first publ. in *Le Figaro littéraire*, 15 September 1966, p.7). I shall develop these criticisms further in Chapter five.

CHAPTER 3

DERANGED VERSES: SUBJECT-POSITIONS AND THE THEORY OF THE ÉNONCÉ

Introduction

This chapter deals with Foucault's theory of discourse as act or event

and with his attempts to theorize the constitution of the subject in discourse.

Both of these aspects are themselves underpinned by Foucault's theory of the

énoncé, the exploration of which will be of capital importance here, firstly in

what concerns the question of subject-positions, secondly in what relates to the

determination of them by the *énoncé* and the 'field'. The outline of Foucault's

theory of discourse is followed principally in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,

though I draw on all his writings of the same period. The burden of my

argument may be summarized thus: that his largely Benvenistean

understanding of the relationship between the subject and discourse is wrought

with tensions: in short, the difficulty of maintaining a formalist theory of

subject-positions alongside a broadly contextualist desire to speak about real

individuals in real institutions. I claim that in the tension between the two

there would be, there wants to be, less a slippage, or *décalage*, than a *calage*,

a 'wedging, chocking, keying, locking', and that this *calage* is a vital

manoeuvre for the emergence of an intellectual practice which construes the analysis of subject-positions as a site of important political work (the value of which, I argue, is limited).

The skeleton of the chapter, upon which the above issues are fleshed out, is provided by the critical exchange between Foucault and Jacques Derrida arising from Foucault's remarks on Descartes in *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. The exchange straddles Foucault's so-called archaeological and genealogical periods, and by itself refutes those who would see a clear break between the two. It also displays, with its rapier-sharp feints and passes, some of the moves and strategies, assumptions and aporia involved in constructing subject and propositional positions in discourse. There are two further reasons for choosing this exchange. Firstly, because I think it demonstrates a certain trade-off in Foucault between a post-Saussurean view of language which is anathema to him and a post-Saussurean view of the subject which he would like to make his own but which he is forced to repudiate in practice. Secondly, because it raises questions concerning the relationship between the sign and reality, between forms of knowledge and the social world, questions which will increasingly concern me throughout the remainder of the thesis.

Foucault and Derrida on Descartes and madness

Without further ado, let us follow the dispute over Descartes. In the course of his reply to Derrida, which we shall examine shortly, Foucault affirms: 'Any discourse, whatever it be, is constituted by a set of utterances [*énoncés*] which are produced each in its place and time, as so many discursive

events'.[1] According to Foucault in *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Descartes' theory of the Cogito is bound all too apparently to a particular set of utterances in that it, too, perpetrates an exclusion of madness typical of the time. How is this so? Foucault argues that during the European Middle Ages and Renaissance, the insane were allowed to circulate with relatively few constraints. They were viewed as harbouring hidden truths about the human condition and consequently not regarded as being outside or beyond humankind. During the Classical age, however, the insane come to be considered manifestations of a great Unreason categorically divided from a properly human Reason. As such, they must be exiled from the social order or leastwise exiled by a process of internment within. The Internment institutions which sprang up across Europe around the middle of the seventeenth century were thus not simply medical institutions but juridical ones too, tied to the bourgeois and monarchic power of the day. In a Europe experiencing economic crisis, the mad, as the embodiment of poverty, indigence and potential mayhem, are apprehended as the representatives incarnate of the great disorder which threatens to engulf man from the outside if ever his vigilance should slip. As we saw briefly in Chapter one, Foucault's contention is that the gesture of segregation itself constitutes alienation, itself produces the figure of the *asocial*. An unreason which had hitherto wandered through the social and imaginary landscape of the Middle Ages and

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[1] 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire', trans. by Geoff Bennington, *The Oxford Literary Review*, 4:1 (Autumn 1979), 9-28; 'Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu', an appendix to Foucault, *Histoire de la folie* (first publ. in *Paideia* (September 1971)). The piece does not appear until 1971, many years after Derrida's critique and in the midst of the so-called genealogical phase. The same issue of the above journal contains a very helpful exposé of the Foucault/Derrida debate by Bennington: 'Cogito Incognito: Foucault's "My Body, This Paper, This Fire"', 5-8.

Renaissance, always experienced in a sense in advance of the actual presence of the madman, against a backdrop of bestiaries and representations of the Apocalypse, is now isolated from that landscape and consequently localized, shorn of ambiguity, in its concrete presence. Unreason becomes a simply human fact, isolatable in certain human figures, a discrete object of perception, an improper quasi-objectivity in a real social world. For Foucault, Descartes himself, in his *Méditations*, excludes madness as a founding move of the Cogito. If man can always be mad, the logic goes, thought itself, as the exercise of the sovereignty of a subject, can, on the contrary, never be insane.

In order to make sense of Derrida's rejoinder, we first need to follow the continuation of Foucault's thesis and particularly his remarks on the modern objectification of madness.

Internment, Foucault argues, was primarily a complex juridical rather than medical affair. The juridical apparatus construes the mad in two ways: it maintains a juridical theory of madness based on the person as a subject of law and practises a social internment of the mad by positing them simply as social beings. As a subject of law, the madman is exempted from his responsibilities, insofar as he is alienated from his senses; as a social being, madness implicates him in a field of culpability.[2] Foucault's point is that one also sees the emergence of two forms of medicine at this time: one dealing with the capacities of the subject of law (which later mutates into psychology); the other with the behaviour of social man (and thus paving the way for a

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[2] Pierre Rivière's barrister defends him precisely on the grounds of the former. *Moi, Pierre Rivière*, p.175.

dualist pathology, in terms of normal/abnormal, etc.). The thrust of his argument is to claim that nineteenth-century positivist medicine inherits the Enlightenment's belief that these two aspects form an essential unity of man, taking it as read that the alienation of the subject of law can and should coincide with the madness of the social man. Nineteenth-century psychopathology's *homo natura* is thus, for Foucault, a creation which should be situated in a social (juridical, medical) rather than natural space.

This second creation stems from a second *partage*, which supervenes in the middle of the eighteenth century when Europe sees the foundation of a series of houses reserved for the insane, the purpose of which (and it is largely economic) is to avoid contaminating those non-mad internees with the madness of those most incapable of being harnessed to productive life.[3] But the final step in the birth of the asylum is only taken once the negative gesture of exclusion becomes at the same time an opening onto the positive world of cure. By a trick of the (En)light(enment), what was social reform of internment becomes fidelity to the deepest truths of madness; 'and the *manner in which one alienates the madman* is forgotten only to reappear as *the nature of alienation*' (p.458).[4] In other words, the insane are presented to knowledge only in the neutralized form of an 'offered objectivity' (*objectivité offerte*), in which each madman appears only insofar as he has been passed through the abstraction of madness. An objectified madness is thereby stripped of its

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[3] The creation of the asylum also neatly satisfies the Christian duty to offer public assistance to the wretched at the same time as it quells the fears aroused by the presence of the insane.

[4] All translations of *Histoire de la folie* are my own.

deepest powers and mastered more effectively than its anterior enslavement to unreason.

Yet madness also penetrates daily life in ways uncontrolled by the asylum, and in this public domain it constitutes a scandal. Foucault maintains that a body of knowledge like psychology is born when a sort of public consciousness, in effect that of the bourgeois individual, is invoked as universal instance of reason and morality in order to judge men. He thus describes the new psychiatry as a double movement of liberation and enslavement. Yes, psychiatric positivism is linked to a promotion of knowledge, but more originarily it is concerned to define a mode of being outside madness (*être hors folie*), a practice Foucault regards as a 'thingification' (*chosification*) owing far more to sorcery and to psychiatry's status as an arm of bourgeois power than to any scientific prowess.

So much for the argument of *Histoire de la folie* (or *Folie et déraison* as it was called when Derrida locked horns with Foucault). Let us follow Derrida's reply, before turning to Foucault's rejoinder. Derrida's case can be artificially separated into two points.[5] First, he argues that if Foucault holds that the language of psychiatry could be established only on the basis of a silence brought about by the stifling of madness, would not Foucault's 'archaeology' of that silence, by definition itself a logic, 'an organized language, a project, an order, a sentence, a syntax, a "work"' (p.35), thus be

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[5] Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', in *Writing and Difference*, pp.31-63. The original lecture was given in Foucault's presence. Derrida has a much later lecture on the same book, '"Etre juste avec Freud". L'histoire de la folie à l'âge de la psychanalyse', in *Penser la folie. Essais sur Michel Foucault*, Collection Débats, directed by Michel Delorme (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1992), pp.139-195, which I shall allude to in Chapter five.

the subtlest repetition of the act perpetrated against madness? The psychiatrist, Derrida says, is but one delegate among the immense delegation that is Western reason and by fustigating psychiatry one does not end all complicity with that order. Moreover, the Classical division between the Cogito and unreason cannot have been the first such decision, since all thought is premised on a less than comforting dissension (Derrida's preferred word) within reason. Derrida remarks that Foucault was himself aware of this difficulty of speaking against reason, and that there is another discourse in Foucault's book in which the silence of madness is not said, but is metaphorically made present by its pathos. But even here, Foucault cannot exculpate his effort, as Derrida's play on *éloge* and *logos* confirms: 'A new and radical praise of folly whose intentions cannot be admitted because the *praise* [*éloge*] of silence always takes place within *logos*, the language of objectification' (p.37).[6]

Yet, and this brings us to the second point, did Descartes at all simply seek to exclude madness? In fact, Derrida argues, contrary to Foucault's contention that Descartes' process of reasoning can tolerate dreams and sensory error but not (the totally unreasonable) madness, Descartes posits madness as but one case of sensory illusion before making the radical break with *all* the senses by moving up to another, higher order of reasoning – the intelligible. As we shall see shortly, it is this moment in Derrida's rereading

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[6] Colin Gordon deflects this criticism by referring back to the suppressed preface in which Foucault acknowledges that the perception seeking to seize the sufferings of the insane 'necessarily belongs to a world which has already captured them'. '*Histoire de la folie*: An Unknown Book by Michel Foucault', *History of the Human Sciences*, 3:1 (February 1990), 3-26 (p.19). But Derrida's point is that this and other such remarks are what makes Foucault's book contradictory, divided within itself, since it continues to pursue madness itself despite glimpsing the problems of doing so.

of Descartes that Foucault will lock on to in 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire'.

In any event, Derrida argues that Descartes' apparent dismissal of the insane

is actually a feigned objection on the part of a non-philosopher who proclaims

that to doubt the senses in this manner would be to make us all mad.

Descartes, Derrida says, echoes this objection, only then to unsettle his

interlocutor more radically with the example of sleep and dream. This

hyperbolical example is more common than madness and also more total (since

the mad are not always wrong in everything), and will ruin all foundations of

sensory knowledge. In any case, Descartes is not concerned with determining

the truth of madness, he does not speak of 'madness itself'; his interest lies in

using the popular notion of insanity

> in order to ask questions of principle regarding only the *truth* of ideas.[--]
> What must be grasped here is that *from this point of view* the sleeper, or the
> dreamer, is madder than the madman. Or, at least, the dreamer [...] is
> further from true perception than the madman. (p.51)

At this juncture let us turn to Foucault's reply. It bears greatly on the

word 'truth' and the phrase 'from this point of view'. The germ of his

argument is that Derrida has misconstrued the discursive differences in

Descartes' text which ensure that it metes out varying treatments to dream and

to madness. Madness tends to be confronted as the completely other,

something external which cannot be experienced, merely stated. Dream, on the

contrary, is framed as a quotidian activity which can be experienced without

much difficulty. Foucault then points to a telling lexical shift in Descartes'

passage on the mad. When it is a matter of characterizing the mad according

to their wayward imagination, Descartes uses *insani*, a word of quotidian as

much as medical usage. However, when he states that he should not follow

the insane's example ('But just a moment: these are madmen [*sed amentes sunt isti*], and I should be no less extravagant [*demens*] if I were to follow their examples'), Descartes employs terms (*amentes* and *demens*) which, Foucault says, are primarily juridical ones designating those incapable of certain religious, civil and judicial acts. In brief, *insanus* is a characterizing term; *amens* and *demens*, disqualifying ones. Thus, for Foucault, the passage does not, as Derrida maintains, concern the truth of ideas but, rather, the way in which the subject is qualified.

Foucault's second main point is that Derrida has misread the fundamental discursive differences which marks out Descartes' work as a demonstrative meditation, one comprising an ensemble of discursive events which modify the subject as they unfold (freeing it from its convictions, inducing new doubts, etc.), only for these modifications of the subject in turn to permit new ensembles of utterances.[7] Thus the example of madness must be excluded for Descartes, since it allows the constitution of a doubting subject but disqualifies him from being a reasoning subject.[8] Dream, on the contrary, allows the proper constitution of the subject as at once doubting and as continuing a valid meditation. Derrida's play of voices is therefore, for Foucault, a means of continuing the exclusion of madness while attributing it to an outside, non-philosophical objector and thus preserving the reputation of philosophy.

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[7] The same idea is applied to the confession in *The History of Sexuality*, p.62.

[8] There remains an insoluble difficulty of translation here regarding the verb *constituer*. The common forms it takes, *se constitue* or *s'est constitué*, are at once passive and reflexive, 'is constituted' and 'constitutes itself'.

Now, Derrida had already conceded that the first stage of Descartes'
reasoning, in which madness is subsumed within the category of sensory error,
might well have neutralized the originality of madness. However, Derrida
says, there is a further, properly critical phase of doubt in Descartes. This
entails the hypothesis of the evil genius (*Malin Génie*) which will conjure up
the possibility of a total madness afflicting not only the body-object but the *res
cogitans* itself. Derrida cites Descartes:

> 'I shall consider that the heavens, the earth, colours, figures, sound, and all
> other external things are nought but the illusions and dreams of which this
> genius has availed himself in order to lay traps for my credulity; I shall
> consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any
> senses, yet falsely believing myself to possess all these things'. (p.53)

Thus, Derrida surmises, neither sensory nor intellectual knowledge will be
sheltered from this new phase of doubt, and everything previously set aside as
insanity is now welcomed into the inner sanctum of thought.

It would appear that Foucault delivers the *coup de grâce* precisely here.
He argues that Derrida's demonstration works by two series of semantic
derivations, in order that the evil genius and the Cogito may become better
instances of madness than madness itself. Thus the evil genius is described by
Derrida as 'total madness', 'total derangement', 'disorder of the body',
'extravagance'. And the Cogito, as 'mad audacity', 'mad project', 'disorder
and inordinate nature of hyperbole'. All of which represents Derrida striving
to erase from Descartes' text everything that shows that the episode of the evil
genius is a volontary exercise controlled in the last instance by the meditating
subject. The hypothesis of the evil genius may well carry the suspicion of
error beyond those sensory illusions exemplified in madmen, but the one who

forms this fiction of the evil genius escapes *ipso facto* the risk of believing such illusions. Descartes' quote speaks for itself: 'I shall consider myself as having no hands... yet falsely believing myself to possess all these things.' Hence, the meditating subject is a match for the evil genius and remains in the position of master in relation to his fiction. We are thus far from Derrida's line: 'total madness, total derangement which *I am unable to master*, since it is *inflicted* by hypothesis and *I am no longer responsible for it*'. The stakes are clear: first, philosophy is impure, traversed (as Derrida seems to acknowledge only to disallow), by juridical and medical freightage; second, philosophy excludes madness for the subject's benefit. In arguing this, Foucault frames the debate between Derrida and himself as the confrontation of a discursive analysis versus an immanent, narrowly textual reading. Foucault is not the only one to alight gleefully on Derrida's words concerning the need first of all for an 'internal and autonomous analysis of the philosophical content of philosophical discourse', and on the sentence that follows: 'Only when the totality of this content will have become manifest in its meaning for me (but this is impossible) will I rigorously be able to situate it in its total historical form' (p.44). In fact, I think this is a severe misreading by Foucault, by Edward Said and by John Frow, all of whom see it as proof of Derrida's neat drawing of boundaries around philosophy and the philosophical text. Said, to take just one commentator, speaks of the contrast between 'a criticism claiming that *il n'y a pas d'hors texte* and one discussing textuality as having to do with a plurality of texts, and with history, power, knowledge, and society'; Derrida missing the fact that a text is a series of

discursive events ruled by 'a set of constraints imposed on the author by the kind of text he is writing, by historical conditions, and so forth'.[9] All three critics of Derrida are over hasty, because they misunderstand his warning about claiming to situate the totality of content in its total historical form. They contribute the valuable insight regarding the impurity of knowledge, which remains important even if it has today become a commonplace. But they are all pushed from a general recognition that discourse makes available certain subject-positions to a form of madness which tries to 'determine' that discursive positioning. Foucault's theory of the *énoncé*, which subtends his position in respect of the Derrida debate, is an exemplary and admirable instance of this madness.

Foucault's theory of the *énoncé*

At this juncture, I should like to elucidate the logic which subtends Foucault's position. As we shall see, it forms part of a much larger project which straddles Foucaultian archaeology and genealogy. When Foucault says in his reply to Derrida: 'Any discourse, whatever it be, is constituted by a set of utterances which are produced each in its place and time, as so many discursive events', he restates a theme which is central to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. In that text, Foucault elaborates a theory of the *énoncé* which binds its production to a notion of the event.[10] *The Archaeology of*

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[9] 'The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions', *Critical Inquiry*, 4 (Summer 1978), 673-714 (pp.673, 703).

[10] The translation renders *énoncé* as 'statement'. Emile Benveniste, in his *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966), uses *énonciation* to designate the act of formulating speech and *énoncé* to designate what is uttered in the *énonciation*. The English

Knowledge does not yield up an easy understanding of the *énoncé* but with the aid of some of Foucault's examples we might be able to attempt a preliminary definition. He considers a typewriter keyboard. As it stands it is not an *énoncé*. However, the same series of letters A, Z, E, R, T, listed in a typing manual is the *énoncé* of the alphabetical order adopted by French machines. By the same token, a classificatory table of species, a genealogical tree, and an accounts book, all of which must be distinguished from a proposition, a speech act and a sentence, are all, for Foucault, instances of *énoncés*. The *énoncé*, then, which essentially has to do with rules, with allowing and with disqualifying, is 'indispensable if we want to say whether or not there is a sentence, proposition, or speech act' (*The Archaeology*, p.86). A specific ground rule, then, with a built-in principle of evaluation. We are reminded of Heidegger on the mode of an object's objectivity ('We are now not only not directed to the object of the assertion, but also not to the form of the assertion as such, but rather to how the object is the object of the assertion' [*What Is a Thing?*, p.178]). The precise goal of Foucault's archaeology is to ask how it is that one *énoncé* rather than another should appear at a particular time and place. It is therefore imperative for archaeology that an *énoncé* always betray the specific place from which it is articulated and the status it carries. As James Bernauer observes, Foucault is interested in the medical statement not as a vehicle for the communication of medical understanding, but rather *qua* 'signal as to the existing system of relationships (of knowledge, of institution,

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translation of Benveniste renders both terms as 'utterance'. I shall retain the French terms to avoid the ambiguity implied by both 'statement' and 'utterance'.

of society) in which such a statement is made'.[11]

It is not coincidental that in the most eloquent, most synthetic expression of his theory of discourse, *The Order of Discourse*, which nonetheless contains important differences, as we shall see later, Foucault uses the metaphor of policing. He states that in every society the production of discourse is controlled by procedures designed to ward off its powers. He indicates three principles of exclusion – the prohibition, the division between madness and reason, the will to truth – and claims that the last of these is gradually assimilating the other two. Bluntly put: 'One is "in the true" only by obeying the rules of a discursive "policing" which one has to reactivate in each of one's discourses'.[12] As a result, the speaking subject must satisfy certain requirements in order to enter the discourse. There is first the ritual dimension (the qualifications, gestures and behaviour which the subject must display); second, the membership of a society of discourse which protects the discourse in a closed field; third, the doctrinal dimension involving the subjection of speaking subjects to discourses and of discourses to a group of speaking individuals. Such procedures of discourse, Foucault says, are usually linked to one another, from the education system to *écriture*, from the judicial system to the medical institution. And, not to be forgotten, a certain number of themes in philosophy also correspond to such activities of limitation and

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[11] *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight*, p.106. Bernauer offers a good summary of *The Archaeology* in a book which is similarly punctilious throughout. There are many points with I would take serious issue (not least the word 'ethics') but the book stands as a generous and thorough commentary on Foucault's thought.

[12] Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse: Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France, Given 2 December 1970', trans. by Ian McLeod, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. by Robert Young (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul), pp.51-77 (p.61).

exclusion. We can allow the following to resonate in full:

> They correspond to them first of all by proposing an ideal truth as the law
> of discourse and an immanent rationality as the principle of their unfolding,
> and they re-introduce an ethic of knowledge, which promises to give the
> truth only to the desire for truth itself and only to the power of thinking it.
> Then they reinforce the limitations and exclusions by a denial of the specific
> reality of discourse in general. (p.65)

In short, and to restate the themes of the response to Derrida (which are already restated in this last quote), discourse must be conceived of as an event, something that takes place, an event over which the subject does not have control since in order to activate such a *énoncé* it has had to accept a position prescribed for it by the rules of formation.

These concerns bearing on the fundamental difference in the way in which the subject of discourse is described inform Foucault's reply to Derrida. One of the most important differences to note is that Derrida speaks of the text in traditional terms: 'Descartes says', 'Descartes successively judges inadmissible', 'Descartes imagines that he can always dream'. Descartes remains the speaking subject but at a certain moment 'throws' his voice in imitation of a naïve objector. Foucault, on the other hand, speaks of a 'meditating subject', a 'doubting subject', an 'enunciating subject', a 'philosophizing subject'. This vocabulary is strictly faithful to the semiotic vernacular according to which the subject of the enunciation, or the *énonciateur*, is to be distinguished from the real author. The subject of the enunciation is a textual strategy constructed by the text, functioning rather after the fashion of an imagined paper person who 'speaks' and 'experiences' in ways perhaps similar to but never identical with the thoughts and experiences

of the author.[13] For Foucault, there is a ceaselessly modified enunciating subject which (who?) develops and changes as the meditation progresses.

Now, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* addresses the question of the subject and discourse in some detail. (I note in passing that the argumentation of *The Archaeology* lends credence to the view that 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire' is as much Foucault putting the subject into play as it is Foucault demonstrating how Descartes accomplishes this task.) Emile Benveniste's work is crucial here and one can read *The Archaeology* as a necessarily awkward attempt at the same time to assimilate those appropriations of Benveniste that go beyond him and yet to claw back some of Benveniste's original formulations.

We should first register the fact that *The Archaeology* is in many ways a latecomer to the debate. Barthes writes in 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives' (1966) that '*who speaks* (in the narrative) is not *who writes* (in real life) and *who writes* is not *who is*'.[14] Foucault himself writes in 'The Thought From Outside':

> the sovereignty of 'I speak' can only reside in the absence of any other language; the discourse about which I speak does not pre-exist the nakedness articulated the moment I say, 'I speak'; it disappears the instant I fall silent. Any possibility of language dries up in the transitivity of its execution. The desert surrounds it. [...] If the only site for language is indeed the solitary

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[13] For a different view see Foucault, 'Sexual Choice, Sexual Act', in *Foucault Live*, pp.211-231 (first publ. in *Salmagundi*, 58-59 (Fall 1982/Winter 1983), 10-24). Discussing the homosexual act and the fondness for recollection as the best moment, the questioner makes the link with Swann's relations with Odette in the first volume of Proust's novel. Foucault agrees but adds that 'though we are speaking there of a relationship between a man and a woman, we should have to take into account in describing it the nature of the imagination that conceived it'.

[14] In *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p.112. A footnote after the quote reads: 'J. Lacan: "Is the subject I speak of when I speak the same as the subject who speaks?"'

> sovereignty of 'I speak' then in principle nothing can limit it – not the one
> to whom it is addressed, not the truth of what it says, not the values or
> systems of representation it utilizes. In short, it is no longer discourse and
> the communication of meaning, but a spreading forth of language in its raw
> state, an unfolding of pure exteriority. And the subject that speaks is less the
> responsible agent of a discourse (what holds it, what uses it to assert and
> judge, what sometimes represents itself in it by means of a grammatical form
> designed to have that effect) than a non-existence in whose emptiness the
> unending outpouring of language uninterruptedly continues.[15]

We shall return later to the phrase 'the discourse about which I speak does not

pre-exist the nakedness articulated the moment I say, "I speak"'. Suffice it to

say here that this position is closely bound to the question of literature and to

an interrogation of the 'deepest interiority' of the subject, concerns which

Foucault articulates with consummate economy:

> The reason it is now so necessary to think through fiction – while in the past
> it was a matter of thinking the truth – is that 'I speak' runs counter to 'I
> think.' 'I think' led to the indubitable certainty of the 'I' and its existence;
> 'I speak,' on the other hand, distances, disperses, effaces that existence and
> lets only its empty emplacement appear. ('The Thought', p.13)

We note two things at this juncture: first, the relationship between the subject

and the phrase 'empty emplacement' (to which I shall return); second, that this

phenomenon is a historical experience, in Foucault's (rather than Derrida's)

understanding of that term: namely, that it is peculiar to a specific era – in this

case our own.[16]

Now, in a section of *The Archaeology* entitled 'The Enunciative

Function', Foucault stresses that the *décalage* between the author and the

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[15] 'Maurice Blanchot: The Thought From Outside', trans. by Brian Massumi *Foucault/Blanchot* (New York: Zone Books, 1987), pp.10-11. Originally published as 'La Pensée du dehors', *Critique*, 229 (1966), 523-546.

[16] 'The breakthrough to a language from which the subject is excluded [...] is an experience now being heralded at diverse points in culture: in the simple gesture of writing as in attempts to formalize language; in the study of myths as in psychoanalysis; in the search for a Logos that would be like the birthplace of all of Western reason. We are standing on the edge of an abyss that had long been invisible: the being of language only appears for itself with the disappearance of the subject' ('The Thought', p.15.).

subject of the *énoncé* is a general phenomenon not confinable to literature. It is important to register the shift in terminology here: he writes of the subject of the *énoncé* rather than the subject of the *énonciation*. The word *décalage*, 'gap, interval, time-lag' but also 'jutting out' and 'standing back', suggests it is not the case that formalism is being neatly imported into non-literary realms: the author is not vaporized; in this *décalage* he simultaneously 'juts out' and 'stands back'. Using the example of a maths treatise, Foucault provides three instances of different statements likely to appear in that type of discourse. Let me hold back the first and most problematical instance. The second and third examples illustrate Foucault's point well. In the proposition 'Two quantities equal to a third quantity are equal to each other', the subject of the *énoncé* is, Foucault explains, the absolutely neutral position – indifferent to time, space, circumstances, and linguistic systems – that any individual can occupy to make such a proposition. On the other hand, the sentence 'We have already shown that...' implies a precise context: the position is located in a series of enunciative events which must already have taken place and it is established in a 'demonstrative time' the earlier steps of which need only to be invoked, not rehearsed in full. These operations belong not to a real individual but to the *sujet énonçant*. (I think we are to read this expression as conflating the subject of the *énonciation* with the subject of the *énoncé*.) It is not difficult to appreciate the pertinence of the following to the debate over Descartes' *Méditations*:

> The subject of such a statement [*énoncé*] will be defined by these requisites and possibilities taken together; and he (!) will not be described as an individual who has really carried out certain operations, who lives in an unbroken, never forgotten time, who has interiorized, in the horizon of his

consciousness, a whole group of true propositions, and who retains, in the
living present of his thought, their potential reappearance (this is merely, in
the case of individuals, the psychological, 'lived' aspect of their position as
enunciating subjects). (p.94)

If I am not mistaken, this passage simultaneously affirms and negates

Foucault's argument about Descartes. Affirms it inasmuch as it describes

convincingly the type of subject implied by such an *énoncé*: that is, one that

presupposes prior discursive events in which the subject has been implicated.

Negates it insofar as it is just one subject-position. For as soon as we put

together the two instances of the two different positions of the subject of the

énoncé, we have a discourse – the maths treatise – offering diverse subject-

positions and not simply a solitary enunciating subject that is mobile and

modifiable, as Foucault claims for the Descartes text.

John Frow suggests that Foucault's defence of his reading of Descartes

lends support, if anything, to Derrida's position since it is precisely in the

genre of the meditation that a play of voices takes place, a splitting of the

enunciating subject as the soul talks to itself, a 'sort of floating of discourse

rather than the direct derivation of a discourse from an axiomatic'.[17] For

Frow, Foucault avoids the conclusions of his own position by tying the

movement of the discourse to its subject, which is then opposed to what

Foucault calls Derrida's 'invention of voices behind texts', which allows

Derrida 'to avoid having to analyse the modes of implication of the subject in

discourses'. Frow rightly observes that to speak of a subject 'implicated' in

discourses suggests an extradiscursive subject, as though it might be the real

Descartes that Foucault sees constituted as a subject in language, even if

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[17] *Marxism and Literary History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.212.

Foucault has been careful throughout not to take Descartes' name in vain. (Nonetheless, without collapsing it into Descartes' consciousness, Foucault anthropomorphizes this function: he speaks of the meditating subject's 'consciousness of actuality'.) Foucault's remark that the reader can become the subject enunciating the truths of the meditation confirms Frow's belief that part of Foucault does seem to view the subject of the enunciation as 'a discursive effect, a positionality, a function'. Frow writes:

> The reader inscribes himself within a set of subject positions in order to be constituted as subject of the enunciation; this latter *is* the effect of the occupation of these positions. But what guarantees the unity of these positions? Not the preconstituted subjectivity of the author and the reader; and not an effect of unity given by the text, because we are dealing precisely with 'a mobile subject modifiable through the effect of the discursive events which take place'. Nothing, it seems to me, justifies Foucault, under these particular generic conditions, in assigning the 'ownership' of a plurality of discursive positions to a single, unified subject of enunciation – nothing apart from a willful confusion of the discursive subject with 'real,' empirical speaking subjects. (Frow, p.213)

Frow thus signals a possible confusion. Now what I want to argue is that there could not not be a confusion and that the more telling confusion would be Foucault's insistence on the fact that there is no confusion between the subject of the *énoncé* and the author.

What really matters for Foucault, if he is to get any purchase on questions of the time and place of an *énoncé*, is the modality by which the subject of an *énoncé* conjoins with an individual. Foucault speaks of the subject of the *énoncé* as an empty place or function capable of being filled by different individuals. Similarly, the same individual, in a series of *énoncés*, can occupy different positions and thereby 'assume the role of different subjects' (*The Archaeology*, p.94). Thus he can say:

> To describe a formulation *qua* statement [*énoncé*] does not consist in

On the one hand, he rehearses the emphatic difference between author and

subject of the *énoncé*; on the other hand, though, he affirms that the subject-

position can be occupied by a real individual who will then be the subject of

the *énoncé*. This conflation is already at work in the parenthesis in the quote

from p.94: individuals are fundamentally, in one aspect at least, *sujets

énonçants*. It is also at the heart of the first example from the hypothetical

maths treatise which I left in abeyance and to which I now return. Foucault

says that in the proverbial sentence of the Preface where one explains the

work's aims and motivations, the position of the enunciative subject (*sujet

énonciatif*) can only be occupied, for reasons of convention, by the author or

authors of the formulation: 'The conditions of individualization of the subject

are in fact very strict, very numerous, and authorize in this case only one

possible subject' (p.94). In short, at one level the distinction

author/enunciative subject is preserved, while convention allows the real

individual to function as the subject of the *énoncé*.

This ambivalence subtends Foucault's piece on the parricide Pierre

Rivière. In his memoir, Foucault says, Rivière comes to 'fill' the 'lyrical

position of the murderous subject', a position 'defined from outside' by those

charged with draughting the loose sheets sold on the streets of nineteenth-

century France.[18] He fills this position 'by means of a real murder the

account of which he had projected in advance [*projeté à l'avance*]'. *Mente*

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[18] Michel Foucault, 'Les Meurtres qu'on raconte', *Moi, Pierre Rivière*, p.273.

concipere. Rivière lodged his deed and his word 'in a well-determined place

in a certain type of discourse and in a certain field of knowledge [*savoir*]'.

> All the historical recollections, to which he appeals in his text, are not at all
> ornaments or justifications after the event. From Bible history, as one learns
> it at school, right up to recent events that the sheets and rags [*canards*] tell
> of or commemorate, it is an entire domain of knowledge which finds itself
> invested in his murder-account and in which this murder-account finds itself
> involved. This historical field was less the mark or explanatory content than
> the condition of possibility of this murder-memoir. (pp.273-274)

In other words, not only was the account written according to a prior script –

comprising, apart from Bible history, the *complaintes* composed by criminals

and published in the *canards* of the early nineteenth century; the murder itself

was pre-scribed.[19]

Again the transcendental subject would fall victim to an act of

parricide, would itself be the object of an *epoche* of sorts. As Gayatri Spivak

puts it, showing how Foucault's understanding of the 'statement' (which she

wrongly says translates *énonciation*) may be of use for subalternist historians:

> Foucault asks us to remember that what is reported or told is also reported
> or told and thus entails a positioning of the subject. Further, that anyone
> dealing with a report or a tale (the material of historiography or literary
> pedagogy) can and must occupy a certain 'I'-slot in these dealings. The
> particularity of this 'I'-slot is a sign. It may for instance signify a socio-
> political, psycho-sexual, disciplinary-institutional or ethno-economic
> provenance. Hence, Foucault uses the word 'assigned': 'the position of the
> subject can be assigned.' There may be a hidden agenda in covering over
> this rather obvious thing.[20]

It is time to pull together what we have been outlining. Broadly

speaking, we might say that Foucault is positioned somewhere between

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[19] From which one could argue that 'Pierre Rivière' merely occupies a certain subject-position in a larger, determining text and that *he* is the real victim of the whole sordid affair. I shall address this question of guilt and responsibility in Chapter five.

[20] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text From the Third World', in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.241-268. She quotes from Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

'Benveniste' and 'Benveniste-through-Lacan-through-Barthes'. Benveniste writes thus: 'In some way language puts forth "empty" forms which each speaker, in the exercise of discourse, appropriates to himself and which he relates to his "person," at the same time defining himself as *I* and a partner as *you*'.[21] That is slightly different from saying, as Foucault does, that a speaker, an individual 'occupies' a subject position. In 'The Death of the Author', Barthes makes the same gesture as Foucault of refusing literature any privilege in what concerns the relationship of a subject to discourse. But, contrary to Foucault's line, for Barthes the process of the enunciation (and he is speaking about writing) cannot be filled by an individual, for the good reason that language knows a subject, not a person:

> Leaving aside literature itself (such distinctions really become invalid), linguistics has recently provided the destruction of the Author with a valuable analytical tool by showing that the whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors. Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together', suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it.[22]

And yet Barthes has given Benveniste's theory a slight, though important, tweak. For Barthes, subjectivity in a sense disappears into written language. For Benveniste (and he is concerned with spoken language), 'subjectivity' is 'the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as "subject". [...] "Ego" is he who *says* "ego"' ('Subjectivity', p.224). Subjectivity is thus an act of affirmation. The pronoun *I* does not refer to any individual (Benveniste: 'How could the

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[21] 'Subjectivity in Language', in *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. by Mary Elizabeth Meek (Florida: University of Miami Press), pp.223-230 (p.227).

[22] In *Image, Music, Text*, pp.142-148 (pp.144-145).

same term refer indifferently to any individual whatsoever and still at the same time identify him in his individuality?'), but to 'something very peculiar which is exclusively linguistic':

> *I* refers to the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced, and by this it designates the speaker. It is a term that cannot be identified except in what we have called elsewhere an instance of discourse and that has only a momentary reference. The reality to which it refers is the reality of the discourse. It is in the instance of discourse in which *I* designates the speaker that the speaker proclaims himself as the 'subject.' And so it is literally true that the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language. If one really thinks about it, one will see that there is no other objective testimony to the identity of the subject except that which he himself thus gives about himself.
>   Language is so organized that it permits each speaker to *appropriate to himself* an entire language by designating himself as *I*. (p.226)

(Of course, it is difficult not to hear Lacan already in Benveniste's text. *I* define myself and assume a consciousness of self only through my relationship to *you*; 'it is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of *person*' (p.224). As such, 'subjectivity' would in a sense always spill outside me, and would be the effect of a process always begun again, never completed.) Now it is apparent that Foucault's project around the time of *The Archaeology* is predicated first and foremost on a theory of the constitution of subjectivity in spoken language. Foucault's departure from Benveniste is to argue that such a constitution would not be 'entirely linguistic' and, further, that the power to 'give' the 'objective testimony to the identity of the subject' would not rest simply with the subject. Subjectivity for Foucault is not simply about the act of discourse, the enunciation, but also about what can be said, and what makes this possible, about the *énoncé*. In fact, in another essay Benveniste is in a sense already Foucaultian. Benveniste remarks in 'Analytical Philosophy and Language' that a performative utterance 'is an event because it creates the

event', an act 'identical with the utterance of the act'.[23] But he modifies the

claims made in 'Subjectivity in Language' by remarking that a performative

utterance can be so only if it is an act imbued with the requisite authority.

Anybody can cry out at the shipyard: 'I name this ship...', but such words will

constitute a performative utterance only if they come from the right V.I.P. at

the right time and in the right place. Benveniste thus insists on the uniqueness

of the performative utterance and on its unrepeatability. One can anticipate

here Derrida's challenge to this uniqueness, his insistence on the necessary

iterability of the performative.[24] But that is to get ahead of myself. Let us say

for now that Foucault's project is profoundly Benvenistean, more so than

Barthes'. Language, or better, discourse is so organized that it permits each

speaker to appropriate to herself not only an entire language but a truth, a

gravitas, an institutional support, a salary; and to do this not only by

designating herself as *I*, but also by saying 'Two quantities equal to a third

quantity are equal to each other' or 'We have already shown that...'.

Discourse permits her this, or pits her against these things, against authority.[25]

Maurice Blanchot would therefore be correct in saying that Foucault never

succeeded in getting rid of the subject. In words remarkably

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[23] In *Problems*, pp.231-238 (p.236).

[24] 'Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as *conforming* with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a "citation"?' Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', in *Glyph*, Johns Hopkins Textual Studies, 1, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp.172-197. I have preferred this translation to the one in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982; repr. 1986).

[25] Again, *The History of Sexuality* on the confession: 'The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement [*énoncé*]; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship' (p.61).

similar to Frow's, Blanchot writes:

> The subject does not disappear; rather its excessively determined unity is put
> in question. What arouses interest and inquiry is its disappearance (that is,
> the new manner of being which disappearance is), or rather its dispersal,
> which does not annihilate it but offers us, out of it, no more than a plurality
> of positions and a discontinuity of functions.[26]

We must credit Foucault with saying as much himself in *The Archaeology*:

> Instead of referring back to *the* synthesis or *the* unifying function of *a*
> subject, the various enunciative modalities manifest his dispersion. To the
> various statuses, the various sites [*emplacements*], the various positions that
> he can occupy or be given when making a discourse. To the discontinuity
> of the planes [*plans*] from which he speaks. (p.54)

We note the presence of a spatial, geometric metaphorics. Our interest in the

second part of the chapter will shift towards questions of the planes, sites,

institutions and 'fields of regularity' that Foucault summons up to determine

the positions of subjectivity, to circumscribe this dispersion. For now, I should

like to pursue this question of the subject and suggest that, in this respect, the

difference between Derrida's version of Descartes and Foucault's is really not

so pronounced.

Subject-positions and individuals

Since legal terminology has lain at the heart of the debate between

Foucault and Derrida, the phrase 'critical negligence' would seem appropriate

to characterize the astonishing elision of the remainder of Derrida's argument

by an entire phalanx of commentators (led by Foucault, it must be said). After

declaring that nothing would appear to escape the hypothesis of the evil

genius, Derrida says that there is another, essential and principled truth that

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[26] 'Michel Foucault as I Imagine Him', trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman and Brian Massumi *Foucault/Blanchot*, pp.76-77.

one must face: 'if discourse and philosophical communication (that is, language itself) are to have an intelligible meaning, that is to say, if they are to conform to their essence and vocation as discourse, they must simultaneously in fact and in principle escape madness. They must carry normality within themselves' (p.53). And this is a point that Foucault never grapples with in his response. Which is all the more curious given that Derrida had already pointed to the paradox that his own argument was 'strictly Foucaldian' and that Foucault's phrase 'Madness is the absence of a work' in fact saved Descartes from the accusations levelled at him. Irrespective of the state of the one who speaks and of the paucity of the syntax, the work 'starts with the most elementary discourse, with the first articulation of a meaning' (p.54), it is logos and reason. And if madness is, in general, the absence of work, as Foucault says, then it is essentially silence. Not a historical silence as Foucault understands it, but one linked essentially to an act of force, to a prohibition which opens up history and speech, that is, historicity in general.

This is why Derrida says that any speaking subject who must evoke madness from the interior of thought can do so only 'in the realm of *the possible* and in the language of fiction or the fiction of language' (p.54). Which is why Foucault's citation of Derrida's allusion to the absolute madness of the Cogito ('total madness, total derangement which *I am unable to master*, since it is *inflicted* by hypothesis and *I am no longer responsible for it*'), has missed the essential parts of Derrida's original phrase, the elision of one of which – the word *possibilité* – necessitates a slight doctoring of the original French quote to make its syntax hold (the disappearance of a *d'un* before

affolement, which does not show up in English). The original reads: 'Now, the recourse to the hypothesis of the evil genius will evoke, conjure up, the possibility of a *total madness*, a total derangement over which I could have no control since it is inflicted upon me – hypothetically – and I am no longer responsible for it' (pp.52-53; trans. mod.). For Derrida, and he believes Foucault has glimpsed this truth, madness can by definition only be hypothesized. At this hypothetical, hyperbolical phase of the Cogito, Descartes does not exclude madness since he believes the certainty attained in it to be valid even if he is mad.

I wonder if the correlate of the logos is not some kind of speaking subject? Benveniste himself observes that 'a language without the expression of person cannot be imagined' ('Subjectivity', p.225). And it seems to me that in both Foucault and Derrida, though in different ways, there is tacit agreement over the functioning of some kind of provisional human subject speaking in language. To take Derrida first, this can be illustrated with the aid of two examples. First, a sentence of Heidegger's which Derrida is not sure of understanding. In '*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger's Hand', Derrida remarks of a description by Heidegger of two hands that fold into one that he is 'not sure of comprehending this sentence' (p.175). But he nonetheless makes sense of it by observing that this sentence in which Heidegger names man's hands in the plural for the first and only time is one in which Heidegger seems to be joining them in prayer. Derrida struggles for meaning on the understanding that Heidegger meant something by it. Which is neither to ignore the structure

of the *vouloir-dire* nor to reinstate a simple intentionality.[27] Derrida is

insistent on the deconstruction of the subject, not its destruction. And it is

arguably that difference which makes him *appear* less revolutionary than

Foucault. Second, the example (which Derrida takes from Sarl)[28] of

composing a shopping list for oneself. 'The sender of the shopping list,'

Derrida remarks, 'is not the same as the receiver, even if they bear the same

name and are endowed with the identity of a single ego' ('Limited', p.185).

The point that this instance (which is not an instance) exemplifies so well is

that the 'I' who receives the memorandum has moved on in space and time

from the 'I' who composed it. Indeed, as Derrida notes, were this not a

constitutive (and therefore self-dividing) condition of the act of inscription,

there would be no need for the list in the first place, since the self-identity of

'I' would ensure the proscription of forgetfulness and thereby vitiate the need

for an aide-mémoire. But a minimal remainder and a minimum of idealization

still hold. Derrida writes of iterability: 'Iterability supposes a minimal

remainder (as well as a minimum of idealization) in order that the identity of

the *selfsame* be repeatable and identifiable *in, through,* and even *in view of* its

alteration.' The last phrase takes back the suggestion of self-identity offered

by the first part. Again Derrida:

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[27] Cf. Jacques Derrida, 'Limited Inc abc...', in *Glyph*, Johns Hopkins Textual Studies, 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 162-254 (p.249): 'What is limited by iterability is not intentionality in general, but its character of being conscious or present to itself (actualized, fulfilled, and adequate), the simplicity of its features, its *undividedness.*' Elsewhere Derrida writes that Rousseau's 'declared intention is not anulled... but rather *inscribed* within a system which it no longer dominates' (*Of Grammatology*, p.243).

[28] 'Sarl' is Derrida's designation for the collective body that authored 'Searle's' reply (since Searl mentions a number of individuals to whom he is indebted for their contributions). It refers to the French *Société à responsabilité limitée.* See 'Limited Inc', p.170.

> The iterability of an element divides its own identity *a priori*, even without taking into account the fact that this identity can only *determine* or delimit itself through differential relations to other elements and that it hence bears the mark of this difference. ('Limited', p.190)

Our absent-minded shopper is neither reinstated as self-identical purchaser nor is his/her relationship to a prior manifestation completely forgotten. The invention of voices is limited, even if each voice knows no bounds. According to Nick Heffernan, Deleuze and Guattari make the same move:

> It seems that subjectivity must be *worked through* rather than exploded, for 'you have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn... and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality.' Such counsel is intended to inject a dimension of strategy and negotiation into what, in *Anti-Oedipus*, seemed to be a politics of total deracination; yet it also represents the difficulty of constructing a positive *modus operandi* within the parameters of a system which is deemed absolutely metaphysical or oppressive – a difficulty which besets post-structuralist politics in general.[29]

The place of ideality in Husserl's 'The Origin of Geometry' is paramount here. Husserl shows that in order to guarantee the identity of an idea and thus preserve the possibility of communication from one individual to another, one needs the '*persisting existence*', the 'continuing-to-be' of both the ideal objects and the subjects.[30] Husserl will, of course, immediately invoke writing as that function capable of preserving the mental objects. Derrida, seizing on the spacing-timing of writing, will dance nimbly between the Same and the Different, without destroying the provisional embodiment of the one who thinks, sends and receives, *Des-cartes*.

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[29] 'Oedipus Wrecks? Or, Whatever Happened to Deleuze and Guattari?', in *Redirections in Critical Theory*, ed. by Bernard McGuirk (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.110-165 (p.135). The quote is from *Anti-Oedipus*, pp.381-382. The greater difficulty, it seems to me, is that of 'constructing' any *modus*, positive, political or otherwise.

[30] Edmund Husserl, 'The Origin of Geometry', published as Appendix IV in *The Crisis*, pp.353-378 (p.360).

Even more so from Foucault's point of view, one must hold on to the individual in the white coat, the one who does the round of the wards and who speaks with and from authority (*The Archaeology*, p.51). Which means that he must draw back from the formalist pronouncement from 'The Thought from Outside': 'the discourse about which I speak does not pre-exist the nakedness articulated the moment I say, "I speak"'. After all, what is the relationship between the three 'I's' here? Similarly, even as Barthes exposes the conventions and ruses by which paper 'characters' assume human attributes, he does not get rid of characters by redefining them as 'participants' rather than 'beings', a fact of which he is well aware.[31] 'James Bond' is not constituted *ex nihilo* in and through narrative, since something called 'existence' – with its multiple Bonds and bindings – is already inside the text. The point, as Barthes intimates, is not to cease reading about characters and their foibles, but to read with less naivety. *S/Z*, it should be recalled, posits a subject which we know is not a person, but which has sexuality (perforce ambivalent), sensitivity, a past and an uncertain future. We know that s/he gains these trappings from larger, textual codes but without a minimum anthropomorphism transgression would have no purchase, would cease to move

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[31] 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives', p.105: 'The characters (whatever one calls them – *dramatis personae* or *actants*) form a necessary plane of description, outside of which the slightest reported "actions" cease to be intelligible; so that it can be said that there is not a single narrative in the world without "characters", or at least without agents'. Derrida evokes something of this logic: 'It is thus simultaneously true that things come into existence by being named. Sacrifice of existence to the word, as Hegel said, but also the consecration of existence by the word.' 'Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book', in *Writing and Difference*, p.70. Which I take to be less dismissive of the already-there than Barthes' remark about reading: 'to read is to name; to listen is not only to perceive a language, it is also to construct it' ('Introduction', p.102).

us.[32] Especially in view of the historiographical dimension of Foucault's work, the minimal remainder and minimum of idealization are crucial, even if they look rather like the return to an empirical human being. Vital to his enterprise are the questions: Who speaks and what institutional position must they occupy for their statement to be valid? What effect on the character of the *énoncé* does the institutional site of the speaker have?

By the same token, the nature of the discourse, the conventions of its functioning, its intentionality-effect are all important considerations. And in this respect the historical narrative is not to be collapsed into the literary. Let us take the famous sentence from Balzac's story *Sarrasine* which Barthes works at in the opening paragraph of 'The Death of the Author'. And let us imagine that it is uttered by a male doctor to a group of student nurses in the wake of a visit to a patient on the gynaecological ward: '*This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility.*' Barthes' question was: Who is speaking thus?

> Is it the hero of the story bent on remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author professing 'literary' ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing. (p.142)

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[32] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970). Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan explains the characters versus actants dichotomy thus: 'The two extreme positions can be thought of as relating to different aspects of narrative fiction. In the text characters are nodes in the verbal design; in the story they are – by definition – non (or pre-) verbal abstractions, constructs. Although these constructs are by no means human beings in the literal sense of the word, they are partly modelled on the reader's conception of people and in this they are person-like'. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983; repr. 1984), p.33.

I prefer Benveniste's words on the written *énonciation*, which, he says, moves on two levels: 'the writer articulates himself by writing and, in his writing, makes individuals articulate themselves'.[33] At any rate, in the Balzac story the hyperbole of the description heightens the surprise of the revelation that La Zambinella is not a woman at all. In our new context, Foucault would not have to reduce everything to the speaker: it is the *énoncé* which speaks thus; making possible the subject-position(s); opening up and sanctioning this meditation on the female *homo natura*. And yet for this conclusion to be drawn Foucault must assume a certain embodiment of the voice, the identity and sincerity of the speaker, and of the status, time and place – the institution – of the utterance. In itself it means nothing and even situated in a hospital it does not give us the voice's origin, the wisdom's provenance. But a glance at its functioning might see the voice endowed with a certain weight, particularly if there is a historical sedimentation of the discourse – if there is a historical archive testifying to such views and evidence of an accompanying essentializing practice.

My assessment of Foucault, though, is this: that in his theory of subject-positions one does not witness a *décalage* between an individual and the subject of the *énoncé*, but the collapse of one into the other. An individual steps forward to 'occupy', or 'fill', a position. Broadly speaking, this would allow Foucault to do two interrelated things: firstly, to construct a formalist subject by cutting through the messiness and vagaries of human personality;

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[33] 'L'appareil formel de l'énonciation', in *Problèmes de linguistique générale II* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1974), p.88.

secondly, to determine the subject's place (to 'lock' or 'wedge' him into a position to which he is 'assigned') with a similarly geometric precision.

The Foucaultian discourse of subject-positions, which has assumed an exaggerated importance in contemporary critical production, has obvious political ramifications. The flip side of Foucault's historical narrative describing how individuals have been locked in to certain subject-positions is the attempt to diagnose present positions and create new ones. Strictly speaking, the archaeological theory of discourse elaborates a *general* theory of how corpuses of knowledge come to be formed and how they assign a particular position to the *general* historical subject of knowledge. But the extrapolation from the general theory to a more local one is not difficult to make. In such an extrapolation, the regulation of subject-positions would not affect individuals in a uniform fashion but instead function differentially, according to the status, sex, class, race of the individual concerned. Pierre Rivière does not rush forward at this juncture; he is already in the former, general project. He is the subject matter for other knowing subjects, other 'specialists'. Even when he becomes a formal knowing subject, inserting himself into a tradition of writing with its attendant conventions, Foucault is not interested in showing how this particular individual – from a certain class, of a particular sex, with a certain educational standard – comes to be assigned a specific subject-position different from other writers. This latter work has been carried out by others, such as Spivak with her suggestion that the assignation of an 'I'-slot may signify a socio-political, psycho-sexual, disciplinary-institutional or ethno-economic provenance. The endeavour is

non-foundational. Judith Butler, who is heavily marked by Foucault's theory of discourse, embraces the idea of subject-positions because it allows her to think the contingency of positionality rather than the essentialism of foundations. To that extent, though, and talk of 'post-' apart, her inclinations are manifestly structuralist. She must argue for the determining quality of the subject-positions made available to us (if they were not determining, there would not be a problem), while holding out the possibility that, through analysis, new positions may be created. The italicization of the past participle is hers:

> The 'I' who would select between [positions] is always already constituted by them. The 'I' is the transfer point of the replay, but it is simply not a strong enough claim to say that the 'I' is situated; the 'I,' this 'I,' is *constituted* by these positions, and these 'positions' are not merely theoretical products, but fully embedded organizing principles of material practices and institutional arrangements, those matrices of power and discourse that produce me as a viable 'subject.'[34]

'It is simply not a strong enough claim.' What is at stake is the strength of the claim. This is why my criticism of Foucault's theory of the *énoncé* differs slightly from Spivak's judgement that Foucault often seems to conflate 'individual' and 'subject'.[35] Spivak is referring to Foucault's genealogical work around the time of *Discipline and Punish* which, as we saw in the last chapter, does tend to introduce an undivided subject. My contention is not, *pace* Spivak, that one ought to think the relationship more plurally; I maintain, on the contrary, that one should question the very possibility of conjuring the

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[34] Judith Butler, 'Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of "Postmodernism"', in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.3-21 (p.9).

[35] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp.271-313 (p.274).

two notions in a manner which allows the pair of them to be plunged into the same conceptual and semantic field. Although pluralism appears to be the avowed stake, it seems to me a pluralism premissed on univocality and univalence. I shall have more to say about this question of subject-positions, and especially the part played by voluntarism, in Chapters five and six. For now, I should simply like to point up the perils of such assumptions as they are deployed in the field of literary theory.

The parallel endeavours of Colin McCabe and Terry Eagleton in the field of British literary theory are instructive in this respect. McCabe takes Saussure to task for failing to see that at the level of meaning language is always discourse.[36] This was due to the two great lacunae in Saussure's work, subjectivity and institutions, which allowed him to think *langue* the most unmotivated social system. (In point of fact, the *Course in General Linguistics* is a little less conclusive than McCabe suggests.)[37] Nonetheless, McCabe's programme of correction is strictly Foucaultian:

> In order to deal with the effects of meaning we must combine an analysis of the institutional sites of language together with an analysis of subjectivity in language to enable us to understand how specific practices of language both produce subject positions for individuals and articulate various practices within institutions. (p.441)

Eagleton's criticism levelled at Saussure in his *Literary Theory: An Introduction* touches similarly on Saussure's failure to think his way through language to discourse:

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[36] 'Language, Linguistics and the Study of Literature', in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), pp.432-444 (p.440).

[37] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1990). On ordinary language see p.71; on literature p.21.

> We may also notice that Saussure's model of individual and society, like many classical bourgeois models, has no intermediate terms, no mediations between solitary individual speakers and the linguistic system as a whole. The fact that someone may not only be a 'member of society' but also a woman, shop-steward, Catholic, mother, immigrant and disarmament campaigner is simply slid over.

However, his following sentence gestures to the complexity this insight thereby gives on to: 'The linguistic corollary of this – that we inhabit many different "languages" simultaneously, some of them perhaps mutually conflicting – is also ignored.'[38] McCabe, too, is aware of this complexity: 'Institutions overlap and conflict, discourses are not tied in some obviously physical way to their institutional sites.   Indeed the very possibility of discursive transformation rests on these contradictory relations' (p.443).

Yet it seems to me that this readiness to speak of subject-positions as the site of political work has limited value. And I think one can discern as much from Foucault's own words on ritual in *The Order of Discourse*:

> Ritual defines the qualification which must be possessed by individuals who speak (and who must occupy such-and-such a position and formulate such-and-such a type of statement [*énoncé*] [...]); it defines the gestures, behaviour, circumstances, and the whole set of signs which must accompany discourse. (p.62)

We note the lexicon of exteriority: 'gestures', 'behaviour', 'signs', that is, the institution (in all senses) of the discursive process. The value of thinking in terms of ritual is that it allows us to foreground techniques, tropes and discursive positions: not essence, but artifice. However, the repeated 'must' in this context (the language of prohibition still marks the Leçon) needs to be tempered, to be read perhaps more strategically as the suggestion of a much more provisional and itself strategic obligation, and one which would not serve

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[38] (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p.115.

to exhaust the meaning of the event. One thereby holds open the possibility

of non-interiorization and of a discourse doing more than its loud, gestural

words might indicate. One also, I think, moves away from a strictly formalist

idea of subject-positions to a consideration of psychological content, of the

workings of the psyche which make certain positions the object of resistance

and others the object of desire. Ritual is nothing if it knows not pleasure,

incantation, the seduction of known formulae, the desire to belong to the

cabbala, the desire also to transgress and exceed the ritual. By the same token,

this psychic content would also impose limits on a process that would

otherwise involve a voluntaristic notion of the perpetual substitution of

positions, as one moved from that of a Catholic housewife to that of a

professor of anatomy to that of a unemployed Wigan miner to that of an

Iranian Ayatollah. This voluntaristic tendency, which is intimately bound to

the fortunes (in all its senses) of the modern humanities, to pedagogy and to

research, to their assessment and (e)valuation, is synthetically expressed by Ian

Hunter:

> One of the leading features of the modern humanities is their incorporation
> of specific ascetic disciplines. In the 'critical' (Romantic) teaching of
> literature and history, for example, texts are not the objects of a methodised
> knowledge. They are devices attached to practices of reading and writing
> whose object is the problematisation and stylisation of the reader's 'divided'
> or otherwise 'incomplete' self. If this begins to indicate the way in which
> such practices differ from philological or 'object-oriented' forms of literary
> and historical scholarship it is also a significant index of the tasks of moral
> formation now performed by the humanities.[39]

The question, it seems to me, is not to deny the task of moral formation now

performed by the humanities. It is simply to recall that, in accordance with the

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[39] 'Personality as a Vocation: The Political Rationality of the Humanities', in *Foucault's New Domains*, pp.153-192 (p.181).

very logic of subject-positions, the reader in the academy is also and simultaneously a Catholic housewife, a trade unionist, a consumer, a voter... and consequently that this 'stylisation' and 'moral formation' can not be laid at the door of the academy quite so easily. We are therefore back with weighing and measuring, with a certain sense of the mathematical. I shall have more to say about 'problematization' in the final Chapter, and about measurement in Chapter four.

When Foucault says that the demonstrative meditation modifies the subject in the course of its unfolding (freeing it from its convictions, inducing new doubts), it becomes clear that UN peace-keeping forces ought to be firing demonstrative meditations in all the world's trouble spots. But what is the quality of 'occupation' when we speak of 'occupying' a subject-position? Would the subject-position be occupied territory? And if so, are we happy to believe (and belief is at stake) that we occupy that territory in a manner identical to the manner in which it is occupied by its 'normal' occupiers. This is not tantamount to saying: here discursive subjects, there real people. But one will probably not be released from quite all one's convictions by means of the meditation, for the simple reason that the text in which one finds oneself is much greater than that of a demonstrative meditation and includes others (competitors, enemies, friends, sons and lovers) together with one's own (presumably) complex psychological make-up. Gillian Rose, who does not refer to Foucault's earlier work on madness, argues that in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault abandons not the fiction of the juridical subject but 'the complex reality of legal personality, especially the relation between personality

as a legal and as a social and psychological category' (Rose, *Dialectic*,

p.178). I would argue that one of the reasons *Histoire de la folie* remains a

more adroit text than *Discipline and Punish* on the question of the constitution

of subjects is that the former simply does not believe that a madman

constituted as, say, a subject of law does justice to the psychic reality of that

individual.

The *énoncé*, the field and iterability

Which brings me to the question of the field, to that which necessarily

locks the subject into (a) position. For there is only so much discontinuity in

Foucault and what there is can be determined. In this part of the chapter I

should like to look at the powers that accrue to an enunciative field or a

discursive domain which organizes and distributes the subject. For if analysing

a discursive formation is about the law of economy, it is also once more about

taking its measure ('To analyse a discursive formation is to seek the law of

that poverty [of *énoncés*], it is to take its measure [*en prendre la mesure*], and

to determine its specific form' [p.120]).[40]

If discourse is no longer a phenomenon of expression, we should view

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[40] Although the convergence will not be explored here, there are reasons for thinking that Foucault's theory of the *énoncé* owes much to mathematical set theory. Foucault mentions the contribution of Cavaillès to the French conceptual tradition ('Introduction' to Canguilhem's *On the Normal and the Pathological*, p.x) and a sentence like 'The field of discursive events [...] is a grouping [*ensemble*] that is always finite and limited at any moment to the linguistic sequences that have been formulated; they may be innumerable, they may, in sheer size, exceed the capacities of recording, memory, or reading: nevertheless they form a finite grouping' (*The Archaeology*, p.27) brings to mind the paradox of the infinite treated by Bernard Bolzano, *Paradoxes of the Infinite*, trans. by Donald A. Steele (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950), in which even something so apparently straightforward as the task of conceiving of the complete set of whole numbers proves paradoxical given that the series of whole numbers is potentially infinite and the set therefore never quite closed. Bolzano, too, was an ardent ratiocinator.

it as 'a field of regularity for various positions of subjectivity' (p.55):

> Thus conceived, discourse is not the majestically unfolded manifestation of
> a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality in
> which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may
> be determined. It is a space of exteriority in which a network of distinct
> sites is deployed. (p.55; trans. mod.)[41]

The above carries two opposing prefixal forces in French, simultaneously exploding ('dis-', 'dis-', 'ex-', 'dé-', 'dis-') and imploding ('en-', 'em-'). Dispersion, yes, but a determinate dispersion. What would a determinate dispersion look like? How would a dispersion be structured and ruled? One obviously has to bear in mind the critique of philosophies of the subject which underwrites Foucault's discursive theory. Foucault: 'It is neither by recourse to a transcendental subject nor by recourse to a psychological subjectivity that the regulation of its [i.e, the discursive formation's] enunciations should be defined' (p.55). One must certainly extend credit to this attempt at thinking through some of the abusive inflations of the subject but nevertheless maintain one's vigilance towards a destructive metaphorics that would substitute for the subject an even greater power of regulation.

I alluded earlier to Derrida's critique of speech act theory in 'Signature Event Context', reelaborated in 'Limited Inc abc...', and it is that critique which poses perhaps the greatest challenge to Foucault's theory of discourse as event. It should be said that Foucault is most punctilious in *The*

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[41] 'Le discours, ainsi conçu, n'est pas la manifestation, majestueusement déroulée, d'un sujet qui pense, qui connaît, et qui dit: c'est au contraire un ensemble où peuvent se déterminer la dispersion du sujet et sa discontinuité avec lui-même. Il est un espace d'extériorité où se déploie un reseau d'emplacements distincts' (*L'Archeologie*, p.74). In an interview around the same time he comments that the Death of Man cry in *The Order of Things* was just the announcement of the death of the 'Subject with a capital letter' (*Sujet majuscule*). He repeats that the subject is 'not one, but split, not sovereign, but dependent, not absolute origin, but ceaselessly modifiable function.' Michel Foucault, 'Entretien: La naissance d'un monde', *Le Monde*, 3 May 1969, p.8.

Archaeology to distinguish his *énoncé* from a speech act. For Foucault, the *énoncé* is what makes speech acts possible. Nonetheless, Foucault's account of the *functioning* of *énoncés* suggests a close affinity between the workings of the two, as his appropriation of Benveniste already leads us to suspect. Derrida himself observes that Foucault's archaeology shares certain of the premises found in speech act theory.[42]

For Derrida, and he is not dealing with the *énoncé*, any linguistic sign has a constitutive force of breaking with its context. For it to be a sign at all, it must have the capacity to function beyond the real context of the moment of its production and in the absence of the conscious intention of the one who first breathed life into it. Elsewhere, Derrida writes that the signifying function of the 'I' does not depend on the life of the speaking subject. My death, he says, is structurally necessary to the pronouncing of the 'I'.[43] This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or the signified makes every mark a 'grapheme in general', that is, 'the non-present *remainder* [*restance*] of a differential mark cut off from its putative "production" or origin' ('Signature', p.183).

Now Foucault is aware of this capacity of signs to function in new contexts. Pondering over how to define an *énoncé*, he cites the instance of letters of the alphabet traced randomly across a piece of paper as an example of what is not an *énoncé*. And yet, he says, could not one view them as

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[42] See Derrida, 'Limited Inc abc...', p.173.

[43] Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. by David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.96.

precisely the *énoncé* of an alphabetical series having no other law but chance? However, his conclusion a few lines later contradicts this insight: 'but neither is it enough to have just any material effectuation of linguistic elements, any emergence of signs in time and space, for a statement to appear and to begin to exist' (*The Archaeology*, p.86; trans. mod.). But in spite of this rider, would it not be the case that, as his example shows, any utterance can be made to signify an example of agrammaticality or an instance of a non-*énoncé*?[44] Foucault describes the *énoncé* as

> a function of existence that properly belongs to signs and on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they 'make sense', according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation (oral or written). (pp. 86-87)

Surely signs can always make sense, and this is due not to any historically determinate *énoncé*, but to the essence of meaning in general. I cite Derrida, not because the *énoncé* is to be recuperated as just another linguistic sign, but because the *énoncé* is nothing, has no reach and no power, if it is not repeatable in different contexts:

> Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable.[45] This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring [*ancrage*]. This citationality, this duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident nor an anomaly,

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[44] Cf. Derrida on the phrase 'le vert est ou' (an example used by Husserl in *Logical Investigations*) bearing within it the possibility of signifying an example of agrammaticality. 'Signature', p.185 and 'Limited Inc', p.221.

[45] Derrida takes the opportunity to tighten things up in 'Limited Inc': 'It would have been better and more precise to have said "engendering *and* inscribing itself," or being inscribed *in*, new contexts. For a context never creates itself *ex nihilo*; no mark can create or engender a context on its own, much less dominate it. This limit, this finitude is the condition under which contextual transformation remains an always open possibility' (p.220).

it is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could not even have a function called 'normal.' What would a mark be that could not be cited? Or one whose origins would not get lost along the way? ('Signature', pp.185-186)

This is a powerful challenge to the comforting notion of context, though the notion is not thereby dispensed with ('This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context').

One glimpses something of this recognition in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, where the theory of the *enoncé* is nothing if not an attempt to show that there is no sign in itself. But in the process of demonstrating this fact, the book is obliged to acknowledge that there can be no *énoncé* in itself either. We may put it thus: If Foucault was criticized for failing to account for the passage from one *episteme* to another in *The Order of Things* (Sartre speaks in a telling metaphor of Foucault preferring the magic lantern to the cinema),[46] *The Archaeology* busies itself, on the contrary, precisely with explaining the conditions of possibility of the conditions of possibility. Because the formation of objects only takes place in discourse broadly defined, Foucault will not only say that defining these objects is a matter of relating them to the 'body [*ensemble*] of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance' (p.48). He will speak in the same sentence of the objects' 'dispersion', that is to say, of deploying the nexus of regularities which govern those objects' dispersion. Thus, if objects are constituted by a disparate discursive formation (rather than a monolithic *episteme*), then their own condition is at best dispersed, at worst phantasmatic. Battle is joined in *The Archaeology*: how to

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[46] 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', *L'Arc*, 30 (1966), 87-96 (p.87).

respect the differential quality of the *énoncé* while preserving its methodological purchase?

Foucault is alert to the dangers of making the *énoncé* appear the 'atom of discourse' (p.80), the absolutely irreducible element of definition. To this end, he asserts that an *énoncé* always has margins which are populated by other *énoncés*. These margins are distinguished from the notion of context inasmuch as they make the latter possible. Foucault rightly affirms that the contextual relationship of a sentence to surrounding sentences differs depending on whether one is dealing with a novel, a treatise on physics or a conversation. However, the following sentence seems caught between two positions. He says: 'It is against the background of a more general relation between the formulations, against the background of a whole verbal network, that the context-effect may be determined' (p.98; trans. mod.). On the one hand he declares that only a wider understanding of the generic and conventional rules will produce an understanding of the *enoncé*. But on the other hand, that since it is a question of a 'context-effect', the understanding depends primarily on reading the formulations themselves, rather than on any *fond*.[47] One can see the strong hermeneutical position here: Foucault does not stumble across *énoncés* neatly preserved in the basements of libraries and in the cellars of asylums. He reads them in (to) or out of texts. In any case,

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[47] Cf. two attempts to queer the pitch of traditional reflection metaphors applied to a text's relationship to reality. Barthes' expression 'l'effet de réel' ('The Reality Effect', in *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, ed. by Tzvetan Todorov, trans. by R. Carter [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], p.160) and Derrida's phrase 'racinating function': 'If a text always gives itself a certain representation of its own roots, those roots live only by that representation, by never touching the soil, so to speak. Which undoubtedly destroys their *radical essence*, but not the necessity of their *racinating function*' (*Of Grammatology*, p.101).

Foucault makes it plain that an *énoncé* unfolds in an associated field, where it finds its place and status by modifying or opposing the other formulations, and where possible relations with the past and potential links with the future are respectively laid out and opened up:

> Every statement is specified in this way: there is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them: it is always integrated into an enunciative play, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be. (p.99; trans. mod.)

Derrida remarks that the concept of *gram* needs to be surrounded by a 'certain interpretive context', for like any other conceptual element it does not signify by itself.[48]

Despite the word *jeu* in that last quote from Foucault and despite also his insistence on fields and relations – all of which would be enough to set to work the movement of the trace, enough, that is, to destabilize self-identity – Foucault is adamant that it is possible to determine the identity of an *énoncé*. On the subject of the *énoncé*'s materiality, which he says is constitutive of it, Foucault writes: 'a statement must have a substance, a support, a place, and a date. And when these requisites change, it too changes identity' (p.101). At this point, Foucault draws a clear distinction between an *énonciation* and an *énoncé*. The enunciation is an event belonging to a specific time and place and is not repeatable. Two people may say the same thing, yet there would be two enunciations. The *énoncé*, on the other hand, is repeatable. The same sentence uttered by two people in different circumstances could well be the same *énoncé*. Foucault then cites the example of successive editions of

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[48] *Positions*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.27.

Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*. The paper, the print, the layout may all have changed but such differences are neutralized, Foucault remarks, by the general element of 'the book'. The book, he says, is an instance of repetition without change of identity. In this case, the materiality of the *énoncé* is not defined by the space occupied or the date of its formulation; but by a status of thing or object. And yet, for Foucault, when a novelist utters something in everyday life which he then inserts unaltered into his current manuscript, now spoken by one of the characters or even by the anonymous voice of the author, there is no question of it being considered the same *énoncé*. He thus concludes: 'The regime of materiality that statements necessarily obey is therefore of the order of the institution rather than of the spatio-temporal localization; it defines *possibilities of reinscription and transcription* (but also thresholds and limits), rather than limited and perishable individualities' (p.103; Foucault's emphasis). The binding of the word *institution* – as both act and structural site – to the expression 'possibilities of reinscription and transcription', I think indicates something of the irreducible complexity and alterity of a word too often summarily invoked to lend a solidity, edge and kudos to a discourse.

The institution of discourse: the case of *modernista* literary history

In this section I should like to offer an extended illustration from a literary historical field of the complexity of the word and concept *institution* (in all its senses).[49] The example of institutionality discussed here is itself

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[49] Something of this complexity is suggested by Carlos Altamirano's excellent article 'La fundación de la literatura argentina', in *Ensayos argentinos: De Sarmiento a la vanguardia*, ed. by Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina,

perforce articulated from a position within the institutional discipline, Hispanic and Latin American Studies, within which I teach. It concerns the production and institution of a literary historical discourse on *modernismo*, and the perennial, if a little tired, debate on the nature, historical moment and geopolitical provenance of the phenomenon, a debate too often characterized by an implacable will to compartmentalize verging on chauvinism (most notoriously when it is a matter of determining who belongs to *modernismo* and who to the Generation of '98, as though it were a question of separate planets each with an absolutely distinct lexical and conceptual system).[50] I shall trace the outlines of this enunciative production with a view to highlighting the positivism (a positivism precisely not devoid of a certain chauvinism) which subtends too rigid a theory of the *énoncé*.

It is widely accepted that Latin America's first literary movement of any note, *modernismo*, represented a profound spiritual and philosophical transformation. In this respect, Ivan Schulman highlights the consensus that took hold around this idea in a famous 1907 inquiry published in *El Nuevo*

1983), pp.107-115 (and the word *fundación* should resonate in at least three ways, as 'founding', 'foundation', and 'Foundation'). Altamirano shows how, in Argentina just after the turn of the century, José Hernández's epic poem, *Martín Fierro* (1872-1879), becomes institutionalized as *the* Argentine epic poem (their *Chanson de Roland*, their *Poema de Mío Cid*), *the* rock upon which an Argentine literary tradition was to be built, *the* embodiment of national spirit and identity. In the context of a huge influx of European immigrants, the celebration of the *gauchos* and the obsession with founding a sense of national identity assume a more than literary dimension. The analysis (and for reasons of space I cannot do justice to the supporting evidence) demonstrates convincingly how discourse can be reinscribed in a new context, and have new meanings grafted onto it, in a supplementary process which adds to and makes up for a lack in the 'original'.

[50] *Modernismo* is a much more effete and ornate literary style than European 'modernism', closer to French Parnassianism than to the poetry of Eliot and Pound. Though its existence is much disputed, the Generation of '98 purports to designate a group of Spanish writers anxious to reassess the being and meaning of Spain in the wake of the country's defeat in the Spanish-American war of 1898 in which it lost its last overseas colonies.

Mercurio.[51] For his part, in the first documented use which he makes of the word *modernismo*, Rubén Darío, the recognized figurehead of the *modernistas*, binds it closely to a 'new spirit' – a relationship confirmed by many.[52] More precisely, and as a plethora of critics have observed, this discourse legitimized itself, at least in one direction, as a rejection and subversion of a past dominated by a tradition of positivism.[53]

Lest we reduce the debate exclusively to the positivist connection, it is worth mentioning that the phenomenon is not so easily encapsulated. There are many other interpretations of *modernismo* in the context of Latin America: a response to the oppressive socio-economic transformations resulting from its incorporation into the world economy; a properly aesthetic manifestation of independence and resistance to the traditional artistic discourse, and especially the peninsular one; the product of a new, intensified psyche, itself the outcome of the sensory bombardment which is the modern metropolis.[54] We could certainly show without undue difficulty how the project of *modernismo*, with

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[51] 'Reflexiones en torno a la definición del modernismo', in Lily Litvak, *El Modernismo* (Madrid: Taurus, 1975), pp.65-95 (p.72).

[52] For the famous definition by Federico de Onís, for example, see Angel Rama, *Rubén Darío y el Modernismo (Circunstancia socio-económica de un arte americano)* (Venezuela: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1970), p.26.

[53] Guillermo Díaz Plaja speaks of the *modernistas*' 'antitainian philosophy', *Modernismo Frente a Noventa y Ocho: Una Introducción a la Literatura Española del Siglo XX*, 2nd edn (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1966), p.140; Cf. Ricardo Gullón *El modernismo visto por los modernistas* (Barcelona: Guadarrama, 1980), p.12, on the 'protest against positivism and materialism'; Luis Alberto Sánchez, cited in Ned J. Davison, *The Concept of Modernism in Hispanic Criticism* (Colorado: University of New Mexico, 1966), p.72, n.23, on the reaction against 'realist and positivist prosaism'; and Litvak, p.12.

[54] See respectively Litvak, p.12; Angel Rama, p.5; and Georg Simmel, "Las grandes ciudades y la vida anímica" (1903), cited in Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot, *Modernismo* (Barcelona: Montesinos, 1983), p.126.

its spiritualism, aestheticism, and 'arielism', is facilitated and traversed by an economic materialism in opposition to which the former had set out its stall.[55] But I shall concern myself only with the relationship between *modernismo* and positivism.

Positivism: 'A philosophical system elaborated by Auguste Comte, recognizing only positive facts and observable phenomena and rejecting metaphysics and theism' (*New Shorter OED*). The positivist system is based on a belief in the process of scientific investigation and observation. Crucially, in Comte's law of the three states, man, the knowing subject, evolves through the theological state and its successor, the metaphysical state, until he reaches the positivist state. In the last, man renounces the effort to know the absolute and most intimate causes of phenomena and turns exclusively to discovering their 'effective laws, that is to say, their invariable relations of succession and similitude.'[56] (For his part, Taine distances himself from Comte – for him causes form part of sensory experience and are therefore knowable.)

In his essay 'Traducción y Metáfora', Octavio Paz traces schematically the historical and psychological relationship between positivism and *modernismo* in the context of Latin America. Paz argues that the variant of

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[55] Rubén Darío illustrates this coexistence of the commerce of bankers and merchants with the transactions of the *modernistas*. Rubén Darío ('El Retorno', *La Nación*, 4.800, Buenos Aires, 21 August 1912, p.8), cited in Rama, p.30: 'Our mandolins sounded next to the banks, and our nocturnal Bohemia mellificated the atmosphere alongside the German, English, and Italian merchants [...]. Those were the good times! The lyrical sound of a few cicadas did not prevent the course of transactions; the Ateneo brought a touch of Greece to the Phoenician or Cartaginese atmosphere and youth learnt that man does not live by paper money alone and that intellectuals, like heroes and beautiful, honest ladies, are the jewels of the Republic.'

[56] Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, i, (1864), pp.9-10. Cited in D.G. Charlton, *Positivist Thought in France During the Second Empire 1852-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p.6. All references to Comte are taken from Charlton; translations mine.

positivism embraced by the dominant classes in the nineteenth-century colonies actually functioned as a 'cut' (or what he calls a 'divisor knife'), reinforcing the separation between Latin America and the Spanish tradition. On top of that, *modernismo* comes as an even sharper blade:

> *Modernismo* was the response to positivism, the critique born of sensitivity and the heart – also the nerves – against empiricism and positivist scientism [...] *Modernismo* was our true Romanticism [...] The connection between positivism and *modernismo* is of a historical and psychological order. One runs the risk of not understanding what this relation involves if one forgets that Latin American positivism, more than a scientific method, was an ideology, a belief. Its influence on the development of science in our countries was much slighter than its sway over the minds and sensitivities of the intellectual groups [...] The superficial judgements belong to those critics who could not read in the lightness and cosmopolitanism of the *modernista* poets the signs (the stigmata) of spiritual uprooting [*desarraigo*]. (In Litvak, pp.104-106.)

Schematically, according to Paz, the advent of *modernismo* marks the sign not just of a cutting of roots, but of an uprooting (*desarraigo*), which would complete the constitution, the cultivation of a properly Latin American cultural heritage and psychology. As Paz suggests, the rejection of the positivist world is not purely academic; it is the refusal of a cultural vision which managed to impose itself in Latin America (the truths of which were often profoundly disconcerting in their implications for those indigenous populations that did not conform to a Western model of progress). Whence the symbolic importance for the *modernistas* of a figure like Taine: the representative of that spiritual and discursive order which had to be purged simultaneously from and by the new cultural configuration.

As one might suppose, the will to cut is more nuanced and more selective. In fact there abound testimonies which highlight the evidence that while *modernismo* was engaged in an exercise of deracination where positivist

philosophy was concerned, it actively prolonged certain prior artistic, especially Romantic, conceptions.[57] There is obviously a convenient selectiveness here: *modernismo* sprang positively from prior art but negatively from philosophical positivism, lifting up its conceptual skirts and fleeing the domain of the philosophical patriarch. However, in this selective move beyond positivism, how should one qualify the difference which must necessarily demarcate the *modernista* inquiries from positivism?

The answer to this question, as one might expect from the way in which I have framed the *modernista* position thus far, is that the 'new' institution of discourse struggles to rid itself of a certain positivism and in fact shows, at least in some of its manifestations, a pronounced kinship with it. Both in terms of an attraction towards the idea of progress, which was a fundamental article of faith for the positivists, and a vaunting of the historical method, which Comte calls 'the principal scientific artifice of the new positive philosophy' (Charlton, p.30). Comte's objective is to 'determine, safe from all arbitrariness, [...] with rigorous precision' (Charlton, p.45) the place of social phenomena in the process of social development, the latter understood as evolution in a specific direction that presupposes by the same token 'that what comes later in the process is an unfolding of what was at least implicitly present in its earlier stage'.[58] An observable transformation in the arts, say, is the symptom of some other more fundamental process of development 'in

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[57] See Eduardo Chavarri, a contributor to the 1907 inquiry; and Pedro Salinas, *Literatura española siglo xx* (Mexico, 1941), pp.21-22. Cited in Davison, p.37.

[58] Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p.43.

the culture as a whole, or in the spirit of a people, or in Humanity, or Reality' (Mandelbaum, p.46).

Let me offer just a handful of examples of *modernista* literary history by way of comparison. In his study of *Rubén Darío* (1899), José Enrique Rodó speaks of *modernismo* representing '*the evolution of thought* in the closing stages of this century', a reaction against literary naturalism and philosophical positivism which leads them to be dissolved into '*higher conceptions*'. A peninsular figure, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, commenting on images from Baudelaire and Gabriel D'Annunzio in *Corte de amor* (1902), says that such images are just 'a logical consequence of *the progressive evolution of the senses*' which means that we perceive gradations of colour, for example, doubtless missed by our ancestors of centuries gone by.[59] Rubén Darío uses an analogous concept of historical development in 'Dilucidaciones': 'Poetic form is not destined to disappear, but rather to spread out, to modify itself, to *carry on its development in the eternal rhythm of the centuries*', which he uses again in *España Contemporánea* (1901), referring to the 'sickly and false production, ignorance of the world's mental progress' in Spanish intellectual circles.[60] A historicist posture which is maintained in the 'Liminary Words' from *Prosas Profanas*, this time with an American

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[59] Rodó and Valle-Inclán cited in Max Henríquez Ureña, *Breve Historia del Modernismo* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954), p.166 and p.168. All italics mine.

[60] Cited in Allen W. Phillips, 'Rubén Darío y sus juicios sobre el modernismo', in *Estudios Críticos sobre el Modernismo*, ed. by Homero Castillo (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1968), p.137.

nuance:[61]

In the depths of my spirit, despite my cosmopolitan outlook, lies *the inextractable seam of race; my thought and my senses carry on a historical and traditional process.* (Phillips, p.125)	at each moment one may consider the character of a people as the résumé of all its preceding actions and sensations, that is to say, as a quantity and as a weight (Taine, p.40)

Finally, when Darío takes the rostrum in Buenos Aires at the headquarters of the magazine *El Ateneo*, his discursive strategy would role the body politic and the cultural spirit into an organic process:[62]

While our beloved and unfortunate Mother country, Spain, appears to suffer the enmity of a hostile fate, enclosed within the walls of tradition, isolated because of her own character, unpenetrated by *the wave of mental evolution in recent times*, the neighbouring brotherly kingdom demonstrates a sudden energy, *the Portuguese soul* finds abroad voices that celebrate her and raise her up, *the blood of Lusitania flourishes* in harmonious flowers of art and of life: we, Latins, Hispanoamericans, must view with pride the vital manifestations of this people and feel as our own the triumphs that she achieves in honour of our *race*.	A civilization forms one body, and its parts hold together like the parts of an organic body. (Taine, p.50) what one calls *race* is the innate and hereditary dispositions that man brings to light with him, and which ordinarily are joined to marked differences in temperament and in the structure of the body. (Taine, p.39)

These examples, which merely touch the surface of the matter, but which I think manifest a certain exemplarity, suggest that a disdain for positivism does not prevent the *modernistas* from perpetuating the tropes of the old organic historicism, from slipping into a similar discourse on the evolution of a species and the destiny of a people whose time has come.

It is not, it seems to me, a question of reprehending the *modernistas* for

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[61] The quotes from Hyppolite Taine are from his *Introduction à l'histoire de la littérature anglaise (L'Histoire, son présent et son avenir)*, ed. by H.B. Charlton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1936).

[62] Rubén Darío, 'Eugenio de Castro y la literatura portuguesa' (19 September 1896), cited by Rafael Alberto Arrieta, 'El Modernismo 1893-1900', in Litvak, pp.275-276.

their incapacity to break with the past. As Derrida indicates, in what remains the best expression of the paradox inscribed in historicist methods bent on describing the radical originality of a new structure, postulating the pertinence to the new system of any sort of past – as positive cause, as negative influence – means that originality is traced through by a constitutive non-originality.[63] Any positivity necessarily carries within itself the marks of the repression of the *moment* of the *milieu*.[64] In the case of the *modernistas*, those tropological figures of trenchant cut, generational division and genealogical discontinuity would invest *modernismo* with the hubris of originality at the expense of suppressing that which was already within its own formation. From which we conclude that a much more hybrid and complex discursive, enunciative economy operates, in which *modernista* thought (and I insist on this) cannot be qualified as simply positivist, for the good reason that positivism 'itself' is not simply positivist.

Foucault is not ignorant of this structurality of the event. Perhaps the closest he comes to a Derridian position is in an essay on Kant and the Enlightenment where he explores Kant's wish to know, in the second dissertation of his *The Conflict of Faculties* (1798), if there exists anything

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[63] 'The appearance of a new structure, of an original system, always comes about – and this is the very condition of its structural specificity – by a rupture with its past, its origin, and its cause. Therefore one can describe what is peculiar to the structural organization only by not taking into account, in the very moment of this description, its past conditions: by omitting to posit the problem of the transition from one structure to another, by putting history between brackets' ('Structure, Sign, and Play', p.291).

[64] One witnesses the marks or *empreintes* of repression in Taine's own discourse – the irruption of *le moment*, the historicity of the interior: 'When national character and environmental circumstances operate, they do not operate on a *tabula rasa*, but on a table where traces [*empreintes*] are already marked. According to whether one takes the table at one moment or at another, the trace is different; and that suffices for the total effect to be different' (*Introduction*, p.43).

like constant progress for mankind.[65] According to Kant, one must show that a cause of progress acts effectively in reality, which implies isolating a historical event that might serve as the manifestation of a cause that has always guided men towards progress. For Kant that event was the French Revolution. However, he guards against the mistake of looking for the proof of progress in the fall of empires, in great crimes and catastrophes. On the contrary, the Revolutionary drama, as a project with as much potential for triumph as for failure, cannot be considered in and of itself a manifestation of progress. Foucault writes:

> what is meaningful and what is to constitute the sign of progress is that, around the Revolution, there is, says Kant, 'sympathy of aspiration bordering on enthusiasm.' What is important in the Revolution is not the Revolution itself, but what takes place in the heads of those who do not make it or, in any case, who are not its principal actors; it is the relationship that they themselves have with that Revolution of which they are not the active agents. ('The Art', p.92)

Foucault's archaeological theory of discourse is nothing if not sceptical towards historiography as the narrative of great events but its fixation with the moment and place of production means that it cannot easily handle the question of reception. Here, though, the *institution* of the Revolution means that the Revolution cannot break with *constitution*, since something has already taken place in the heads of those who do not make it, the people have themselves anticipated what is revolutionary about the event, that is to say, a structure of reception has already been inserted into the heart of the event. As Foucault himself says, for Kant the moral disposition of humanity manifests itself in two ways:

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[65] Given the name of 'The Art of Telling the Truth', in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, pp.86-95 (p.89) (first publ. in *Magazine littéraire*, 207 (May 1984), 35-39).

> firstly, in the right possessed by all peoples to give themselves the political
> constitution that suits them and, secondly, in the principle, in accordance
> with law and morality, of a political constitution so framed that it avoids, by
> reason of its very principles, all offensive war. Now it is the disposition that
> leads mankind to such a constitution that is signified by the Revolution.
> (p.93)

For the *modernistas* to forget the structurality of the event would be to constitute themselves impossibly as the signifier and signified of a revolution without a constitution, as that event which would represent a new, Latin American 'sign of the existence of a cause [...] which, throughout history itself, has guided men on the way of progress' ('The Art', p.90). And it is this rather positivistic understanding of constitution which bedevils Foucault's own theory of the *énoncé* and makes us inclined not to dismiss it simply as an over-zealous theoretical formalization of an otherwise empirical historical field. When he asks, concerning discursive formations, what is the nature of the unity thus 'discovered or constructed' [*découverte ou construite*], the latter past participle thrusts itself forward, neutralizing the equivocation. For the theory itself manifests a powerful will-to-constitute the domains and objects of which it speaks.

Archaeology, deconstruction, and historicity

In point of fact, I think Foucault would probably circumvent any apparent difference between *modernismo* and positivism along lines thus: (minor) differences apart, they both belong to the modern *episteme*, both are predicated on man as simultaneously subject and object of knowledge, and both deploy continuous history as the 'indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded

him may be restored to him' (*The Archaeology*, p.12). Even if we suspect that the 'founding function' is now occupied by the *énoncé*, the above reminds us of the sheer level of generality at which Foucault operates and it is important to recognize this conventional difference from Derrida. To that extent, do we not commit a fundamental category-mistake when we use the insights of deconstruction against Foucault's form of history? Is not Derridean deconstruction potentially debilitating for the historian? Do not the minimal remainder and the minimum of idealization of which Derrida writes – what Foucault calls 'regularity' – need to be more than minimal in order to begin the work of historiography at all? Can historiography take on board Derrida's remark (and the quotation marks are not idle) that iterability is differential within each 'element' as well as between the 'elements', and, at such an intra-elemental level, ever get started? To return to *The Archaeology*, is not Foucault right in stating, on the question of regularity, that archaeology is interested in that which marks out *énoncés* separated from each other perhaps by years as nevertheless the same? He refuses the opposition regularity-originality on the grounds that every *énoncé* is in some measure the bearer of a certain regularity in order for it to be at all considered as such. Therefore, no *énoncé* may be considered a 'pure and simple creation, the marvellous disorder of genius [*génie*]' (p.191; trans. mod.). Is he not correct, from the point of view which holds persuasively that a body of knowledge is constituted only through the sedimentation to which it is subjected by a dense network of institutions, that the identity of an *énoncé* is subordinated to conditions and limits imposed on it by surrounding *énoncés*, by the particular function it has

in a specific field? Indeed, Foucault is alive to the trap of ideality and insists

that the *énoncé* can neither be treated simply as an event nor simply as an

ideal form.[66] One thus gets a formulation which takes Foucault close indeed

to Derrida, with the difference that Foucault is more conscious of the need to

ask the question concerning a discourse's weight or heaviness:

> Too repeatable to be entirely identifiable [*solidaire*] with the spatio-temporal
> coordinates of its birth (it [the *énoncé*] is more than the date and place of its
> appearance), too bound up with what surrounds it and supports it to be as
> free as a pure form (it is more than a law of construction governing a group
> of elements), it is endowed with a certain modifiable heaviness [*lourdeur*],
> a weight relative to the field in which it is placed, a constancy that allows
> of various uses, a temporal permanence that does not have the inertia of a
> simple trace or mark, and which does not sleep on its own past. Whereas
> an enunciation may be *begun again* or *re-evoked*, and a (linguistic or logical)
> form may be *reactualized*, the statement has the peculiar property [*a en
> propre*] that it may be *repeated* – but always in strict conditions. (pp.104-
> 105; trans. mod.)

The word *lourdeur* is pressing here and we should therefore understand the

imbalance in the qualification of the two aspects – the dismissive reference to

the word *trace*, and the final phrase – as Foucault's preference for difference

over *différance*.[67]

However, the answer to the billboard question: 'What can

Deconstruction do for your history?' remains to be decided. This because

deconstruction is not to be thought of as an already-formed body of

methodological procedures which, independent of a particular application,

would always reach pre-defined ends. Which is not to say that deconstruction

is reborn every second and knows nothing of its previous incarnations.

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[66] He addresses the question of ideality on p.62 of *The Archaeology*. Although he refutes the suggestion that ideality is at work in his theory, the *functioning* of what he calls the 'group of rules' within the 'preconceptual level' does appear idealist.

[67] The chapter entitled 'The Description of Statements' can also be read as an anti-deconstructionist manifesto.

Derrida has always insisted that it is a question of *practising* deconstruction (and also knowing when to keep it in reserve). Such a practice entails holding on to all those traditional words and concepts which populate Derrida's discourse alongside the explosive lexicon. It involves retaining the 'con-' of deconstruction.[68] Derrida's practice constitutes a tremendous challenge to pedagogy (and we shall see that Foucault's objection was to Derrida's pedagogy), a challenge to the word *challenge*, to the words *institution*, *authority*, *reason*, and *truth*, but also, and inseparably, to their opposites; a challenge, then, to our modern understanding of the word *research*. Finally, and this is where we ask what history can do/has done for deconstruction, Derrida has always said that the impossibility of the *as such* (madness as such, the aporia as such, history or deconstruction as such), does not, could not, rule out the need to work with these terms and concepts. It is a matter of play and of intervention in that play. Thinking the play between the finite and the infinite is, pedagogically speaking, perhaps the most difficult and troubling aspect of deconstruction. But Derrida has shown himself to be at every turn (when he says, for example, 'Descartes says', 'Western metaphysics', 'Jacques Derrida') a brutal suspender of play, a clinical interventionist, who will select only certain (perforce strategic) 'elements' for deconstruction.

One such element might be Foucault's use of the term 'discourse', which is hardly an innocent by-stander in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. There, Foucault speaks of what he calls the scarcity (*rareté*) of discourse, that

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[68] Unlike Christopher Norris, I would not apply the word 'deconstruction' to Foucault's genealogical practice. *The Truth about Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p.31.

is, the fact that, considering the endless permutations of linguistic elements, relatively few things get said in the world. Economically speaking, *énoncés* are always in deficit. Discourse, and Foucault continues the economic metaphor, is therefore a commodity: 'an asset [*bien*] – finite, limited, desirable, useful – that has its own rules of appearance, but also its own conditions of appropriation and operation'. The final qualification 'but also...' reinscribes (somewhat despite Foucault) the commodity in a structure of grafting and the graft in the structure of the commodity; inscribes an infinite play within a finite, limited, scarce commodity.[69] A commodity which Foucault links to the question of power: 'an asset that is, by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle' (p.120). The following from Derrida's 'Limited Inc', though not ostensibly aimed at Foucault's archaeology, pushes hard at the acceptability of Foucault's metaphor of a policing of discourse from *The Order of Discourse* (cited earlier):[70]

> Once iterability has established the possibility of parasitism, of a certain fictionality altering at once – *Sec* too [*aussi sec*] – the system of (il- or perlocutionary) intentions and the systems of ('vertical') rules or of ('horizontal') conventions, inasmuch as they are included within the scope of iterability; once this parasitism or fictionality can always add *another* parasitic or fictional structure to whatever has preceded it – what I elsewhere designate as a 'supplementary code' [*supplément de code*] – everything becomes possible against the language-police; for example 'literatures' or 'revolutions' that as yet have no model. Everything is possible except for an exhaustive typology that would claim to limit the powers of graft or of

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[69] 'If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field – that is, language and a finite language – excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions' (Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign, and Play', p.289).

[70] Manfred Frank makes this point in his 'On Foucault's Concept of Discourse', in *Michel Foucault Philosopher*, pp.99-116 (p.113) where he quotes this passage from Derrida, albeit in a much traduced and melded form.

fiction by and within an analytical logic of distinction, opposition and classification in genus and species. (p.243)

Iterability, for Derrida, is not tied to convention and is not limited by it. 'If the police is always waiting in the wings, it is because conventions are by essence violable and precarious, *in themselves* and by the fictionality that constitutes them, even before there has been any overt transgression' ('Limited', p.250).

It is not a matter of dispensing with Foucault's policing metaphor: literary history, for one, functions as a kind of guard, patrolling a culture's frontiers, warding off foreign elements which threaten to wound the proper name and legitimizing a position in the same movement (although because in principle no-one escapes this condition, it would therefore not be enough *in itself* to condemn anyone). In my chosen example of the literary history of *modernismo*, one can see the police at work in the heavily Tainian discourses on *modernismo* of critics like Max Henríquez Ureña and Díaz Plaja. First, they concern themselves with the adequation of a spiritual orientation to a specific race – arguing that *modernismo* did not fit the Spanish temperament, the Spanish 'literary spirit' (Henríquez Ureña, p.519); second, with that hoary dichotomy between the Generation of 1898 and *modernismo* which posits the latter squarely as a non-rational, non-formal system of discourse, the 'contemporary projection of Mediterranianism' (Díaz Plaja, p.223); and finally, with another classical opposition: 'This abandonment of the active-rational for sensitive-passivity may it be qualified with the feminine sign?'[71]

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[71] Díaz Plaja, p.213 (for the answer).

But the policing metaphor has its limitations. We recall Foucault's words that no *énoncé* may be considered a 'pure et simple création, ou merveilleux désordre du génie'. In his *L'Archéologie du frivole* Derrida discusses in a chapter entitled 'L'Après-Coup de Génie' Condillac's belief that knowledge consists in combining things. This involves two types of ability: talent and *le génie*. The first combines things to produce expected effects. The second adds to this the idea of a creative spirit, a retracing of familiar ground to produce new angles. Of course, the 'coup de génie' needs certain historical conditions, but by the same token imagining new twists to the rules of analogy not only conforms to the genius of language but lends language some of men's own genius (*L'Archéologie du frivole*, p.49). In other words, and this is classically Derridean logic, genius does not simply respond to history, it opens it up. (It is this 'écart de génie' which Derrida calls the 'archéologie du frivole'.) Precisely the same logic is at work in 'Cogito and the History of Madness', though passed over by Foucault without comment. Derrida argues that even if the totality of my thought and of the world is imbued with madness, I still formulate the project of grasping the totality. For Derrida, everything in Descartes can be reduced to a determined historical totality except the hyperbolical project, which cannot be objectified as an event in a determined history. However, Derrida argues, at the point of this hyperbolical extremity Descartes manoeuvres God into the frame. And he does so (and I think this is what Foucault has insufficiently acknowledged, despite his observations on the meditation as an exercise unfolding in time) by temporalizing the Cogito. The Cogito itself is valid (for the mad too) only

during the instant of intuition. But one must not be mad if one is to reflect the Cogito and communicate its meaning. And it is precisely here, Derrida remarks, that internment takes place in Descartes' text. For God is suddenly conjured up as the sole guarantor of the representations and cognitive determinations, and hence the discourse against madness. In fact Derrida goes on to say that Descartes does not even wait for God, since he pulls himself out of madness by determining natural light through a series of dogmatically determined axioms which are established reciprocally on the basis of the existence and truthfulness of God. As such, for Derrida, they fall within the province of the history of knowledge. Which is why a clear distinction should be made between the hyperbolical moment of the act of the Cogito versus the language or deductive system in which Descartes must inscribe it from the moment that he proposes it for communication.

Derrida thus points up the similarity of his reading to Foucault's, since it is indeed the system of Cartesian certainty that functions to master and limit hyperbole.[72] But, Derrida argues, this movement can be described within its own time and place only if one has previously disengaged the extremity (*la pointe*) of hyperbole, which is what Foucault has not done. Thus we have hyperbole (which is 'the project of exceeding every finite and determined totality'), and 'that in Descartes's philosophy [...] which belongs to a factual historical structure'. One without the other would be strictly unthinkable since

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[72] Foucault discusses the regulation of the hyperbolic in the context of classical Greek sexuality. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure. Volume II: The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), p.50. The *aphrodisia* were naturally hyperbolic since they were associated with an *energeia* which itself tended to excess. The question concerned how to regulate rather than repress it.

at stake is the very possibility of thought: 'The historicity proper to philosophy

is located and constituted in the transition, the dialogue between hyperbole and

the finite structure, between that which exceeds the totality and the closed

totality, in the difference between history and historicity' (p.60).[73]

Finally, then, that question of voluntarism. Derrida asserts that

Foucault's book has made him better understand that the philosophical act can

no longer no longer be in memory of Cartesianism ('ne pouvait plus ne plus

être en mémoire de cartésianisme'), if to be Cartesian is to attempt to be

Cartesian. He expresses the latter project as: to-attempt-to-say-the-demonic-

hyperbole ('vouloir-dire-l'hyperbole-démonique'). And this is the passage

which answers the question that Foucault never properly put to Derrida:

> This attempt-to-say-the-demonic-hyperbole is not an attempt among others;
> it is not an attempt which would occasionally and eventually be completed
> by the saying of it, or by its object, the direct objet of a willful subjectivity.
> This attempt to say, which is not, moreover, the antagonist of silence, but
> rather the condition for it, is the original profundity of will in general.
> Nothing, further, would be more incapable of regrasping this will than
> voluntarism, for, as finitude and as history, this attempt is also a first
> passion. It keeps within itself the trace of a violence. It is more written
> than said, it is *economized*. The economy of this writing is a regulated
> relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality: the
> *différance* of the absolute excess. (p.62)

It is thus not, as Said erroneously deduces, a matter of choosing between

voluntarism or involuntarism, but of thinking voluntarism differently.[74]

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[73] I was interested to see how a common misunderstanding of Derrida's notion of excess held the key to the resolution of a recent television drama. The main sleuth related a spate of brutal attacks on women to a (fictional) lecturer in the Philosophy Department at the University of Nottingham by turning over in his mind the latter's lecture on Derrida and excess as a *modus operandi* for transgressing the limits imposed by society. *Resnick: Lonely Hearts*, BBC TV, 8 August 1993.

[74] 'Foucault's dissatisfaction with the subject as sufficient cause of a text and his recourse to the invisible anonymity of discursive and archival power are curiously matched by Derrida's own brand of involuntarism' (Said, 'The Problem', p.678).

The derangement of pedagogy

Let us return, finally, to the issue of discursive differences and subject-positions. Despite dissenting from Foucault on the question of the subject, Frow concurs with Said and Foucault to the effect that we face a simple textuality (Derrida) versus a more complex one (Foucault). Derrida offers readings of a set of texts 'taken as given' and thereby neglects '"the implemented, effective power of textual statement"' (Frow citing Said, p.214). As is well known, the final blows of Foucault's reply to Derrida touch precisely on this. Disdainfully, Foucault calls Derrida's practice 'a historically well-determined little pedagogy'.[75]

For Frow, Foucault's practice 'does not seek to defer an analysis of the "historical form" of the text until the impossible achievement of a total understanding of the text's philosophical content' (Frow, p.215). Even if Derrida has successfully challenged Foucault's positivism, his gesture toward the 'historical situation of logos' indicates, for Frow, 'the most banal, the most *philosophical* equation of the state of the real with the developed state of reason; and it robs Derrida's question of all its potentially *political* force'

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[75] 'A pedagogy which teaches the pupil that there is nothing outside the text [...]. A pedagogy which gives conversely to the master's voice the limitless sovereignty which allows it to restate the text indefinitely' (p.27). This move is a variant of theological determinism: your clever argument which rebuts the idea of determinism has been entirely determined. Foucault rehearses this in 'Entretien', *La Quinzaine littéraire*, 16 May 1966, 14-15 (p.15). 'In order to think the system [he is referring to *The Order of Things*], I was already constrained by a system behind the system, which I do not know, and which will retreat as I discover it, as it discovers itself...' *Découvrir*, 'discover', 'reveal', 'uncover', 'see'. Following Derrida, he is condemned to discovering the system *indefinitely*. He will discover it when it allows him to discover it, a fact he will discover only when the system... All of which looks remarkably like a Hegelian dialectic of the spirit, despite what Foucault says elsewhere about trying to get out of it. 'Débat sur le roman', *Tel Quel*, 17 (1964), 12-54 (p.14).

(Frow, p.216). Said is even less circumspect.[76]

I question, though, the pertinence of the oppositions erected by Foucault and company between his analysis and that of Derrida: discursive practice/textual traces, events/marks, need to go and look elsewhere/comforting belief that there is nothing outside the text. When Descartes moves from *insani* to *demens* there is thus more than philosophy at stake. And yet, the fact that *demens* should be a disqualifying term does not invalidate, and in fact can be accommodated within Derrida's argument for the feigned objection: it is precisely the scandalized voice which recognizes the legally minor position of the insane and declares such a position intolerable. The word's provenance (which is not to be thought simply) is an important detail, but the word's value and significance cannot be understood independently of its function in Descartes' text, its reinscription by his body in this paper in front of this fire. What Foucault says about discourse as an event produced at a specific time and place is alluring. But it implies that a discourse's meaning is determined by those coordinates and not by the functioning of its various elements, nor by the nature of the working of signs in general.[77] Which leaves Foucault's 'event' looking much like a 'structure'.[78]

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[76] See Said, 'The Problem', p.709.

[77] For an extreme form of this logic see Robert D'Amico, 'Text and Context: Derrida and Foucault on Descartes', in *The Structural Allegory: Reconstructive Encounters with the New French Thought*, ed. by John Fekete, Theory and History of Literature, vol.ii (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp.164-182 (p.179).

[78] I rather think Lemert and Gillan's assessment of the event in Foucault refers to their understanding of the event, not to Foucault's: 'If the long-term structures reduce the unwarranted privilege of the human in history, the event as rupture prevents structures from emerging as unidirectional determinants of human action.' *Michel Foucault: Social Theory and Transgression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.13. Foucault, I think, conceives of the event as an instance of the structure, the appearance of which precisely allows

Thus, one should be a little less hasty than Fou co. Ltd in reading Derrida's question: 'Have we fully understood the *sign* itself, in itself?' ('Cogito', p.32). Less hasty, too, with Derrida's remark that only when the totality of the philosophical content of philosophical discourse will have become manifest in its meaning for him ('but this is impossible') will he rigorously be able to situate it 'in its total historical form'. The key word is *total*. Derrida does not ward off attempts to situate Descartes' work historically; he suggests that a confident, unproblematical and total situating of Descartes' text would presuppose a prior, total exhaustion of the text's meaning which would be precisely totalitarian. I doubt very much that Derrida would dissent from Foucault's invocation to go and look elsewhere. Derrida never rules out history and never discounts causality.[79] As Derek Attridge concludes from Saussure's recourse to etymology (which the latter uses to prevent misunderstandings about a synchronic state), synchrony is an impossible fiction: 'Doesn't my knowledge of past forms of the language (whether accurate or not) necessarily affect my present use and understanding

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us to grasp the structure.

[79] If Derrida remarks (*Of Grammatology*, p.10) that history and knowledge, *istoria* and *epistémè*, have always been determined 'as detours *for the purpose of* the reappropriation of presence', that is not to rule out a more self-questioning practice of history. Derrida says that the question concerning whether an event such as the creation of a house of internment is a sign among others, whether a symptom or a cause, could appear exterior to a structuralist method for which, 'everything within the structural totality is interdependent and circular in such a way that the classical problems of causality themselves would appear to stem from a misunderstanding'. Perhaps, he says. 'But I wonder whether, when one is concerned with history (and Foucault wants to write a history), a strict structuralism is possible, and, especially, whether, if only for the sake of order and within the order of its own descriptions, such a study can avoid all etiological questions, all questions bearing, shall we say, on the center of gravity of the structure. The legitimate renunciation of a certain style of causality perhaps does not give one the right to renounce all etiological demands' ('Cogito', pp.43-44).

of it?'[80] Contrary to what Merquior believes, Derrida is not about 'ditching' history.[81]

What disturbs Derrida is Foucault's provocative act of locating his discussion of Descartes at the very beginning of the crucial chapter on the great internment, before ever confronting the socio-economic dimensions of the process. Is Descartes' supposed act of force a symptom or a cause? And if it has a structural affinity with the totality which is internment, what is the status of this affinity?[82] What, to use Said's expression, might 'the identifiable power of a text' look like and on what instrument could it be measured? In other words, and the crudity is mine, three pages on Descartes is no kind of discursive analysis at all. It simply produces a reading at once massively determined and underdetermined. The passion for system.[83] And in his treatment of the *Méditations* Foucault fails to respect what he himself describes elsewhere as the non-simplicity of the 'gesture that encloses' (*Histoire de la folie*, p.64).

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[80] 'Language as History/History as Language: Saussure and the Romance of Etymology', in *Poststructuralism and the Question of History*, ed. by Derek Attridge, Geoffrey Bennington and Robert Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.183-211 (p.200).

[81] J.G. Merquior, *From Prague to Paris: A Critique of Structuralist and Post-Structuralist Thought* (London: Verso, 1988), p.221.

[82] In *The Archaeology* (p.10) Foucault appears to address this question of the relationship between what he calls different 'series' (that is, the economic, the religious, the literary, etc.). But he still thinks in terms of 'series of series' (which he says is another way of describing the *tableau*), a notion which, despite his protestations, would not differentiate his project significantly from traditional history.

[83] Elsewhere, Derrida observes that one must not isolate notions as if they were their own context, but also one 'must not submit contextual attentiveness and differences of signification to a *system of meaning* permitting or promising an absolute formal mastery'. 'From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve', in *Writing and Difference*, pp.251-277 (p.273).

One of the stakes involved in this treatment is articulated clearly by Foucault himself when, discussing the concentration of academics in the movement for prison reform in the mid-1970s, he insists that it was not a question of a meeting of 'historians' and 'philosophers', but a matter of a common labour by people looking to '*se "dé-disciplinariser"*'.[84] The turn towards a discursive analysis and away from the internal and autonomous analysis of texts has featured prominently in contemporary literary theorizing in Britain. This confident belief in the capacity to grasp literature's institutionality, its disciplinarity, seems to me closely bound to a loss of confidence – only partly in the study of literature itself. Of course, Foucault himself would not focus on internal structures, though notice in this proposal-to-think-the-hyperbolical-project how he presupposes what he claims advenes (that is, literature):

> In order to know what is literature, I would not want to study the internal structures. I would rather grasp the movement, the small process through which a non-literary type of discourse, neglected, forgotten as soon as it is spoken, enters the literary domain. What happens there? What is released? How is this discourse modified in its efforts by the fact that it is recognized as literary?[85]

I think one glimpses something of the difficulty, nay madness, of practising a discursive analysis of literature in the conclusions reached by Terry Eagleton and Colin McCabe.[86] Eagleton's response to what he describes, in decidedly

[84] Foucault, 'La Poussière et le nuage', in *L'Impossible prison*, pp.29-39 (p.39).

[85] 'On Literature', in *Foucault Live*, p.117.

[86] For similar expressions of literary-critical insanity see During, pp.198, 237; and Barbara Riebling, 'Remodeling Truth, Power, and Society: Implications of Chaos Theory, Nonequilibrium Dynamics, and Systems Science for the Study of Politics and Literature', in *After Poststructuralism: Interdisciplinarity and Literary Theory*, ed. by Nancy Easterlin and Barbara Riebling (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), pp.177-201 (p.191).

Foucaultian terms, as the 'power of "policing" language' which the literary-academic institution arrogates unto itself, is to call for a different critical practice, which would study 'what Michel Foucault has called "discursive practices"', that is, the 'whole field' of practices that come to decide what counts as 'literature' (*Literary Theory*, p.205). His would therefore be a return to rhetoric, to a practice which

> saw speaking and writing not merely as textual objects, to be aesthetically contemplated or endlessly deconstructed, but as forms of *activity* inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers, orators and audiences, and as largely unintelligible outside the social purposes and conditions in which they are embedded. (p.206)

I shall end with a contemporary literary example which condenses peculiarly well the difficulties, the madness, which this project brings in its wake. The applicability of Foucault's theory of discourse as event to literary production finds an unfortunate test case in the affair surrounding Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, as Rushdie himself acknowledges. In his 1990 lecture, entitled 'Is Nothing Sacred?', Rushdie quotes from Foucault's 'What Is an Author?' to the effect that 'texts, books and discourses really began to have authors... to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive'.[87] The Foucault piece rehearses a familiar pincer movement: the subject of discourse is not the author, yet real individuals can assume the position of the subject.[88] But that is by the bye. More germane to my argument is Rushdie speaking (via Pinter)

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[87] 'Is Nothing Sacred?', The Herbert Read Memorial Lecture, 6 February 1990 (Granta), p.11. For reasons of safety, the lecture was delivered by Harold Pinter. Foucault's essay can be found in *The Foucault Reader*, pp.101-120.

[88] 'Where has it [discourse] been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?' (*The Foucault Reader*, p.120.)

with Foucault's words:

> In our culture (and doubtless in many others), discourse was not originally
> a product, a thing, a kind of goods; it was essentially an act – an act placed
> in the bipolar field of the sacred and the profane, the licit and the illicit, the
> religious and the blasphemous. Historically it was a gesture fraught with
> risks. (p.11)

What Rushdie's case itself illustrates only too well is that discourse, in this case literary, is still viewed as an event, an act which takes place at a definable historical moment. An event marked by Rushdie's position as a lapsed Muslim within a new tradition of non-English writers of literature in English; an act received in parts of the world mobilized against perceived blasphemies of the *Koran* by a militant Islam bolstered by the fundamentalism of the Iranian revolution. A summary glance at the fate of Flaubert, D.H. Lawrence, Oscar Wilde, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz before them, serves to remind us that the literary discursive event has indeed been a gesture fraught with risks. And yet, although he does not say as much, Rushdie articulates some of the limitations of Foucault's practice. Rushdie's act has been constructed as a simple, punishable act only on the basis of a misunderstanding of literary discourse. Only by virtue of a reduction of the novel's plural voices (and the novel is about nothing if not voices) to a single, determinate position of the author, Salman Rushdie, only by collapsing cacophony into monologue, can the *fatwa* be issued. Only by determining the precise discursive formation of which *The Satanic Verses* is a statement, and then by making the real Rushdie identical with a discernable subject-position within the novel (despite-the-play-of-fiction-we-all-know-it's-Rushdie-speaking), can the novel be adequately described as an event. In short, a Foucault-type analysis would condemn itself to repeating

the move against discourse which Foucault denounces in others. *The Order of Discourse* exposes the ways in which a society controls, organizes and innoculates discourse, which, if given its rightful free reign, would show its lawlessness, its proliferation to infinity, its 'strange', 'frightening' and 'maleficent' qualities. We might question whether discourse could ever show its lawlessness, if discourse must not, rather, in principle always submit to law in general. But as to the omnipresence and -potence, the law, of a single subject-position, I'm making no claims at present – that would be folly.[89]

To conclude. It remains important to allow for a difference in genre and conventions between a practice like Foucault's and that of Derrida. Foucault was interested in the perfectly reasonable question of why people in institutions of knowledge come to articulate a certain body of learning. Faced with evidence of certain general rules, it is perhaps not surprising that his discourse should at times assume the visage of the lawlike. However, the tremendous effort to account for regularity in theoretical terms perforce carries within it the risk of a deterministic gesture of exclusion of becoming. I shall argue in the next chapter that the first volume of the history of sexuality responds to this danger.

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[89] *The Satanic Verses*, p.10: 'I know the truth, obviously. I watched the whole thing. As to omnipresence and -potence, I'm making no claims at present.'

CHAPTER 4

BIG SCIENCE, LITTLE SCIENCE AND THE CONSTITUTION OF FOUCAULT'S 'POWER'

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, an oft-repeated criticism has been that Foucault's conceptual apparatus is marked by a certain rigidity, attributable to a largely spatial, structural understanding of thought, discourse, the subject and society. In this chapter I shall argue that with *La Volonté de savoir* a significant reorientation takes place and that insufficient attention has been paid to the differences which distinguish the elaboration of power in *Discipline and Punish* from the notion of power as it comes to be re(de)fined in the volume on sexuality.[1] In *La Volonté de savoir*, plurality, difference, instability and disequilibrium are broached as never before. What we see there is the deconstitution, not the abandonment, of the constitution metaphor, a process driven by the thinking of time and becoming which had hitherto been the great unthought (rather like Husserl's delay in incorporating genesis into his theory of phenomenology). In addition, and despite Foucault's attack on the depiction

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[1] *The History of Sexuality.* Volume 1: *An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984). Unless otherwise indicated, all page references refer to this text, though I have preferred the French title owing to its Nietzschean overtones.

of power as law, I shall argue that Foucault never abandons, could never abandon, the regular and the lawlike, the Constitution.

With respect to the question concerning the ends of power and knowledge which we began to explore in Chapter three, this chapter will explore the nature and consequences of the opposition which Foucault sets up between power on the one hand and meaning on the other. We shall ask here what hope there can be for the possibility of measuring power once one accepts its unstable, fractured, plural, *microphysical* character. In fact I shall contend that we have in *La Volonté* both the sketch of a fundamentally inorganic, dynamic world predicated on inequality, where the latter designates the structural imbalance of forces without which there would be no power, and the powerful desire to construct a theory that would allow Foucault precisely to trace and 'see' that inequality. (To that extent, Foucault's insistence on the microphysical, his effort to be microscopic, does not distance him from a spatial, structural thought.) To that end, the chapter will explore some of the theoretical touchstones of contemporary science, in an effort to suggest that Foucault on power cannot adequately be understood from within a perspective shaped exclusively by the humanities. Specifically, I shall draw on aspects of the theory of relativity, quantum mechanics, evolutionary theory and, lastly, theories of deterministic chaos – all this to suggest that Foucault's 'power' circulates, and largely holds its own, in a much larger theoretical field. As with many of the scientific theories, so in Foucault the very small is supplemented by considerations of much more conventional dimensions. Despite the brouhaha surrounding micro-powers, one cannot overlook the

importance in Foucault of the macro and the systemic (it is not without significance that many of his analyses should concentrate on the macro phenomenon of population), and we will be suitably vigilant when the microphysical, the local and the recondite threaten to move to their own rhythm. By the same token, I shall suggest that theoretical science can offer a challenge to Foucault's theory: for instance nonrandom cumulative selection as a corrective to Foucault's vaunting of chance. It, along with other theories, suggests convincingly that thinking time, mobility, change and contingency need not necessarily lead to thinking disorder.

The local, the specific and power

There is a famous formulation which is often hailed as Foucault's clearest expression of the shift in his work away from what he himself calls 'the great model of language (*langue*) and signs' towards a Nietzschean model of war and battle. It reads:

> The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning. History has no 'meaning', though this is not to say that it is absurd or incoherent. On the contrary, it is intelligible and should be susceptible of analysis down to the smallest detail – but this in accordance with the intelligibility of struggles, of strategies and tactics.[2]

In another place, he speaks of wanting his books to be Molotov cocktails.[3]

Accompanying this new thematics (which is not entirely new) are a number of

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[2] Foucault, 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp.109-133 (p.114) (first publ. as 'Intervista a Michel Foucault', trans. by Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino in Michel Foucault, *Microfisica del potere* (Turin, 1977)). In *Moi, Pierre Rivière*, Foucault insists (problematically) that medical, juridical and other discourses form a battle rather than a text. In *Remarks on Marx*, he shows signs of tiring of the war metaphor (p.180).

[3] Foucault, 'Sur la sellette', *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 17 March 1975, p.3.

related themes the appearance of which implies a departure from and criticism of the earlier archaeological texts, in which such themes were either too latent or indeed absent altogether. I am thinking of the themes of specificity and practice, which are to be opposed to the abstract theorization and generality characteristic of the work on *epistemes* (though even in an archaeological text like *The Archaeology of Knowledge* there is a pronounced thematics of plurality and specificity, of discontinuous levels and autonomous domains *pace* Althusser, and in fact that text anticipates (p.193) the analysis conducted in *La Volonté*). In the new work, Foucault postulates that such doughty theorizing is part of the problem, a postulate he shares with thinkers like Deleuze and Lyotard and which is broadly symptomatic of the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism.[4] By the mid-1970s Foucault has contributed immensely to making specificity a desirable and worthy objective, and in the process himself come to epitomize the new breed of 'specific intellectuals' engaged in local analyses 'at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations)' ('Truth and Power', p.126).

The stress on the local and the specific is not idle; it directs his thought on power. In *La Volonté de savoir*, where Foucault elaborates on the work done (though not begun) in *Discipline and Punish*, he writes of wanting to move towards an *analytics* rather than a *theory* of power (p.82). The preference for the word *analytics* bespeaks Foucault's conviction that the role for theory

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[4] Spivak cites Deleuze's (similarly problematic) action-man expression: '"A theory is like a box of tools. Nothing to do with the signifier"'. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p.275.

today is 'not to formulate the global systematic theory which holds everything in place, but to analyse the specificity of mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions, to build little by little a strategic knowledge (*savoir*)'.[5] This emphasis is confirmed in interviews of the time, where Foucault repeatedly upbraids the knowledge industry for its overblown theorizing and lack of a sense of the specific, both of which he suspects have come to exert an inhibiting effect on thought. Nevertheless, does the text of the first volume on sexuality bear out these statements on specificity? In fact – and I will argue shortly that this is no coincidence – the reflection he develops bears, in its speculative and general quality (he speaks of 'advanc[ing] a certain number of propositions' about power [p.94]), many of the hallmarks of more abstract, old-fashioned theory.

What, he asks in that volume, explains the tendency in Western societies to recognize power only in the 'emaciated form of prohibition'? Why persist with this juridical and negative representation? A power only to say no; 'in no condition to produce, capable only of positing limits, it is basically anti-energy' (p.85). 'Power', he reasons (and we can almost hear the quotation marks), can be 'positive', in the sense that it is capable of actively moulding or 'producing' individuals. Power's condition of possibility 'must not be sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and descendent forms would emanate'. 'It is,' he continues, 'the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of

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[5] 'Power and Strategies', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp.134-145 (p.145) (first publ. as 'Pouvoirs et stratégies', *Les Révoltes logiques*, 4 (1977)).

their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable' (p.93). I shall return to this passage and to the place of that word *inequality*. Note, for now, and they saturate the text, the semantics of dynamics and of production: power is not; power is becoming.[6] If Foucault can speak of the 'omnipresence' of power, it is because power 'is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another' (p.93).[7] His next words are worth citing in their entirety, since they constitute one of Foucault's clearest statements on power, while at the same time harbouring a by now infamous axiom:

> *Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.* And 'Power,' insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement. One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a certain complex strategical situation in a particular society. (p.93; my emphasis)

This invocation of the local has a political agenda, since it is not a matter of the local for the local's sake. The return of the local represents, in Foucault's eyes, an *'insurrection of subjugated knowledges'*.[8] By this he means not only erudite historical knowledge which has been forgotten or overlooked; he refers at the same time to knowledge which has been disqualified on the grounds of naivety or insufficient elaboration (he cites

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[6] Hence Foucault's suspicion of identity politics. We must work, he says, 'at becoming homosexuals'. 'Friendship as a Way of Life', in *Foucault Live*, pp.203-209 (p.204) (first publ. in *Le Gai pied* (April 1981)).

[7] It is as well to point out at this early stage the crucial influence of Deleuze. For Deleuze's Nietzsche all reality is nothing but quantities of force in mutual 'relations of tension'. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (London: The Athlone Press, 1983; repr. 1992).

[8] Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp.78-108 (p.81; his italics) (first publ. in *Microfisica del potere*).

variously the knowledge formulated by the psychiatric patient, the ill person, the delinquent, women, conscripted soldiers, homosexuals). Yet how does this insight square with that slogan 'Power is everywhere... because it comes from everywhere.' Does this mean that power emerges equally from everywhere? And from everything? The polemic spawned by such phrases arises from the image of a power so mobile and decentred as to make us lose sight of those blockages, knots and (non-)alignments which permit us to speak of inequality. (It is interesting how, when pressed in a 1977 interview, Foucault inflects the issue of mobility differently. A certain stability is invoked which allows him to be more definite about the respective 'potentials' for power of certain positions: 'In so far as power relations are an unequal and relatively stable relation of forces, it's clear that this implies an above and a below, a difference of potentials'.[9])

In fact, if we look back at that passage from Foucault, two powers are in play here, a point clearly marked in the passage and systematically ignored by commentators.[10] First there is 'power' (*le pouvoir*) and then there is '"Power"' (*'le' pouvoir*).[11] The second is evidently a more traditional, 'over-all' name for the general 'complex strategical situation in a given society'. Foucault is much less concerned with this power, but never entirely

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[9] 'The Confession of the Flesh', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp.194-228 (pp.200-201) (first publ. as 'Le Jeu de Michel Foucault', *Ornicar?*, 10 July 1977).

[10] E.g. Edward Said, 'The Problem of Textuality', p.710.

[11] The English resorts to the capital letter to highlight the stress on the article which is lost in translation. Foucault himself says that he never uses the word power with a capital P. 'Clarifications on the Question of Power', in *Foucault Live*, pp.179-192 (p.185) (first publ. in *Aut Aut*, 167-168 (1978)).

unconcerned with it, as we shall see later. By contrast, the first represents a new inscription of the word's meaning, with the aim of re-marking Foucault's nominalistic contention that power is not a thing or a substance, which one might possess or capture whole for one's own use. It is not embodied, self-present and self-identical, in either a state, social system or individual. The entire drift of the text is to counter a notion of power characteristic of a historically specific social form: the juridical monarchy. The reason being, for Foucault, that power no longer has that form in our society. Whence the slogan: 'The representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy. In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king' (pp.88-89). 'In political thought and analysis': it goes without saying that Foucault's purview exceeds the specifically sexual, the latter being precisely an impossibility.

La Volonté exceeds the sexual by binding sex closely to power. In one of those reversals of which we spoke in the first chapter, 'sex' is produced by a *dispositif* of sexuality, which is itself produced. (I preserve the French *dispositif*, since it suggests not only 'apparatus' and the workings of a machine, but also the (military) sense of a more strategic spatial arrangement of forces.) This Nietzschean hypothesis entails thinking the process by which sex is objectified and essentialized. Foucault must argue that the essentialist notion of sex, by which it comes to function as a 'causal principle', a 'unique signifier' and a 'universal signified' (p.154), is itself the reversal; viz. that sex – aided by an appropriation of the biological sciences – is thus made to appear an irreducible thing that power comes to subject from the outside, rather than

appearing in its essential and positive relation to power. Thus, the idea of 'sex' obfuscates what makes power powerful, reducing everything to law and taboo. By contrast, for Foucault, sex is 'the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a *dispositif* of sexuality' (p.155; trans. mod.). One already senses a significant *volte face* here. Power produces not real bodies, as in *Discipline and Punish*, but ideal, fictive unity. Foucault is close at this point to a classical theory of ideology, with a garnishing of *techne*. However, if the quotation is allowed to continue, one witnesses Foucault's language, betraying the cause somewhat, speaking of power as a being-able-to. The hand of power is once again raised: '[a *dispositif* of sexuality] organized by power in its grip [*ses prises*] on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures' (p.155). Old metaphors exert a grip of their own.

Theoretical physics

It can be postulated that this first power, which Foucault believes is proper to our own epoch (though ultimately this is difficult to maintain), has its cognitive roots less in political thought than in certain other fields, of which I name but three. Firstly, this century's natural sciences – particularly post-Einstein physics and post-DNA biology; secondly, a Nietzscheanism heavily filtered through Gilles Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*; and thirdly, a certain Derridean logic. (On the question of influence it should be said that *La Volonté*, with a power at once open and plural, is a sociological *S/Z*.)

Postponing the last two until a later moment, it is to the natural sciences that we now turn, for it is first and foremost this nexus that will be

explored in the present chapter. We recall that Foucault termed power in the negative, juridical view 'anti-energy'. By contrast his is the discourse of 'capillarity', 'micro-relations of power', 'force', 'micro-physics'. This scientific lexicon at times invests his work with a strained ring of scientificity (Foucault himself speaks of nineteenth-century reproductive biology rewriting economic, political and moral concerns 'in a scientific-sounding vocabulary' [p.55]), but more importantly it also places him foursquare within the new tradition of the specific intellectual. As he observes in another interview, it is with Darwin and the post-Darwinian evolutionists that such a figure begins to emerge, a line continued by the theorists of relativity at the turn of the century. Biology and physics, then, 'were to a privileged degree the zones of formation of this new personage' ('Truth and Power', p.129).

One obvious bridge into the natural sciences for Foucault is the work conducted in the history of science by people like Canguilhem and Bachelard. Foucault attributes to Canguilhem the distinction between the microscopic and the macroscopic which will be of such value to him, and one thinks of Bachelard's demand that concepts be thought relationally, his displacement of the notion of object, his refusal to think knowledge without specification.[12] However, this chapter's concern is with more contemporary inflections of these themes, and in any event one is obviously dealing with certain 'truisms' of twentieth-century science, of which Bachelard's work, say, would be but one instance. I should therefore like to begin examining this cluster of themes

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[12] See Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology*, pp.39, 52, 54. Significantly, what counts for Bachelard is thinking the process of objectification.

(relationality, displacement of the object, specification) in a contemporary and popularizing account which charts the state of the art of theoretical physics, Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes.*[13] I shall first discuss the general theory of relativity (which deals with the very big), before moving to an overview of quantum mechanics (which treats of the infinitesimally small). My aim is to see the degree to which certain concepts in those fields operate in Foucault's own discourse.

I begin with the challenge posed by Newton's work to the Aristotelian belief in a preferred state of rest. Although Newton himself resisted the conclusions of his own findings, his work suggested there simply was no such absolute standard. Henceforward, it was impossible to determine whether two events taking place at different times occurred in the same position in space. Hawking cites the example of a Ping-Pong ball on a train bouncing up and down on a table on the same spot at one-second intervals. To someone at the side of the track, the two bounces would appear to take place forty metres apart. Hence, the positions of events and the distances between them would vary according to the position of the observer, and no observational position would be intrinsically better than any other.

However, Newton did believe, along with Aristotle, in absolute time, a position challenged in turn by the theory of relativity. James Clerk Maxwell's theory that light should travel at a fixed speed ran into the problem, in the wake of Newton's dismissal of the idea of absolute rest, of determining what that fixed speed was to be measured relative to. Einstein (and Poincaré

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[13] London: Bantam Press, 1988; repr. 1992.

in parallel work) argued that it was necessary precisely to abandon the notion of absolute time. In the theory of relativity the speed of light is the same for all observers irrespective of their own motion. But because the distance the light has travelled differs for each observer (since space is not absolute, as the example of the commuter Ping-Pong ball demonstrates), the time taken is also disputed (since the time taken is equal to distance divided by speed). Absolute time crumbles. Observers assign different times and positions to the 'same' event. And yet although this is relativity, it is not chaos. In an important sense — and this point will be emphasized in a different context later — the system as a whole still holds, even in the face of sundry observers:

> No particular observer's measurements are any more correct than any other observer's, but all the measurements are related. Any observer can work out precisely what time and position any other observer will assign to an event, provided he knows the other observer's relative velocity. (Hawking, p.22)

Einstein's general theory of relativity holds also that gravity is a consequence of the fact that space-time is 'warped' by the distribution of mass and energy in it. Similarly, it predicts that time should appear to run slower near a massive body like the earth which has a stronger gravitational field.[14] The example of the twins illustrates this point. If one twin lived on a mountain and the other at sea level, the first would age faster. But if the first twin were to relocate to a very dense planet, he would age more slowly than

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[14] 'This is because there is a relation between the energy of light and its frequency (that is, the number of waves of light per second): the greater the energy, the higher the frequency. As light travels upward in the earth's gravitational field, it loses energy, and so its frequency goes down. (This means that the length of time between one wave crest and the next goes up.) To someone high up, it would appear that everything down below was taking longer to happen' (Hawking, p.32).

his brother.[15] The paradox, Hawking remarks, is a paradox only if one thinks in terms of absolute time. He sums up:

> Before 1915, space and time were thought of as a fixed arena in which events took place, but which was not affected by what happened in it. [...]
> The situation, however, is quite different in the general theory of relativity. Space and time are now dynamic quantities: when a body moves, or a force acts, it affects the curvature of space and time – and in turn the structure of space-time affects the way in which bodies move and forces act. Space and time not only affect but also are affected by everything that happens in the universe. Just as one cannot talk about events in the universe without the notions of space and time, so in general relativity it became meaningless to talk about space and time outside the limits of the universe. (p.33)

Therein the rub. For Edwin Hubble discovered in 1929 that distant galaxies are moving rapidly away from the earth: ergo, that the universe is expanding and knows no limits. For the young Alvy Singer this was existentially disturbing.[16] For Foucault, the disturbance will indeed be existential – the cosmos itself refuting the image of equilibrium imputed to it – though by definition not necessarily negative.

Let us go from the very large to the very small, from relativity to quantum mechanics, beginning precisely with the quantum. Max Planck's quantum is defined as a packet of energy in which waves are emitted or absorbed, a notion subsequently used by Werner Heisenberg in his attempts to predict the future position and velocity of a particle. The idea may be summarized thus: by shining light on the particle, the scattering of waves of light which ensues will indicate the particle's position. The shorter the wavelength of the light the more accurate the measurement. But, *pace* Planck,

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[15] Peter Coveney and Roger Highfield, *The Arrow of Time: The Quest to Solve Science's Greatest Mystery* (London: Flamingo 1991), p.95.

[16] Woodie Allen, *Annie Hall*, 1977.

to achieve this measurement one has to use at least one quantum of energy, the problem being that this quantum disturbs the particle and changes its velocity in unforeseeable ways:

> Moreover, the more accurately one measures the position, the shorter the wavelength of the light that one needs and hence the higher the energy of a single quantum. So the velocity of the particle will be disturbed by a larger amount. In other words, the more accurately you try to measure the position of the particle, the less accurately you can measure its speed, and vice versa. (Hawking, pp.54-55)

In short, and to come rather too quickly to the point, quantum mechanics emerges on the basis of this uncertainty principle. Particles do not have separate, well-defined positions and velocities, but a quantum 'state' which is a combination of position and velocity. Likewise, quantum mechanics cannot offer up a single definite result for an observation, but deals in predicting a number of different possible outcomes and estimating the likelihood of each. 'One could predict the approximate number of times that the result would be A or B, but one could not predict the specific result of an individual measurement. Quantum mechanics therefore introduces an unavoidable element of unpredictability or randomness into science' (Hawking, p.56).

And yet not everything defies definition. Hawking explains that of the universe's two groups of particles (those which make up matter and those which give rise to forces between the matter particles), the matter particles obey what is known as Pauli's exclusion principle (after Wolfgang Pauli). To wit, it is impossible for two similar particles to exist in the same state, since, in line with the uncertainty principle, they cannot have both the same position and the same velocity. The exclusion principle helps account for the fact that matter particles do not collapse to a state of high density under the force

exerted by the second group of particles, that such matter particles form separate, well-defined atoms instead of collapsing to form a 'roughly uniform, dense "soup"' (Hawking, p.68).

But the outcome does not make for a static, if nicely structured, universe, and this because the force-carrying particles do not obey Pauli's exclusion principle. Instead, the force-carrying particles emitted from matter particles induce change: first, in the velocity of the matter particle as it recoils; then, in the velocity of a second matter particle which absorbs the force-carrying particle that collides with it. And at some level in the theory (because all this is speculative), in order for the earth and all the galaxies to exist it would have to be the case that in the high-energy heat at the beginning of the universe more antielectrons turned into quarks than electrons into antiquarks: so that despite the fact that every particle has an anti-particle with which it can annihilate, as quarks annihilated with antiquarks a small excess of quarks remains. Hawking notes in a telling parenthesis: '(Had it been an excess of antiquarks, however, we would simply have named antiquarks quarks, and quarks antiquarks)' (Hawking, p.78).

The significance of this theory emerges in Hawking's discussion of the challenge to the commonly-held view of black holes, appropriately entitled 'Black Holes Ain't So Black'. Theoretical speculation and calculation had come to suggest that black holes should emit particles, a flat contradiction of the very being of black holes since one of the latter's defining characteristics was precisely that nothing could escape from its event horizon. Quantum theory offers a plausible hypothesis, positing that the particles do not come

from within the black hole, but from the 'empty' space just outside the black hole's event horizon. The following passage may be read as an inspired piece of reasoning (not simply by Hawking, but by an entire tradition, inherited and understood by Foucault) according to which force is everywhere... because it comes from everywhere:

> What we think of as 'empty' space cannot be completely empty because that would mean that all the fields, such as the gravitational and electromagnetic fields, would have to be exactly zero. However, the value of a field and its rate of change with time are like the position and velocity of a particle: the uncertainty principle implies that the more accurately one knows one of these quantities, the less accurately one can know the other. So in empty space the field cannot be fixed at exactly zero, because then it would have both a precise value (zero) and a precise rate of change (also zero). There must be a certain minimum amount of uncertainty, or quantum fluctuations, in the value of the field. (Hawking, pp.105-106)

'There must be...', theoretically speaking. But theory is supported by calculation and measurement. As Hawking says, the fluctuations of which he speaks may be thought of as pairs of force-carrying particles which remain virtual (since they cannot be observed with a particle detector). One is thus in the business of calibrating their effects: all very Foucaultian. However, these effects, Hawking insists – and he cites the example of small changes in the energy of electron orbits in atoms –, 'can be measured and agree with the theoretical predictions to a remarkable degree of accuracy' (Hawking, p.106). Relativity, if I understand it correctly, issues in and recognizes a certain play; at the same time, however, standards and norms do not thereby disappear into the nearest black hole: the theorist's armature still bristles with instruments, gauges and formalized equations to register, measure and evaluate. It is arguably here, in the measurement of effects and in the determination of cause, that Foucault's model of power, and probably any model of social power,

comes up against severe limitations. Einstein's own mistrust of the quantum mechanics he had helped spawn is due largely to its apparent eschewal of causality. On the bicentenary of Newton's death, Einstein wrote: 'May the spirit of Newton's method give us the power to restore unison between physical reality and the profoundest characteristic of Newton's teaching – strict causality' (Coveney and Highfield, p.121).

Force(s)

One wonders if, for the first and 'new' power of which we spoke earlier, Foucault would not have been better served by the word *force*, reserving the word *power* for an executive use, as a difference of potentials, of being-able-tos (*pouvoirs*). The OED defines *power* in one of its technical meanings as 'Any form of energy or force available for application to work. *spec.* a. Mechanical energy [...] as distinguished from hand-labour, often viewed as a commodity saleable in definite quantities [...] b. Force applied to produce motion or pressure.' Now there is something unduly instrumental, quantifiable and substantial about all this, as though power could be gathered and released at will, which is just what Foucault did not intend. On the other hand, this is what the same source has to say about *force*, in its scientific meaning:

> 11. *Physics*, etc. Used in various senses developed from the older popular uses, and corresponding to mod. scientific uses of L. *vis.* a. (= Newton's *vis impressa*...). An influence (measurable with regard to its intensity and determinable with regard to its direction) operating on a body so as to produce an alteration or tendency to alteration of its state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line; the intensity of such an influence as a measurable quantity.

And this is followed by an interesting aside in smaller print: 'Recent physicists

mostly retain the word merely as the name for a measure of change of motion, not as denoting anything objectively existing as a cause.' Such a definition might just be more workable, especially if one's critical project is an unrelenting attack on our understanding of cause (particularly as embodied in the psychological positivism of *homo natura*) and yet one is still in the business of nomination, as Foucault says he is.

As a matter of fact, in the chapter on 'Method' from the first volume on sexuality, the expression *force relations* is used repeatedly, and almost tautologically, as a virtual synonym of power. The chapter's first attempt at a definition reads: 'It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization [*sont constitutifs de leur organisation*]' (p.92). This 'multiplicity' of force relations is immediately followed (it literally begins the next phrase) by 'play', *le jeu*: 'the play which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them' (p.92; trans. mod.).[17] Multiplicity and play suffice to de-constitute any 'organisation'. *La Volonté* questions the very possibility, and certainly the sufficiency, of any constitution (both process and resultant) or, more still, construction, without decommissioning any of those terms. Time and movement take their place taking place away. Power, and with it the constitutional model of power-knowledge, necessarily lose their grip, without thereby becoming destitute.[18] For Foucault, the whole shebang is multiplicities

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[17] The translation has 'process' for *jeu*.

[18] Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*, p.517: 'The world is already constituted, but also never completely constituted.'

of force relations, moving around, colliding, deflecting; webs and spirals of them, shifting, mutating, regrouping. And if there are resistances, then these are but the 'odd term' in relations of power, inscribed in the latter as an 'irreducible opposite' (p.96). For their sins they, too, are 'distributed in irregular fashion [...] at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behavior' (p.96).

This characterization of power and resistance has met with a forceful counter-lobby. For Jean Baudrillard in *Oublier Foucault* – and his is perhaps the most compelling, the most eloquent of many similar voices – Foucault's discourse is a mirror of the powers it describes.[19] 'Too perfect', it describes 'an interstitial flowing of power that seeps through the whole porous network of the social, the mental, and of bodies'; no backfiring, just a flawless writing (pp.10-11). Yet Foucault's 'power' still remains a mystery for Baudrillard. What is a force relation without a force resultant? And what sense could it make to say that 'the same fragment of gesture, body, gaze, and discourse encloses both the positive electricity of power and the negative electricity of resistance' (p.37)? Power remains a structural, polar notion 'with a perfect genealogy and an inexplicable presence':

> Power no longer has a *coup de force* – there is simply nothing else either on this side of it or beyond it (the passage from the 'molar' or the 'molecular' is for Deleuze still a *revolution* of desire, but for Foucault it is an anamorphosis of power). (p.39)

One form of power dominates and is diffracted into the prison, the military,

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[19] Paris: Editions Galilée, 1977. All references are to the English translation, *Forget Foucault* (Columbia: Semiotext(e), 1987).

the asylum, etc.:

> Power is an irreversible principle of organization because it fabricates the real (always more and more of the real), effecting a quadrature, nomenclature, and dictature without appeal; nowhere does it cancel itself out, become entangled in itself, or mingle with death. In this sense, even if it has no finality and no last judgment, power returns to its own identity again as a *final principle*: it is the last term, the irreducible web, the last tale that can be told; it is what structures the indeterminate equation of the world.[20] (p.40)

It appears that Baudrillard in fact pours *Discipline and Punish* indiscriminately into *La Volonté de savoir*.[21] He takes from the former the undoubted totalizing impulse and sense of spatial entrapment, and from the latter the metaphorics of spirals, coils, movement and time. Foucault's 'power' is then born as a species of malevolent and amorphous, energized slime that spreads unstoppably throughout the social, seeping into pores and slowly extending its empire over bodies and minds, like something out of a low-budget 'B' movie. Baudrillard writes that because, in Foucault, power is an

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[20] The translation mistakenly reads 'word'. Might it not be the case that Baudrillard's insistence on the catastrophic potential of reversibility is guided by a certain reading of science? He argues that our culture gives meaning only to what is irreversible (accumulation, growth, progress, production, power) and that the slightest dose of reversibility injected into our economic, political or sexual machinery would suffice for everything to collapse at once. Thus, power's *mise-en-scène* (since power itself does not exist) is the sign that 'the substance of power, after a ceaseless expansion of several centuries, is brutally exploding and that the sphere of power is in the process of contracting from a star of first magnitude to a red dwarf, and then to a black hole absorbing all the substance of the real and all the surrounding energies, now transmuted at once into a single pure sign – the sign of the social whose density crushes us' (p.51). But black holes ain't so black. Surrounding energies and all the substance of the real would therefore never quite be absorbed.

[21] He is not alone in failing to distinguish the two. The most bizarre example is Barbara Riebling, 'Remodeling Truth, Power, and Society: Implications of Chaos Theory, Nonequilibrium Dynamics, and Systems Science for the Study of Politics and Literature', in *After Poststructuralism: Interdisciplinarity and Literary Theory*, ed. by Nancy Easterlin and Barbara Riebling (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), pp.177-201 (p.178ff). She deals precisely with everything she mentions in the title, yet forgets about *La Volonté*. See also During, pp.130-131; Duccio Trombadori, 'Introduction: Beyond the Revolution', in *Remarks on Marx*, p.20; Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989; repr. 1991), p.83; Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), p.34; Dreyfus, 'On the Ordering of Things', p.82;

immanent, unlimited field of forces, 'we still do not understand what power runs into and against what it stumbles since it is expansion, pure magnetization'. Similar misgivings are voiced by Toril Moi. She argues that the price to be paid for giving in to Foucault's seductive and powerful discourse is the depoliticization of feminism:

> If we capitulate to Foucault's analysis, we will find ourselves caught up in a sado-masochistic spiral of power and resistance which, circling endlessly in heterogeneous movement, creates a space in which it will be quite impossible convincingly to argue that women under patriarchy constitute an oppressed group, let alone develop a theory of their liberation.[22]

Like Baudrillard, Moi insists that the crucial point bears on the question of '*what* it is that resists power' (Moi, p.100). It cannot be sexuality, she says, since Foucault claims that power produces sexuality. Nor can it be individuals, since he reduces the subject to subjection. In fact, Moi reflects, Foucault is unable to answer: 'His celebratory account of the pleasures of power degenerates into a kind of pan-powerism where "power" has become a nebulous, mystical entity beyond the reach of human reason' (Moi, p.101).

Now, I recognize the difficulty of conjuring up an adequate image of power, when *adequatio* is just what is being put into question. But if there is anything that Foucault's 'power' would not do, it would be to run into something or stumble against something else. Foucault's 'power' in *La Volonté de savoir* is much less substantive (and photogenic), far more abstract (and destined for box-office failure). It is, as he repeatedly says, relational. Power would thus not suddenly bump into something which, finally, would

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[22] 'Power, Sex and Subjectivity: Feminist Reflections on Foucault', *Paragraph*, 5 (March 1985), 95-102 (p.95). With the expression 'sado-masochistic spirals' Moi is perhaps closer to the mark than she realizes. For Foucault and sado-masochism see James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), ch.8.

resist it, since power is the name Foucault gives to that process of perpetual collision, fusion, slippage and grating. I have already petitioned for the neutral term 'force' to describe the powers in play (if I might be permitted the tautology). As a matter of fact, Moi ends her piece with a quote from Peter Dews – the author of an influential critique of Foucault's notion of power – which makes the same point, therein, to my mind, reinforcing rather than challenging Foucault's position:

> 'If the concept of power is to have any critical political import, there must be *some* principle, force or entity which power 'crushes' or 'subdues', and whose release from this repression is considered desirable. A *purely* positive account of power would no longer be an account of power at all, but simply of the constitutive operation of social systems.' (Moi, p.101)

Precisely. As was said earlier, one never escapes, or is released from, forces; one changes their direction and balance. And this insight, this question of change and changing, is what enables *La Volonté*, and we with it, to escape from the theoretical prison of the earlier book.

In addition to the scientific intertext, this insight owes much to a Deleuzean Nietzsche. A dominating force would not be generically different from a dominated force; it would be quantitatively greater. And qualitatively too, since quality is the difference in quantity. Simplifying matters unduly we might say that in Nietzsche the difference in the quality of forces usually corresponds to the difference between 'active' and 'reactive' forces, and it would be the former that in general dominated. However, it is possible to find a situation in which the reactive forces have the upper hand. In such an event, and crucially for Nietzsche, the reactive forces would not simply become active. Nietzsche reserves the right to evaluate the respective forces on criteria

all his own, which is why he can argue, against Darwin's evolutionism, that natural selection tends, if anything, to lead to '"the defeat of the stronger, the more privileged, the fortunate exceptions"' (Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, p.58). This is why Deleuze says that the problem of measuring forces 'will be delicate because it brings the art of qualitative interpretations into play' (p.42).

Foucault's endeavour, by contrast, is to rewrite the formal structure of Deleuze's Nietzsche in terms of power and resistance: if a resisting force, by definition an inferior force, became superior in quantitative terms, it would cease to be resistance and become power. Baudrillard is thus correct in saying that 'the one-sidedness of a force relation never exists' (p.44); but wrong in thinking that Foucault believes otherwise. Nominalism is vital here (and that word 'vital' should be understood in all its senses). As Hawking says: if there had been more antiquarks than quarks left over from the Big Bang, we would have called them quarks. The term 'power', as already indicated, would then be reserved, in a very old-fashioned, nominalistic way, for the designation, the massively difficult and fraught task of naming the beneficiaries of the imbalance of forces. Something Foucault never shirks. (By contrast, and in spite of the image of Nietzsche's thought as thunderously abstract and mythical, and of Foucault's reputation for thinking through the dirty reality of social institutions, Foucault is far more reticent about attaching positive values to specific individuals, groups or social classes.) He never gets so caught up in sado-masochistic spirals, so hooked on quicksilver micro-power as to deny that women under patriarchy constitute an oppressed group. However, as in Nietzsche, a newly powerful force need not necessarily be viewed positively.

At this juncture, we recall Derrida's logic regarding Reason in general. We need go no futher than 'Cogito and the History of Madness'. There Derrida writes:

> The unsurpassable, unique, and imperial grandeur of the order of reason, that which makes it not just another actual order or structure (a determined historical structure, one structure among other possible ones), is that one cannot speak out against it except by being for it, that one can protest it only from within it; and within its domain, Reason leaves us only the recourse to stratagems and strategies. (p.36)

Further, since the revolution against reason can operate only within reason, 'it always has the limited scope of what is called, precisely in the language of a department of *internal* affairs, a disturbance' (p.36). I disagree with Roy Boyne's conviction that Foucault's formulation of power in *Discipline and Punish* is Derridean.[23] Boyne cites Foucault to the effect that 'there is no outside', but what Foucault actually says, if I may supply the missing context, is that 'the carceral network [...] has no outside' (*Discipline and Punish*, p.301). He thereby restricts the concept of power to a determinate historical structure (the carceral) and does not, as I argued in Chapter 2, think through the possibility of resistance, which is to misunderstand Derrida's Reason in general. It is Reason in general, or Foucault's power in general, that offers no outside; but it does so only by sacrificing the cohesion of the inside, such that the inside can always be displaced, disrupted, strategically disturbed. Should it be said that one is always 'inside' power, Foucault asks. Or that, history being the ruse of reason, 'power is the ruse of history, always emerging the winner?' (p.95) No. Because resistances are always within the power

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[23] *Foucault and Derrida: The Other Side of Reason* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

network.[24] Rivière's story would therefore not remain, as he previously contended, 'below power' (*Moi*, p.270). Although in *La Volonté* Foucault still refers to power as a specific configuration of our epoch, the propositions that he advances concerning the nature of modern power take the form of generalized abstractions about insides and outsides reminiscent of a Derridean logic. And this is enough to deflect part (though not all) of the criticism levelled at Foucault by Rainer Rochlitz, according to which a simplification by Foucault vis-à-vis modern power allows him to stand as an exceptional individual able to free his mind from this infiltration.[25] Foucault is not outside power; he has glimpsed the consequences irradiating from the (non-specifiable) dislocation of power's centre.[26]

A cautionary word, though, about resistance and the law. Towards the end of *La Volonté*, Foucault writes of the great struggles which, since the nineteenth century, have challenged the general system of power. (Note the scale: like the power it challenges, this resistance is not micro.) He states, strictly in accordance with his theory, that the forces that resist do so on the back of the same 'things' which power invests – namely, life and man as a living being. However, he is struck by the fact that this resistance is

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[24] See 'Powers and Strategies' (pp.141-142) for a clear restatement of this conviction.

[25] 'The Aesthetics of Existence: Post-Conventional Morality and the Theory of Power in Michel Foucault', in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, pp.248-259 (p.254).

[26] There is perhaps no more pressing example of the need to think this 'economy' of power than that of economics itself. Eduardo Galeano points tellingly, apropos of the birth of the new Latin American republics at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to the constitutive market *forces* of a purportedly 'free' freetrade regime. *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, trans. by Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), p.198.

articulated in the language of law, viz. claims to the right to life, to health, to happiness and, of course, to the body. Foucault mentions this detail as if to highlight the gap between a modern, quicksilver form of power and its arch-traditional rationalization. Again, in the 'Preface' to *Anti-Oedipus* he exhorts us not to demand of politics that it restore the 'rights' of the individual; rather, what is needed is 'de-individualization' (p.xiv). But he does not follow through the possible ramifications of this gap for the critique he builds concerning the obsolescence of the model of power as law. Rather, he confuses the forms of force/resistance with the forms in which that force and its resistance are put into discourse. Thus when he observes that modern power emerges at the same time as a plethora of Constitutions and Codes written in the wake of the French Revolution, he adds that this noisy legislative activity should not fool us, since the forms it takes fail to do justice to the ungraspable nature of power. But might it not be the case that the fate which befalls the affirmation of resistance to bio-power of which Foucault speaks – that is, its fall into an outmoded form of expression which literally (and therefore dangerously) fails to come to terms with the nature of the beast – is the fate which befalls every such affirmation?

The famous rallying cry towards the end of the book illustrates this point well. Foucault postulates that in claiming the right to our sex, in making sex the truth and index of who we are, in desiring its and our own liberation, and in believing (for it is a question of belief) that in this process we say no to power, we are bound just as closely to the apparatus of sexuality which keeps us in debt to our sex. Therefore:

> It is the authority of sex that we must break away from, if we aim – through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality – to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance. The rallying point for the counterattack against the *dispositif* of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures. (p.157; trans. mod.)

But the law is never far away. Whoever affirms the need to think beyond sex-desire, beyond an essence of sex, beyond the thought of the prohibition, exclusion or repression of sex, and even beyond the law of desire, affirms the right of affirmation. In other words, the Constitution which underwrites constitution pejoratively envisaged must also underwrite the revolution. Which does not suffice to bring sex back within the rule of law. This is the need for a double strategy that Derrida insists on, the necessity of complementing theory with a political lobby to alter legislation and rights which may have to preserve work on metaphysical presuppositions until later.[27]

A further word about this passage and about the economy of power. Foucault has been much criticized for this call to bodies and pleasures, to some simply ingenuous, to others the logical conclusion for a radical libertarian pessimist. For Baudrillard, Foucault's position, in spite of his refusal to accord any kind of place in his theory to desire, remains remarkably Deleuzean. Foucault's 'pleasures' constitute the use value of the body and thus even where he appears to take his distance from 'sex-desire' he still ends up rediscovering in bodies an unbound energy which would be opposed to the 'bound energy' of productive bodies. And for Baudrillard, a capitalist imprint marks the scenario to which the insistence on production leads: if one cannot control

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[27] Derrida, 'Choreographies' (Interview with Christie V. McDonald), *Diacritics*, 12 (Summer 1982), 66-76.

one's own means of production, one can at least control the product's circulation:

> sexual jurisdiction is the ideal means, in a fantastic extension of the jurisdiction governing private property, for assigning to each individual the management of a certain capital: psychic capital, libidinal capital, sexual capital, unconscious capital. And each individual will be accountable to himself for his capital, under the sign of his own liberation. (Baudrillard, *Forget*, p.26)

In any event, one can already detect in Foucault's passage the germ of later, more personal work on the possibility of individual self-control leading to the creation of a certain radius of freedom around the individual: the work of individuals as opposed to the work of systems.

And yet it is possible to view *La Volonté* as the first properly dynamic response by Foucault to the opposition of system and individual. First, one is to free oneself, Foucault says, from the authority, the *instance* of sex – a specific juridical form of conceptualizing sexuality – not from sex *tout court*. Second, the phrase 'if, through a tactical reversal [...] possibility of resistance' does suggest, problematically, that bodies, pleasures and corpuses of knowledge stand against power, as though to let one's pelvis girate lasciviously outside Parliament would suffice, in itself and always, to subvert power. But Foucault writes of valorizing these things 'in their multiplicity and their *possibility* of resistance', and we have already seen that resistance, for him, is not outside power: it is little power; and that in the same way that these things have resistance possibilities, they have other, less disruptive ones. It is always possible that the most brilliant local strategy may be no resistance at all. Third, this is a 'counter-attack', to valorize and forge a legal space for specific bodies, pleasures and corpuses of knowledge which fall outside a constraining

– and often mythical – norm. But it is not the war to end all wars. The specific, as Foucault realizes, does not allow us to put an end to power; neither will a particular resistance always and forever, and we with it, be outside power. There is no 'single locus of Refusal', no 'pure law of the revolutionary' (pp.95-96); only resistances existing in 'the strategic field of power relations' (p.96). He will therefore dream in the book's penultimate paragraph of 'a different economy of bodies and pleasures' (p.159), not of the absence of economy. Consequently, thinking the 'moving substrate' would thus mean thinking the former's complex and labile provisionality with rigour and anxiety, and with an eye to the similar precariousness of the thought which thinks. It is therefore difficult to suscribe to the theory of the break between volumes one and two of the series on sexuality. The first volume clearly foreshadows the return in the second volume to a markedly old-fashioned, not to say universal philosophical pronouncement on the importance of the act of thought:

> The 'essay' – which should be understood as the assay or test by which, in the game of truth, one undergoes changes, and not as the simplistic appropriation of others for the purpose of communication – is the living substance of philosophy, at least if we assume that philosophy is still what it was in times past, i.e., an 'ascesis,' *askēsis*, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought. (*The Use of Pleasure*, p.9.)

Notwithstanding what we have said about resistance, it remains that the imagery of webs, subatomic powers, magnetic force fields and power radiating from all points is undoubtedly not user-friendly, precisely Toril Moi's objection. She reasons that a political theory such as feminism must necessarily posit the existence of an agent of an action, even if this is seen to be no more than an aspect of the decentred human psyche. Now, I am not

sure that I can redeem or recuperate Foucault for Moi by pointing to a specific page where Foucault whispers sweet nothings about human agents. The nearest he gets to this ideal is the statement that 'power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective' (p.94). But while fully conceding that *La Volonté* is not agent-friendly, I really do not see that Foucault's thoughts on power rule out human agency, that people are vaporized into fluxes. Again, it might be more instructive to conceive of the arrow, which in any situation where power is at stake might seem to point to an agent, as an arrow-effect, which is not to volatilize the subject.

Let us take an example. An example of a sexual agent which comes from Foucault and 'is' 'Foucault'. Completed in draft form in 1958, *Folie et déraison* is presented as part of a doctoral thesis in 1961. In chapter 3 of the book, Foucault touches on Classical age internment, relating how miscellaneous 'experiences' viewed as socially deviant are suddenly lumped together under the single banner of Unreason. The first instance he cites of a domain affected by these experiences is sexuality and its relations with the organization of the bourgeois family (*Histoire*, p.97). He then expatiates, examining firstly the handling of those suffering from venereal diseases. Secondly, he turns to sodomites and homosexuals.[28] Foucault contends that by the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century in France a new leniency in the punishment of sodomites – internment rather than the former punishment, *ignis et incendium* – is paralleled by a moral condemnation which begins to punish

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[28] He will choose sodomy once more in *La Volonté* (pp.133-134), this time to show how discourses condemning it create space for discourses laying claim to it.

homosexuality. The Renaissance's tolerance of homosexuality is replaced by a new, moralizing intolerance. Two formerly separate experiences are thus conflated and homosexuality passes into the realm of prohibition at the same time as it is classified as an 'unreasonable love'.

Now, without glorifying Foucault's intervention in this academic force field, we nonetheless witness here Foucault's self-inscription, his highly personal (and risky) intervention *qua* human agent in the field of sexuality and power. In the France of the 1950s this is a bold step. Although homosexuality was not illegal, a Vichy decree of 6 August 1942 – subsequently upheld by De Gaulle – had outlawed homosexual acts with an individual under twenty-one years of age, thereby reversing the trend of tolerance stretching back to the Constituent Assembly of 1791 which 'for the first time in modern history contained no penalties for homosexual activity that did not entail the use of force or the violation of public decency'.[29] There is an important sense, then, in which Foucault's work on sexuality does not wait until the aftermath of the sexual revolution and certainly cannot be construed as riding on its coat-tails. It already informs the earlier work on madness and

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[29] *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, ed. Wayne R. Dynes, 2 vols (Chicago: St. James Press, 1990), I, p.424; see also Antony Copley, *Sexual Moralities in France 1780-1980: New Ideas on the Family, Divorce and Homosexuality* (London: Routledge, 1989). There is a poignant comparison with Britain here, concerning the case of a British mathematician, Alan Turing, whose pioneering work contributed immensely to the body of knowledge concerning self-organization in chemistry which I shall touch on at the end of this chapter. Turing killed himself in the wake of his trial in 1952 on a charge of Gross Indecency after confessing to his homosexuality. Put on probation, he was sent for medical treatment – 'organo-therapy' – where hormones were administered to curb his sexual urge (Coveney and Highfield, p.189). I cite this instance to support Foucault's case – if support were needed – concerning the yoking together of medical, juridical and moral 'knowledge' in an important sense 'producing' unreason.

exclusion.[30]

And yet it is hardly proper to reduce *Histoire de la folie* to autobiography – which is really what James Miller attempts to achieve in his biography of Foucault, appropriately called *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, and what the BBC television programme on Foucault (based largely on Miller's book) tries somewhat pathetically to beat us with.[31] Nor should one reduce the gesture of resistance to a single individual. So, calibration of resistance, and of degrees of power, becomes infinitely difficult. Which is just what *La Volonté* says, even if it offends our sense of justice and of the power of human reason.

The Order of Things: histories already plural and successive

It is worth recalling that questions of inorganicism, of dynamism and even of specificity were already central to *The Order of Things*, and it is possible to read the later volume on sexuality as a sort of cranking up to an advanced degree of the logic of specification and pluralization outlined in the earlier work. In that early text, Foucault points up what he sees as the dispersal of History into plural, autonomous temporalities specific to individual things and beings. This is Foucault's modern *episteme* and challenge to the historicist account of the nineteenth century as the century of a single history

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[30] See *Histoire de la folie*, p.103.

[31] 'Michel Foucault: Beyond Good and Evil', programme by Benjamin Woolley broadcast on *The Late Show*, BBC, 7 June 1993.

shared by all.[32] Rather than belonging, as in the Classical age, to one great, essentially visible order of things which could be enumerated and classified, around the end of the eighteenth century things come to 'acquire' their own depth, internal structure and temporality, along with their own hidden force. European culture – and the parallel with Nietzsche is irresistible – turns to origins, to causality and to history. Since we are concerned with science, let us take the example of the shift from natural history to biology, from the project of a general *taxinomia* to the laying bare of hidden internal functions. Comparative anatomy is decisive here in opening up the depths to reveal hitherto invisible resemblances and establish continuities (though also differences) between species (for example, in the common functions of breathing, digestion, reproduction, etc.). Rather than the traditional image of the continuous scale (*échelle*) which had prevailed in the eighteenth century, Foucault suggests the image of multiple rays spreading out from an ensemble of centres. Nineteenth-century nature is thus discontinuous precisely insofar as it is alive. This is what allows Foucault to say that from Cuvier onwards 'biological being becomes regional and autonomous'.[33] It is the rupture of the Classical space which reveals life's fundamental historicity. Even if Cuvier's system cannot be described as evolutionism and even if his belief in the fixity of species appears to represent a refusal of history, his system has already inscribed time, growth, decay and death in the midst of life. For the Classical

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[32] On historicism, see Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason* p.42; on single history, p.49.

[33] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.273. Unless otherwise indicated, all references in this section are to this work.

age, chronological succession was but a property and manifestation of the order of beings; from the nineteenth century on, it expresses the profoundly historical way of being of each and every thing. Life becomes a fundamental force. Opposed to being as movement is to immobility, time to space, life becomes the common root of being and non-being.

The important point to bear in mind is that Foucault believes that since the nineteenth century knowledge has itself become fragmentary and heterogeneous. One example of this would be the differing conceptualizations of the same theme of historicity that one finds in biology and economics. The former holds that individuality is a precarious moment on the path to annihilation, but that the obstinate recommencements of life in general prevent us from imposing a limit to its duration. The latter, on the other hand, and by virtue of a powerful concatenation of events, ushers in thoughts of the ultimate immobility of History, which, Foucault says, can take two routes.[34] The first (Ricardo) involves rejoining a stable state which was in any case what history had always been progressing towards; the second (Marx) means reaching a point of return where history is stabilized only by suppressing what it had hitherto been. Whence Foucault's scathing comment on Marxism's fish-in-water existence in nineteenth-century thought: Marxism shares the dream that the flux of becoming, with all its iniquities, will be caught up in an anthropological finitude, and that with the end of time will come the truth of

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[34] The concatenation runs as follows: land rents rise due to the scarcity of productive terrain -> entrepreneurs' profits fall -> no new workers taken on -> working population stagnates -> no demand for new land -> land rents level out -> pressure eases on industrial revenues which then stabilize.

man: '*Finitude*, with its truth, is given in *time*; and suddenly *time* is *finite,*

finished [*fini*]' (p.263).

The final chapters of *The Order of Things* are a great attempt to surpass

this anthropological thought of finitude. For, like those organs that possess

their own rhythm and structure, man in turn loses his History only to gain

histories:

> nature no longer speaks to him of the creation or the end of the world, of his
> dependency or his approaching judgement; it no longer speaks of anything
> but a natural time; its wealth no longer indicates to him the antiquity or the
> imminent return of a Golden Age; it speaks only of conditions of production
> being modified in the course of history; language no longer bears the marks
> of a time before Babel or of the first cries that rang through the forest; it
> carries the weapons of its own affiliation. The human being no longer has
> any history: or rather, since he speaks, works, and lives, he finds himself
> interwoven in his own being with histories that are neither subordinate to
> him nor homogeneous with him. [...] The man who appears at the beginning
> of the nineteenth century is 'dehistoricized'. (pp.368-369)

(One must temper Foucault's brilliance here. While it does not remain the

same, talk of creation, of a Golden Age and of Babel does not disappear.) For

Foucault, man's historicity is fundamentally ambiguous. On the one hand,

since he can only be known insofar as he speaks, labours and lives, his history

is an inextricable knot of different temporalities. On the other hand, since it

is man who speaks, labours and lives, it is man's positive historicity that makes

other histories possible.

A similar fate befalls the human sciences. History affords them a

cultural, temporal and geographical domain in which to work; but in so doing

it erects frontiers which limit that knowledge and with it the pretensions to

universality. History is thus engaged in an oscillation between the temporal

limits which define the singular forms of labour, life and language, and the

historical positivity of the human subject. As a result, subject and object are

reciprocally submitted to a kind of erosion. Together, the unconscious and History would therefore constitute the two faces of man's finitude which has never finished. Foucault is here touching on the excess of man and of thought in a manner reminiscent of Derrida's thrust in 'Cogito and the History of Madness'. In this finitude which has never finished there would always be something left for it to think in the very instant of thought, always be time left to think anew what it has thought. Foucault erodes the limits both of knowledge and of the human subject by pushing at the notion of finitude. This is why, in the final pages of the book, he turns to psychoanalysis, to ethnology and to linguistics (though it would be more accurate to say literature) as the disciplines of modern thought most capable of questioning and contesting the limits of man. The first two touch on the limits of man's consciousness and of what in a culture is to be regarded as natural and normal. The third announces that man is finite/finished, that in language man does not arrive at his own essence, but at the edge of what limits him. Interestingly, and despite an apparently quasi-universal reach, Foucault states that because the first two disciplines are directed towards what constitutes the external limits of man, they never get near a general concept of man because the uncertainty of limits prevents them from determining what is specific to man, what might be uniformily valid for him.

Close here to a species of deconstruction, Foucault distances himself, however, from deconstruction by suggesting that one abandon the subject completely. Such a radical desire to see and imagine beyond the present begins by first negating the contents and forms of the present, and ends by

locating the new order in the heterotopia of language. This is an ingenious way of thinking becoming without thinking the end or goal of that becoming, without thinking a become, since language would be, or would always be becoming *the* non-place. But removing man (as opposed to displacing him), allocating him no place at all, makes for an end-game of mystical, not to say apocalyptic, dimensions.

This is the substance of Derrida's essay 'The Ends of Man', the critique of an antihumanist, antianthropologist vogue of thought in 1960s France which Derrida believes has insufficiently assimilated the critiques of anthropology and metaphysics carried out by Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, while believing it has surpassed them.[35] For Derrida, in certain respects 'we are still on the same shore', a revealing choice of metaphor which recalls Foucault's famous image from the final lines of *The Order of Things* where he wagers on the effacement of man, 'like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea' (p.387). Besides, the essay's third epigraph is taken precisely from *The Order of Things*: 'As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.' For Derrida, it is a question of thinking with greater rigour what it might mean to think the end, or ends in all its senses, of man. Hegel's *Aufhebung* of man, Derrida writes, doubtless marks the end of man, that is, man past. But by the same token, and reading 'end' differently, it also marks 'the achievement of man, the appropriation of his essence'. Derrida continues:

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[35] In *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982; repr. 1986), pp.111-136.

> *It is the end of finite man* [*C'est la fin de l'homme fini*]. The end of the finitude of man, the unity of the finite and the infinite, the finite as the surpassing of the self – these essential themes of Hegel's are to be recognized at the end of the Anthropology when consciousness is finally designated as the 'infinite relationship to self.'

For Derrida, Hegel had already put into question any simple understanding of man's self:

> The *relève* or *relevance* of man is his *telos* or *eskhaton*. The unity of these two *ends* of man, the unity of his death, his completion, his accomplishment, is enveloped in the Greek thinking of *telos*, in the discourse on *telos*, which is also a discourse on *eidos*, on *ousia*, and on *alētheia*. Such a discourse, in Hegel as in the entirety of metaphysics, indissociably coordinates teleology with an eschatology, a theology, and an ontology. *The thinking of the end of man, therefore, is always already prescribed in metaphysics, in the thinking of the truth of man.* What is difficult to think today [1968] is an end of man which would not be organized by a dialectics of truth and negativity, an end of man which would not be a teleology in the first person plural. (p.121)

I mention Derrida's piece because of a striking achievement and a lingering difficulty in Foucault's first volume on sexuality. On the one hand, the Foucault of *La Volonté* is no longer concerned with any simple end of man, any beyond of man which would entail the removal to another, altogether different shore. This corresponds to the first strategy of deconstruction, that is, deconstruction without changing terrain, whereby one uses the concepts of metaphysics to disturb the edifice of Western thought (which is to be opposed – though not absolutely – to the second strategy, which entails changing terrain 'by brutally placing oneself outside, and by affirming an absolute break and difference' [Derrida, 'The Ends', p.135]). On the other hand, despite the lexicon of plurality, difference, kinesis, instability and strategic reversals, despite all this effort at thinking the complexity of relationality, the thought of power has not managed to distance a stubborn teleology and a finitude of more conventional garb.

The ends of power and knowledge

What, then, of the ends of power and knowledge? One of the principal achievements of Foucault's work consists in submitting to scrutiny the traditional view that knowledge is strictly delimited from power, that knowledge begins where power ends; and in suggesting, by extension, that the borders placed around a particular field of knowledge might themselves constitute highly artificial divisions. These insights already inform *Histoire de la folie*, even when the reciprocal nature of power-knowledge is not yet recognized, even when knowledge is conceived, conspiratorially, as a simple disguise of power.[36] Similarly, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* touches on the dubious nature of the distinctions traditionally drawn between the major types of discourse we happily call science, literature, philosophy, etc. Dubious enough applied to our own world of discourse, but doubly so when applied to another era: 'After all, "literature" and "politics" are recent categories, which can be applied to medieval culture, or even classical culture, only by a retrospective hypothesis' (*The Archaeology*, p.22). (Or, at least, only with care: it would be the difficult dream of historicism – which Foucault occasionally also dreams – to believe it possible to dispense with 'recent categories'.) This argument forms the substance of 'What Is an Author?': the author is a function, a principle of thrift in the economy of meaning, but the latest in a series of such functions the powers of restriction of which have served to limit the play of discourse. It also applies to the idea of the book.

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[36] See *Histoire de la folie*, p.525.

Here Foucault joins Barthes, Kristeva, Derrida[37]:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut [...] it is caught up in a system
> of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within
> a network.[...] The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's
> hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it:
> its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses
> its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a
> complex field of discourse. (*The Archaeology*, p.23)

This persuasive logic of intertextuality is mutually supported by the

notion of the non-extrinsic relations of power and knowledge, that is to say,

by a fundamental mistrust of the doctrine of knowledge for knowledge's sake.

Even literary discourse would not be devoid of power-effects. Literature, the

teaching and theorizing of literature, thus become, have always been – and this

in strict accordance with Foucault's metaphor of war – sites of struggle. It is

then the proper of knowledge to think the ruses of power-knowledge and to

engage in struggle.

Now this logic, which has become a truism of contemporary critical

theory, goes hand in hand with a general, 'post-modernist' trend away from

high theory towards local, less grand theories. However, with the aid of two

brief examples, the first from a conference, the second from a newspaper

article, I should like to question this praise of the particular and its

understanding of the ends of power and knowledge. Before doing so, it is

important to underscore that Foucault does not say, as far as I am aware, that

knowledge *is* power. Had he done so, he would no longer have anything to

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[37] One instance. Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image Music Text*, p.156: 'Just as
Einsteinian science demands that the *relativity of the frames of reference* be included in the
object studied, so the combined action of Marxism, Freudianism and structuralism demands,
in literature, the relativization of the relations of writer, reader and observer (critic). Over
against the traditional notion of the *work*, for long – and still – conceived of in a, so to speak,
Newtonian way, there is now the requirement of a new object, obtained by the sliding or
overturning of former categories. That object is the *Text*.'

say, 'since in identifying them I would have had no reason to try to show their different relationships'.[38]

The first example comes from the 'Inequality/Theory' Conference held under the aegis of the School of Critical Theory at the University of Nottingham in July 1992. One of the Conference's main tendencies was its concern with a sort of interventionist theory which could be brought to bear on specific social as much as intellectual questions of inequality. However, in the final Plenary session of the Conference, Geoffrey Bennington gave a paper which we might characterize, broadly speaking, as an unashamed example of high theory, and what interests me here is the reaction which it aroused. Dwelling in an eminently Derridean fashion on the question of 'Difference and Inequality', and striving to engage with the bald terms of the Conference title, Bennington passed by way of Hegel on the Enlightenment and the terrorism of knowledge, through Kant, and on to Derrida's notion of *différance*. His concluding remarks stressed that *différance* is precisely the name for the absolute impossibility of difference, the impossibility of absolute difference, which would, rather, be a Hegelian return to absolute identity. Thus, those social groups brandishing 'The right to difference' as a political slogan run an essentializing risk. Instead, they should be claiming the right to be different differently. The argument is the classical Derrida-influenced one warning against the seduction of a narrowly defined identity politics. The identity fought for and subsequently lauded as proper to the group in question can itself

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[38] Foucault, 'The Concern for Truth', in *Foucault Live*, pp.293-308 (p.304) (first publ. in *Le Magazine littéraire* (May 1984)).

become, the argument goes, terroristic and intolerant of differences which threaten to disturb it. One might think here of the vexed question of the search for identity which polarizes so many debates on Latin America. In some hands, the question, loosely asked (and Rigoberta Menchú constitutes one prominent contemporary instance), is about affirming marginalized peoples, silenced values and lost social relations. In others, narrowly asked, it lends itself at worst to an aggressive, if untenable, pan-Americanism and at best to a well-meaning trade in continental-sized stereotypes. García Márquez's utterances on Latin America merit attention in this latter respect.

Now, Bennington's paper did not reach me without interference. Aside from the fact that I am no hi-fidelity receiver, I was also distracted throughout the presentation by noises and violent gestures coming from someone seated immediately in front. This second form of interference ended during question time when that person, manifestly upset at not understanding the paper and saying as much, walked out. There would be little remarkable in this episode were it not for the fact that she was not alone in those sentiments. Another conferencee asked Bennington with pointed irony what he thought about the propensity of certain theorists to resort to elitist language. The question (the answer to which I think prompted the walk-out) met with murmurs of approval. I patently cannot rule out the possibility of subjective distortion, but the reaction of some of the audience seemed to be that Bennington had dwelt on inequality too theoretically. That he had been guilty of emphasizing theory at the expense of inequality, and, indeed, that ultimately his variant of theory had perpetuated a kind of inequality. His variant of theory. It is not, of

course, a question of theory versus non-theory.

I mention the Bennington case because it provides one of the clearest examples, in a sense by default, of a pronounced desire, manifest in many of the Conference papers, to see theory at work in the service of the fight against a demonstrable social inequality. To see theory, adopting a social imperative, instrumentally active in the struggle of a particular social group experiencing inequality. Not something I would take issue with. That critical theory should exhibit a social imperative is a view which strikes me as impossible to refute, and for reasons I have already touched on with Foucault. It is not that such a view is simply correct; rather, it is not incorrect. After all, we are in the historical tracks of Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* ('literary theory [...] is really no more than a branch of social ideologies, utterly without any unity or identity which would adequately distinguish it from philosophy, linguistics, psychology, cultural and sociological thought');[39] and Christopher Norris's *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* ('[The] mystique of origins and presence can best be challenged by annulling the imaginary boundaries of discourse, the various territorial imperatives which mark off "literature" from "criticism", or "philosophy" from everything which stands outside its traditional domain').[40] Once the propriety of object or method is sundered, and this sundering of the proper becomes itself widely taught and learnt (for the sundering has, theoretically at least, always already been there; what is new is its institutionalization), the notion of 'correctness' assumes a value anywhere

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[39] Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, p.204.

[40] London: Methuen, 1982, p.23.

between the quaint and the quartermasterly. It is then always possible to reproach knowledge for its impurity, its conceptual and discursive entanglement in systems of values and in the social.

But what to make of a 'Critical Theory' Conference which engages at every turn with inequalities while shying away from the analysis of the term *inequality* and, still more, of the relationship between inequality/theory? It need not be, and I insist on this, that the Conference was intolerant of Bennington-type theory – but it was remarkably lacking in it. In any event, to consider abstract speculation misplaced because it appears indifferent to tangible inequality, because it fights no obvious cause, seems to me to be questionably confident, in this post-Saussurean age, about the relationship between the sign and 'history', between the sign and 'reality'.

In this respect, and I now move away from the Conference to my journalistic example, it is interesting how the refusal of a certain traditional, canonical form of critical correctness shades into a more modern form. (In moving away I doubtless sacrifice a certain consistency here, a certain specificity, though I do not believe I have moved altogether outside the text of the Conference.) In an article published in *The Guardian*, Lisa Jardine, Professor of English at Queen Mary and Westfield College, argues, in the wake of the appearance of *The Selected Letters of Philip Larkin 1940-1985*, that the racism, misogynism and parochialism of the new documents confirm her department's decision to displace Larkin to the margins of their course.[41] One of the beliefs that informs this view is that Literature, *pace* Eagleton (whom

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[41] 'Saxon Violence', *The Guardian*, 8 December 1992, Arts 4.

she quotes later in the piece), can no longer be considered a comfortably delimited realm and therefore rather than treat it as such we should study the 'cultural frame'. After all, 'the work is the product of its times; its author's preoccupations are those of a generation, a class and a nation'. This is literature as improper object and Larkin's poetry as improperly representative of those times.

Yet, on the other hand, Larkin is not representative: 'Actually, we don't tend to teach Larkin much now in my Department of English. The Little Englandism he celebrates sits uneasily within our revised curriculum, which seeks to give all of our students, regardless of background, race or creed, a voice within British culture.' Laudable but confused. A confusion crystallized by Jardine later in the same piece with the help of another commentator:

> The furore over Larkin (censored or uncensored) is a row about cherished values. Tom Paulin thinks we are no longer allowed [Police Warning: A.S.] Larkin (or Virginia Woolf), because their writings are structured by key beliefs to which we can no longer subscribe. To acknowledge their beliefs and still to promote the cultural centrality of their works is, in his view, at best dishonest, at worst viciously corrupting.

The syllogism: Larkin belongs to another age, our age does not share those beliefs, therefore Larkin is not important, is the stuff of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ('Ingsoc. The sacred principles of Ingsoc. Newspeak, doublethink, the mutability of the past').[42] Whatever became of those Saussurean insights? Sent packing on the 8.45 London-Paris boat train? Annulling the imaginary boundaries between verse and beliefs, abolishing their absolute difference becomes instead a collapse into an undifferentiated sameness. 'Above all,' Jardine writes, 'we teach our students to read with care, and to take account

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[42] George Orwell, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, repr. 1983), p.27.

of the nuanced opinions that careful reading reveals. In 1992 that means teaching our students to see through the even texture of Larkin's verse, to the parochial beliefs which lie behind them.' Oh Philip, how could you?... From text back to work.

There are a number of questions which go unexplored by Jardine, questions regarding the power-effects of a literary artifact and the capacity of theory to determine them: (a) If one destroys – as opposed to deconstructs – the propriety of literature, if Larkin's work is said to have multiple effects beyond the literary (since the literary is itself always marked by the social), what are these effects and where do they take place? (b) Derrida reminds us: 'That a declaration of opposition to some official policy is authorized, and authorized by the authorities, also means, precisely to that extent, that the declaration does not upset the given order, is not *bothersome*' ('The Ends', p.114). (c) If power is to be thought plurally, as powers, is it the case that Larkin's poetry exercises purely dastardly powers? Does it, in this weighing up of its effects, resist nothing? Does it produce no other effects? Do we know, and can we calibrate, the ways in which poetry *affects*? (d) What is the speaker's benefit in power-accountancy? This essentially Foucaultian question touches on the self-interest involved in telling the truth about power. Here Foucault muses on the business of speaking about sex in terms of repression: 'As if the urge to talk about it, and the interest one expects from doing so, had far exceeded the opportunities for being heard (*possibilités de l'écoute*), some people have even rented out their ears (*mis leurs oreilles en location*)' (p.7).

I wonder if what one sees at work in the Conference and in Jardine is

not something like a reinstated finalism, wherein the production, functioning and power-effects of signs would become specific and specifiable; and the academic reassume the function of chartered accountant, power-broker, estate agent. Despite protestations of difference, plurality and openness, the thought of power always threatens to close in on its subject, to denounce it by means of a knowledge knowing the ends of power, knowing how to calibrate power's effects, knowing that it can resist the forces of power. Such is my objection to Jardine: the hasty gathering up of the multiple strands of Larkin's work into a single, and terribly impoverished, principle of ideological unacceptability. Here nothing in Larkin would exceed the ear of power, least of all anything specifically poetic, anything powerful in specifically poetic ways.

But in this question of representation, would it not be necessary to dwell a little longer – to theorize – on the nature of the relationship between power and signs? The linguistic and political dimensions of representation are inseparable if we aspire, from our specific situation in the academy, to the latter via the former. Besides, in Foucault's terms, there can be no 'pure law of the revolutionary' (p.96), even where, perhaps especially where, one thinks to have sundered both object and method. From which it follows that theoretical discourse, after Foucault's fourth rule ('Rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses'), in which he enjoins us to 'conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable' (p.100), cannot be confident of its valence and *telos*, nor indeed its 'critical' nature.

Inequality and theory

Let us return to *La Volonté de savoir*, where history has the form of relations of power and where Foucault has redoubled his efforts to think the plural, the unstable and the miniature. I attach particular importance to Foucault's leaning on the expression *force relations*, for the latter, with its connotations of an infinitely mobile network, with its gesture to relativism and to a positionality without positive term(ination)s, condenses a contradiction which goes to the core of Foucault's methodological vision.[43] This may be schematized by positing a certain relation between two terms: Inequality/Theory. On the one hand, then, we have the sense in Foucault of a fundamentally inorganic, dynamic world predicated on *inequality*, where the latter is the name given to the structural imbalance of forces without which there would be no power ('the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable'). And on the other, the powerful desire nonetheless to construct a *theory* which would allow Foucault to trace and finally 'see' (we are reminded of the etymological link between theory and seeing) that 'moving substrate'.

This raises a crucial question, which should certainly be put to Jardine, and which we might formulate thus: Once one accepts a decentred model of power and accepts that power is relational and is 'exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations' (p.94); accepts

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[43] We recall Saussure's 'in language there are only differences, without positive terms'. There is an argument for seeing Foucault's use of the word *inequality* as a synonym of *différance*.

that relations of power are immanent in economic processes, knowledge

relationships, sexual relations and are 'the immediate effects of the divisions,

inequalities and disequilibriums which occur in the latter, and conversely [...]

the internal conditions of these differentiations' (p.94); accepts that power cuts

into and disciplines bodies, and that resistance to power produces 'cleavages

in a society that shift about [...] furrowing across individuals themselves,

cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them,

in their bodies and minds' (p.96); once one accepts this and accepts with it the

impossibility of knowing, seeing and revealing where inequality begins and

ends, how does one begin to measure and consider, in a non-Cartesian but not

altogether unclear, indistinct, anti-Cartesian way, the weight of inequality?[44]

How to see and then take into account, account for, all those forces, relations

of power, excesses and play (what Foucault calls *'de la' plèbe*)?[45] And further,

how to do all this when it is texts not bodies that one is considering?

Foucault himself provides a dizzying example – and unlike Megill on

The Archaeology I see no sign of parody – of the lengths (breadths and depths)

one is forced to go to as a consequence of the micro-physical logic. The idea

of 'eventalization', Foucault says, is to construct around a singular event

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[44] It is interesting how the terms Foucault uses to describe the task of power in its control over life echo what we surmise to be the goal of the analysis of power's effects: 'Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize' (p.144).

[45] 'The plebs is no doubt not a real sociological entity. But there is indeed always something in the social body, in classes, groups and individuals themselves which in some sense escapes relations of power, something which is by no means a more or less docile or reactive primal matter, but rather a centrifugal movement, an inverse energy, a discharge. There is certainly no such thing as "the" plebs; rather there is, as it were, a certain plebeian quality or aspect (*"de la" plèbe*). There is plebs in bodies, in individuals, in the proletariat, in the bourgeoisie, but everywhere in a diversity of forms and extensions, of energies and irreducibilities' ('Powers and Strategies', pp.137-138).

(which is constituted precisely by multiple processes) a '"polyhedron" of intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can never properly be taken as finite':

> the further one decomposes the process under analysis, the more one is enabled and indeed obliged to construct their external relations of intelligibility. (In concrete terms: the more one analyses the process of 'carceralisation' of penal practice down to its smallest details, the more one is led to relate them to such practices as schooling, military discipline, etc.). [...] This operation thus leads to an increasing polymorphism as the analysis progresses. ('Questions of Method', pp.6-7)

There then follows a great list of elements, relations and domains to be described: from British empirical philosophy and techniques of firearms to the growth of banditry and the 'attempted emplacement in a capitalist economy of new techniques of power'. Let it not be said that Foucault had no interest in truth as correspondence. In *La Volonté*, precisely when he is anxious to deny the place of theory, he asserts that his heuristic model of power merely follows from how things are in the world.[46] (This was our argument in Chapter one: he is not simply saving the phenomena.) Clearly, he remarks in 'Questions of Method', from the standpoint of those forms of history which prefer to gather everything under the rubric of a plainly intelligible structure, what he is proposing entails too many relations, too little necessary unity. But for him this is precisely what is at stake in historical analysis and political critique. 'We aren't, nor do we have to put ourselves under the sign of a unitary necessity' (p.7). A powerful indictment this of traditional history – and a programme to send every genealogist the way of Nietzsche in the dying days

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[46] 'The strategical model, rather than the model based on law. And this, not out of a speculative choice or theoretical preference, but because in fact it is one of the essential traits of Western societies that the force relations which for a long time had found expression in war, in every form of warfare, gradually became invested in the order of political power' (p.102; trans. mod).

of 1888.

Where on earth, then, does this explosive dissemination leave the analysis and weighing of power? I shall argue later that Foucault supplements this 'infra-rationality' with a rationality of much more familiarly conventional dimensions. For now, it is difficult not to be sceptical of that call to arms in which history is laid bare by an Apollonian intellect:

> The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning. History has no 'meaning', though this is not to say that it is absurd or incoherent. On the contrary, it is intelligible and should be susceptible of analysis down to the smallest detail – but this in accordance with the intelligibility of struggles, of strategies and tactics. ('Truth and Power', p.114)

One wonders in what sense this claim for intelligibility and 'analysis down to the smallest detail' differs in spirit from an older 'in the last instance' claim. In fact, Foucault's preference for power over meaning, maintaining the possibility of intelligibility down to the smallest detail, retains a certain principle of visibility, in accordance with the etymological roots of 'theory'. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (p.112) Foucault had already stressed the principle of visibility and the transparency which theory permits, and despite the critique of theory's pretensions to universality which informs the later work on sexuality, visibility, even when taken negatively as a support of power, still retains an important role. What is more, Foucault had shown in *The Birth of the Clinic* how the principle of the visual – in this case the gaze – is closely allied to the spatial. And it is with the insistence in *Discipline and Punish* on the manipulation of space and visibility for the purposes of achieving a grip on the body that the nexus of visibility-space-power, already latent in the earlier text, becomes manifest. (It should be noted – and I shall return to this

point – that the notion of space does not always and everywhere in Foucault have a negative value.) In an interview from 1977 Foucault affirms that the neglect of space as an issue worthy of study is due in part to philosophy:

> At the moment when a considered politics of spaces was starting to develop, at the end of the eighteenth century, the new achievements in theoretical and experimental physics dislodged philosophy from its ancient right to speak of the world, the cosmos, finite or infinite space. This double investment of space by political technology and scientific practice reduced philosophy to the field of a problematic of time. Since Kant, what is to be thought by the philosopher is time. Hegel, Bergson, Heidegger. Along with this goes a correlative devaluation of space, which stands on the side of the understanding, the analytical, the conceptual, the dead, the fixed, the inert.[47]

It should be borne in mind that this revaluation of space was published as a preface to the French translation of Bentham's *Panopticon*. Speaker's benefit apart, it is appropriate to dwell briefly on the 'negative' nexus of space-visibility-power and the extent to which those force relations and their correlative inequality are revealed to us, in the last and smallest instance, by theory.

This question of space and the primacy of the visual is germane to Baudrillard's critique of Foucault's 'power'. For Baudrillard, Foucault never ceases to posit a certain givenness, a thereness of power. The concept of 'production' – which one might suppose to offset the idea of thereness – Baudrillard views as part of the problem. The original understanding of 'production' was not bound up with notions of material fabrication, but with making visible, causing to appear: *pro-ducere*:

> let everything be produced, be read, become real, visible, and marked with the sign of effectiveness; let everything be transcribed into force relations, into conceptual systems or into calculable energy; let everything be said, gathered, indexed and registered [...]. Ours is a culture of 'monstration' and demonstration, of 'productive' monstruosity (the 'confession' so well

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[47] 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp.149-150.

analyzed by Foucault is one of its forms). We never find any seduction there – nor in pornography with its immediate production of sexual acts in a frenzied activation of pleasure; we find no seduction in those bodies penetrated by a gaze literally absorbed by the suction of the transparent void. Not a shadow of seduction can be detected in the universe of production, ruled by the transparency principle governing all forces in the order of visible and calculable phenomena: objects, machines, sexual acts, or gross national product. (Baudrillard, *Forget*, pp.22-23)[48]

Baudrillard reproaches Foucault his acceptance that power functions according to a teleonomical order.[49] 'Teleonomy is the end of all final determination and of all dialectic: it is the kind of generative inscription of the code that one expects – an immanent, ineluctable, and always positive inscription that yields only to infinitesimal mutations' (p.34). Baudrillard is suspicious, though, of the felicitous collusion of Foucault and Deleuze in their appropriation of and 'wallowing' in recent scientific work on the molecular. 'It is a spiral of power, of desire, and of the molecule which is now bringing us openly toward the final peripeteia of absolute control. Beware of the molecular!' (pp.35-36)

Foucault's writing and theory, which see and expose the microscopic ruses of power, the infinitesimal tremblings of inequality, which shine light into the most obscure substrata, do not, *pace* Baudrillard, mirror a relentless colonization by power of everything and of every space between everything; but in order to measure and weigh power, they always threaten to hypostatize force. As Baudrillard says above (pp.22-23), everything is transcribed into

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[48] The dramatic weakness of a text like Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* lies precisely in its making everything visible and explicit, even though repression is supposed to prevail.

[49] The *OED* defines teleonomy thus: '*Biol.* The property of living systems of being organized towards the attainment of ends without true purposiveness.' I shall say more about this property in the final sections of the chapter.

'calculable energy'. The question remains, though, as to whether it is possible to think force without hypostatizing it.

We are close here to Derrida's critique of structuralism's incapacity to think force. From one perspective, Foucault's thinking in *La Volonté de savoir* responds in large measure to Derrida's challenge to interrogate the notion of structure, to turn away from the fascination with the geometrical figures of space to a consideration of the play within those figures.[50] It is this effort of thought that differentiates the 1976 text from the one of the previous year, a distinction – and an intellectual labour – often uncredited. However, from another angle – and perhaps unsurprisingly given a certain commitment to specificity and to struggle – vestiges of the previous taste for spatial *dispositio* still remain. Brandishing the historian's power to specify and delimit a historical ruse in time and space, Foucault writes of a general *dispositif* of sexuality being 'put in place' (p.159). If it becomes a question of reproaching others their historical inaccuracies (his argument is that this *dispositif* predates Freud), this questioning nonetheless falls short of interrogating the self-identity of history and the spatio-temporal presence of a structural-looking *dispositif*. From this other angle, then, we might say of *La Volonté* what Derrida says of Jean Rousset's *Forme et Signification*; namely, that time itself is often reduced to a *dimension*. Time is but the element in which a form or a curve can be displayed and measured. Let us say that for the Foucault of *La Volonté* the effort to be microscopic does not mark the end of spatial, structural thought; space merely contracts and thinking force adequately therefore entails thinking

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[50] Derrida, 'Force and Signification', in *Writing and Difference*, p.16.

more profoundly what it is still possible to see and therefore gauge and measure. Hence Derrida's remarks on structuralism still hold true even for this the apparently most unstructuralist text of Foucault's. To think force at the molecular level, to believe it intelligible 'down to the smallest detail', would be an example of that which, according to Derrida, metaphysically menaces every structuralism, namely, 'the possibility of concealing meaning through the very act of uncovering it':

> *To comprehend* the structure of a becoming, the form of a force, is to lose meaning by finding it. The meaning of becoming and of force, by virtue of their pure, intrinsic characteristics, is the repose of the beginning and the end, the peacefulness of a spectacle, horizon or face. Within this peace and repose the character of becoming and of force is disturbed by meaning itself. The meaning of meaning is Apollonian by virtue of everything within it that can be seen. ('Force', p.26)

It remains a moot point, then, as to whether Foucault succeeds in avoiding, at one level of his discourse, the repetition of the ancient complicity between light and power, between theoretical objectivity and techno-political possession which Derrida writes of in 'Violence and Metaphysics' and which Foucault exposes so vividly – ultimately overexposes – in *Discipline and Punish*.

Yet how would one ever escape light? And in what language would this escape be articulated? It is difficult, as Derrida observes, to maintain a philosophical discourse against light. For Derrida, it is a matter of choosing the best light, in an *economy* of 'violence against violence, light against light' ('Violence and Metaphysics', p.117). Moreover, the dialectic of force and weakness can only be articulated in the language of form, through images of shadow and light. Force is not simply darkness opposed to the lightness of form, 'nor can it be conceived, from within phenomenology, as the *fact* opposed to *meaning*' ('Force', p.28). Derrida asserts that it is not a question

of abandoning this language, but of resisting it, of criticism exceeding itself 'to the point of embracing both force and the movement which displaces lines'. Finally, the difference between Dionysus and Apollo, between ardour and structure, is not to be found in history, for it is the opening of history, historicity itself. This is why Derrida can write:

> If we must say, along with Schelling, that 'all is but Dionysus,' we must know – and this is to write – that, like pure force, Dionysus is worked by difference. He sees and lets himself be seen. And tears out (his) eyes. For all eternity, he has had a relationship to his exterior, to visible form, to structure, as he does to his death. This is how he appears (to himself). ('Force', pp.28-29)

And this is perhaps the difficulty common to force and meaning which is not overcome by Foucault's opposing the one to the other, as if everything in force had a more immediate, evident, real and tangible value. Force, like meaning – and as I think Foucault realized only too well in *La Volonté* – is worked by *différance*.

I mentioned earlier that space does not always and everywhere in Foucault bear a negative value. In 'The Thought From Outside' Foucault assimilates the positive (because disruptive) power of the language of fiction to space. He writes:

> The fictitious is never in things or in people, but in the impossible verisimilitude of what lies between them: encounters, the proximity of what is most distant, the absolute dissimulation in our very midst. Therefore, fiction consists not in showing the invisible, but in showing the extent to which the invisibility of the invisible is invisible' ('The Thought', pp.23-24).

It is hard to shrug off the visual, as the semantic battle in this last sentence testifies: fiction in no sense reveals the invisible; but it nonetheless 'shows' the degree to which this property of invisibility cannot be seen. There is an entire Saussurean problematic here. Saussure spoke of the temptation to assimilate

linguistic signs to visual ones – as though they existed neatly in space; and of how the very word *form* confirms us in this error. Of course, Saussure is concerned with spoken language, but the push-pull of the following definition of language – now you see it, now you don't – still suggests the need to think play before the spatial opposition of presence and absence:

> language has the character of a system based entirely on the contrasts between its concrete units. One cannot dispense with identifying them, nor move a step without having recourse to them. And yet delimiting them is such a tricky problem that one is led to ask whether they are really there. (Saussure, p.105)

But to return to the question of fiction and space, allow me to continue Foucault's quote:

> Thus, [fiction] bears a profound relation to space; understood in this way, space is to fiction what the negative is to reflection (whereas dialectical negation is tied to the fable of time). No doubt this is the role that houses, hallways, doors, and rooms play in almost all of Blanchot's narratives: placeless places, beckoning thresholds, closed, forbidden spaces that are nevertheless exposed to the winds. ('The Thought', p.24)

One is struck by the intractability of the visual. Foucault posits fiction as the great transgression of place and of the commonplace, of the thereness of the visual; but the evocation of placeless places would be meaningless if it did not first pass by way of 'houses, hallways, doors, and rooms', if it did not in some provisional sense think these places.[51]

One is put in mind of Borges. In the preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault, famously, repeats from Borges' piece 'The Analytical Language of John Wilkins' the enumeration of creatures found in a certain Chinese

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[51] To judge by Blanchot's comments on Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, at issue was the spatialization of space rather than its destruction. See Malcolm Bowie, *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.144. What was perhaps Foucault's misprision of Mallarmé lay in his conviction that the defiance of ordinary logic was somehow inherent in the transitive language used by Mallarmé, rather than a function of a certain practice of writing which called forth a new and demanding practice of reading.

dictionary.[52] For Foucault, this monstruous, yet startlingly matter-of-fact classification precisely ruins the site of thought. Such a classification could exist only in the non-place of language, but this language only ever opens up an 'unthinkable space'. In fact, Borges goes further: 'We may go further; we may suspect that there is no universe in the organic, unifying sense of that ambitious word' (p.112). But Foucault's preface, a great hymn to the (dis-) order of space, to its displacement, overlooks the importance in Borges of time as the other great force which prises open the order of presence. Where labyrinths are concerned, for instance, the idea of openness and of non-place is intimately bound to time. (Though time in Borges does not always have the same function or value: there is a sense in which Borges uses the past to disrupt the arrogance and fallacious originality of the present, but in so doing bestows upon time great powers of continuity. Despite the movement of difference in Borges – of which 'Pierre Menard, author of the *Quixote*', where it is thematized, is perhaps the finest example – one is struck by the presence of heredity and inheritance – nature and culture – as leaden forces of repetition of the same.) However, the mythical, metaphysical dimension of the labyrinth, and of the creatures that inhabit it, does not remove us to a simple non-place. Derrida has expressed convincingly this difficulty of escaping the thought and language of space.[53] In Borges, labyrinths take the shape of houses and houses

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[52] From Jorge Luis Borges, *Prosa completa*, vol. 3 (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1985).

[53] E.g. 'Violence and Metaphysics', p.112: 'that it is necessary to think *true* exteriority as non-*exteriority*, that is, still by means of the Inside-Outside structure and by spatial metaphor; and that it is necessary still to inhabit the metaphor in ruins, to dress oneself in tradition's shreds and the devil's patches – all this means, perhaps, that there is no philosophical logos which must not *first* let itself be expatriated into the structure Inside-Outside. This deportation from its own site toward the Site, toward spatial locality is the *metaphor* congenital to the

acquire the form of labyrinths ('Death and the Compass'): one does not simply pass from the domestic to the metaphysical or vice versa. This is not an idle point. One of the effects produced by 'The House of Asterión' is a disquieting pathos.[54] The Minotaur, in his own first-person (?) narration, speaks of his solitude and his 'house'. The absence of furnishings lends the labyrinth a timeless quality and makes the story the very opposite of a period piece, preventing an easy reality-effect (no little door here). And yet, that the Minotaur itself should comment on the absence of furniture is enough to inject an unexpected domesticity. (In Cortázar, by contrast, the movement would tend to introduce unexpected metaphysical dimensions into a domestic locus.) In the assignation of speech and human emotions, one catches the pathos of the creature's condition, a pathos one can see in Watt's painting, which Borges says inspired the story. In that canvas, the Minotaur gazes out across what looks to be a rampart, holding his body in a posture suggestive of an anticipated long and perhaps fruitless wait. This is art from art, but it is not therein to be opposed to the real world with its visual dimension. What is scandalous in Borges is not the fact that he writes simply about Minotaurs as a figure of man (or as a metaphor of Hitler, as Donald Shaw suggests)[55], but that he also attributes rationality and emotions to Minotaurs: a (very old) transgression, rather than abolition, of the proper.

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philosophical logos.[...] Space being the wound and finitude of birth (of *the* birth) without which one could not even open language, one would not even have a true or false exteriority to speak of.'

[54] *Prosa completa*, vol. 2.

[55] *Borges' Narrative Strategy*, Liverpool Monographs in Hispanic Studies, no. 11 (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1992), p.5.

Macro and micro: the rule of double conditioning

There is a sense in which Foucault anticipates the criticism levelled at the primacy he accords the visual and at the unacknowledged functioning in his work of a traditional notion of *aletheia* revealing the smallest of powers. Although its expression assumes a defensive posture, the idea of seeing power and inequality is matched by scattered references to his texts as 'fictions'. The use of that word, particularly from within a conventional perspective which would oppose it categorically to truth, may seem to indicate a capitulation on Foucault's part, as though he had abandoned the hope and possibility of truth. However, he insists on the possibility that exists 'for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth'.[56] A nominalistic blurring (but not obliteration) of boundaries, I read that recourse to the word 'fictions' as Foucault's acknowledging the extent to which his work involves the hazardous reconstruction in narrative form of the most recondite power effects he can only imagine to have taken place.

Such remarks on fictions may also be turned back on the empiricism of *Discipline and Punish*, on the anchoring which takes place there in the notion of the body. In fact, for all the corporeal semantics one does not really sense in his histories the effects of power on a particular body; he is a historian of techniques not of bodies. By the same token, and as important as it is, the lexeme 'micro-' should not beguile us. Indeed, it has been objected that Foucault's schema of obstreperous molecules is so reductionist that it plain

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[56] 'The History of Sexuality', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp.183-193 (p.193) (first publ. as 'Les Rapports de pouvoir passent à l'intérieur des corps', *Quinzaine littéraire*, 247, 1-15 January 1977).

misses the true level at which power works, that is, the level of human beings and social structures. By contrast, Richard Dawkins writes in another context that he is happy to be labelled a 'hierarchical reductionist':

> 'reductionism' is one of those things, like sin, that is only mentioned by people who are against it. To call oneself a reductionist will sound, in some circles, a bit like admitting to eating babies. But, just as nobody actually eats babies, so nobody is really a reductionist in any sense worth being against. The nonexistent reductionist [...] tries to explain complicated things *directly* in terms of the *smallest* parts, even, in some extreme versions of the myth, as the *sum* of the parts! The hierarchical reductionist, on the other hand, explains a complex entity at any particular level in the hierarchy of organization, in terms of entities only one level down the hierarchy; entities which, themselves, are likely to be complex enough to need further reducing to their own component parts; and so on. It goes without saying – though the mythical, baby-eating reductionist is reputed to deny this – that the kinds of explanations which are suitable at high levels in the hierarchy are quite different from the kinds of explanations which are suitable at lower levels. This was the point of explaining cars in terms of carburettors rather than quarks. But the hierarchical reductionist believes that carburettors are explained in terms of smaller units..., which are explained in terms of smaller units..., which are ultimately explained in terms of the smallest of fundamental particles. Reductionism, in this sense, is just another name for an honest desire to understand how things work. (*The Blind Watchmaker*, p.13)

There is a compelling case for hierarchical reductionism in Dawkin's field of biology, which takes in the general functioning of the eye from the lens to the retina, and down to the 125 million rods or photocells found in each retina. However, I would suggest that the term 'hierarchical reductionism' is also apposite for Foucault's approach, if we are to do justice to his attempt to think the complexity of power. At the same time – and I now return to a point made in passing some while back – the term is also suggestive of Foucault's interest, perhaps more than in the micro, in the systemic. While Foucaultian semantics may suggest the micro, the scope of his analyses suggests an overviewer is also at work. A micro-physics which one might expect to have more than a little in common with textual psychoanalysis in fact becomes a

genealogy dedicated to macro-scale reconstruction.[57] Which is why Eagleton is both correct and wide of the mark when he writes thus in connection with Foucault's micro-analytics:

> It is always possible [...] to stumble across a more fervent nominalist than oneself. For all those who feel that the human body is no more than a disarticulated ensemble of this or that organ, there is always someone else who feels just the same way about the concept of organ. It is as though almost any thought can be made to appear an illicit homogenization from the standpoint of some other, and so on in a potentially infinite regress.[58]

As Eagleton is well aware, to go micro to the nth degree would mean foregoing any such homogenizations as 'the prison'. But Eagleton would be incorrect in thinking that Foucault had not realized the need for a complementary large-scale analysis. Hasty, too, in labelling that tendency, which in Foucault supplements the micro-level, a 'totalizing impulse'. The opposition need not be micro- versus totalizing thought.

Borges expresses this problematic elegantly in 'Funes the Memorious', where Funes is left, in the wake of a fall from a horse, with infallible perception and memory, with a startling grasp of the specific in its smallest

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[57] In a discussion of Foucault's work on the history of sexuality, Jacques-Alain Miller, no stranger to psychoanalysis, is less polite: 'Don't you ever have the feeling that you're putting together an argument, which – amusing as it is – is destined to let slip the essentials? That your net is so coarse-meshed that it will let all the fish through? Why, instead of using your microscope, are you now taking a telescope, and looking through the wrong end at that?' ('The Confession of the Flesh', p.215). The whole interview (which dates from 1977) is important reading for those interested in Foucault's first volume on sexuality, since he is under considerable pressure to maintain many of the points advanced there. However, unaware of the macroscopic dimension of the book he is not. He puts to himself in that text the concerns of a feigned objector: in your thoughts on sexuality don't you try to 'reveal what might be called the organization of "erotic zones" in the social body; it may well be the case that you have done nothing more than transpose to the level of diffuse processes mechanisms which psychoanalysis has identified with precision at the level of the individual' (p.151). His retort bears on the question of sex versus sexuality; but he never denies the question of scale, nor the preference for 'social body' over 'individual'.

[58] 'Marxism, Structuralism, and Post-Structuralism', *Diacritics*, 15:4 (Winter 1985), 2-12 (p.11).

detail:

> He knew by heart the forms of the dawn southern clouds of 30 April 1882, and could compare them in his memory with the mottled streaks on a book in Spanish binding he had only seen once and with the lines of foam raised by an oar in the Río Negro on the eve the Quebracho uprising. These memories were not simple; each visual image was linked to muscular sensations, thermal sensations, etc.[59]

Where the emperor of Lilliput, according to Swift, discerned the movement of the minute hand,

> Funes would discern the tranquil course of corruption, of decay, of fatigue. He would note the progress of death and dampness. He was the solitary and lucid spectator of a multiform, instantaneous and almost unbearably precise world. (p.94; trans. mod.)

But the unceasing welter of detail which besieges Funes' mind and which he registers precisely, in Nietzschean terms, without forgetting, nevertheless does not prevent the narrator from suspecting that, when all is said and done, Funes was not very capable of thinking: 'To think is to forget differences, to generalize, to abstract. In the plethoric world of Funes, there were only details, almost immediate details' (p.94; trans. mod.).

For his part, Foucault consciously reflects on the general and the systemic, and despite the stress placed on specificity it could be no other way. Derrida maintains that no discourse could be meaningful if it did not draw upon a layer of general concepts which guided thought in some provisional way. By virtue of this possibility of intelligibility, however, Derrida can say that 'all thought and all language are tied to theoretism, de facto and de jure'; that the meaning of the non-theoretical can be known only with a theoretical knowledge (in general) ('Violence', p.122). This Derridean understanding of

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[59] Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, ed. by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970; repr. 1985), p.92 (trans. mod.).

the necessity of theorizing in order for thought to happen at all is supplemented in Foucault by a strategic generality. In the chapter on method from *La Volonté*, Foucault speaks of overall strategies and does not discount, contrary to what Eagleton states, expressions like 'ruling order'. In his 'Rule of Double Conditioning' the local and the general presuppose each other, though they are not simply the other in miniature or *en gros*. It is also not without significance that one of the concerns of *La Volonté* – and an aspect of the book which Foucault says has received scant attention – should be eminently general, namely, population. Which brings us to the second of the two sciences mentioned some time ago: biology. Or, more accurately, to evolutionary theory as the theoretical history of *bios*.

Evolutionary theory and genealogy

Foucault's work has always been marked by biology (or previous incarnations of biology such as Natural History). But it would appear that around the time of *La Volonté* contemporary biological sciences held a particular interest for him. In the same issue of *Le Monde* Foucault published reviews of Jean Bernard's *Les Paliers de l'évolution* and Jacques Ruffié's *De la biologie à la culture*.[60] On the surface of things evolutionary theory, the theory of the development of life in all its forms over time, could not be further from Foucault's genealogy. Where the former dwells on continuity and gradual development, the latter seeks out rupture and discontinuity. However,

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[60] '*Les Paliers de l'évolution* by Jean Bernard', *Le Monde*, 17-18 October 1976, pp.1, 5; 'Bio-histoire et bio-politique', *Le Monde*, 17-18 October 1976, p.5.

I want to suggest that a certain double schema in Foucault – in which sex lies at the heart both of individual bodies and of the species – has instructive affinities with evolutionary theory. I will also suggest that the idea of nonrandom cumulative selection, a commonplace of evolutionary theory, offers a cogent corrective to Foucault's vaunting of the positive, because contingent, force of chance; and that the same idea takes us close to an understanding of why it is that the notion of construction or constitution cannot be thought to describe a process and a product which would both be without necessity, would be the mere outcome of random accident.

The image of evolutionary theory as the great search for continuity is, as Gillian Beer argues, a popular misconception. Evolutionary theory does not in fact privilege the present, but sees it instead as 'a moving instant in an endless process of change'.[61] In point of fact, there are features of evolutionary theory which are common to Foucault's genealogy. In the first instance, evolutionary theory, though to all intents and purposes a science, is in one sense a form of imaginative history, one which 'cannot be experimentally demonstrated sufficiently in any present moment' (Beer, p.8). Secondly, Darwin's theory is suspicious of language. Although borrowing from Lyell the metaphor of etymology as a representation of descent and change, Darwin shied away from language because of its anthropocentric tendency to place man at the centre of signification and because of the notion of agency implied therein.

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[61] *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1983; repr. 1985), p.13.

Now, strictly speaking, in *La Volonté* Foucault is not interested in biology. The question of what we are, he says, has gradually come to be put not so much to sex-nature, to biology, as to sex-history, or sex-signification, to sex-discourse. Even genetics – which sees the reproductive mechanism not as one capacity among others but as the very thing which introduces the biological dimension – in a sense continues this work of positing sex as the key to an individual's very being, not just his biology.

At the same time, modern power is exercised not in the name of the sovereign's ancient right to dispense death but primarily as a power over life exercised in the name of the population itself. Power (*le pouvoir*) – and we note the absence of compunction with which Foucault uses the singular form for the most massively generalized statement – 'is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population' (p.137). At this level of generality it is difficult to avoid the return of old metaphors and of old separations, as though life and power were precisely different things, with the latter needing to get a grip on the former: 'Now it is on life, throughout its unfolding, that power establishes its grip [*prises*]' (p.138; trans. mod.).

This power over life takes two forms: the first, following *Discipline and Punish*, is that of the disciplines, centred on the body *qua* machine (here Foucault calls it an *anatomo-politics of the human body*); the second is centred on the species-body which hosts the biological processes such as propagation, birth and mortality, life expectancy and longevity. These are supervised and regulated by what Foucault terms a *bio-politics of the population*. Although

he refers to the second technology as *spécifiante* and to the first as *individualisante*, the latter designation does not prevent his account from assuming the most general countenance: the individualizing power is treated not in relation to individuals, but rather schematized according to what are generally assumed to be its overall effects on unspecified bodies.[62]

The administration of bodies and the calculated management of life and populations. Once again, we note the scale of the analysis. Anatomo- and bio-politics, Foucault states,

> operated at the level of economic processes, of their development, and of the forces working to sustain them. They also acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony. (p.141; trans. mod.)

Such formulations would easily pass for classical Marxism. The Foucaultian twist comes in his contention that what happened in the eighteenth century in certain Western countries was nothing less than the entry of life into history, that is to say, the entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the species into the order of knowledge and power; viz. that with the development of knowledge about life, about its mechanisms and about how to maximize and regulate it, the fact of living is no longer what he calls an inaccessible substratum (*soubassement*) in an economy fundamentally ordered by death and fatality; instead, it becomes something of which power-knowledge can take

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[62] The individual focus is supplied by *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*, trans. by Richard McDougall (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980). The idea of 'governmentality', to which I shall return in the final chapter, is an attempt to bridge the gap between the macro- and the micro-.

charge.[63]

The foregoing postulate paves the way for the entry of sex, the importance of which – and this is what I would like to stress – consists in the fact that it lies at the pivot of the two axes: of the disciplines and of the regulation of populations. The concern with sex thus gives rise to infinitesimal surveillances and meticulous orderings of space: to micro-power; and to 'massive' measures, to statistics and interventions aimed at the social body as a whole: to macro-power. Foucault is close at this juncture to blurring the meaning of the term 'evolution' in an eminently Darwinian fashion. The eighteenth century used the word to designate an account of a single life span, as in the term ontogeny. By the 1830s the term was used to describe the development of the species, that is, phylogeny. However, in the wake of Darwin the two meanings are condensed in, and their distinction blurred by, the 'same' term 'evolution' (Beer).

This double schema – whereby sex is 'a means of access both to the life of the body and to the life of the species' (p.146) – is what allows Foucault, contra Eagleton, to yoke together the local and the general, powers and Power. He can thus write that the four great lines of attack in nineteenth-century sexual politics were all to some degree premised on the putting together of disciplinary techniques with regulative methods: the sexualization of children (as a campaign for the health of the race), hysterization of women (in the name of their responsibility to the family and the well-being of society),

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[63] I shall question Foucault's establishment of a 'threshold of biological modernity' in Chapter five.

birth control and the psychiatrization of perversions. Now, it is this double schema of Foucault's which has instructive affinities with evolutionary theory. Both are premised on the central pairing individual/collective species which is never far from appearing as an antagonistic opposition individual/system in which the former's role may always be characterized, mournfully, in terms of insignificance and ephemerality. Almost by definition, the species, or the system, will always prevail. We have seen the triumph of the carceral in *Discipline and Punish*. Similarly, the theorist of evolution, Richard Dawkins, can gaily remark that individuals are but 'temporary vehicles' for the DNA whose messages live on long after memory of the host has slipped into oblivion.

The source of a more optimistic strain in Foucault's thought, and one of his important insights into history writing, is the stress placed by his genealogy on chance. The play of accident, error and chance is powerfully, even triumphantly, expressed across 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'.[64] If one can show the degree to which the formation of a system is marked by chance, rather than by necessity, it becomes possible to envisage a way out of those present systems which confine us. This scheme is classical. Despite the great denunciation of knowledge's interestedness, the Enlightenment theme prevails: it is knowledge, more especially 'effective' history, that will liberate us from the old historians' prejudices.

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[64] It is not pure chance that Foucault should speak thus. Deleuze had already argued that because a body is constituted by any two unequal forces, it is always the fruit of chance (Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, p.40). Thomas M. Kavanagh uses a Foucaultian scheme to argue that chance was one of the Enlightenment's *bêtes noirs*, against which much of its thinking was directed. 'Chance and Probability in the Enlightenment', *French Forum*, 15:1 (1990), 5-24.

The theme of chance is again taken up by Foucault in his review of François Jacob's book *La Logique du vivant*.[65] In it, Foucault states that more important than any humiliation of man that Darwin may have achieved by making him the descendent of monkeys was Darwin's stripping the individual of his privileges by studying the aleatory variations of a population in time. Mendel added to this debunking by showing that we do not blend inheritance from our parents, but receive it in discrete particles according to calculable chances which only sudden mutations could modify. And then there is molecular biology, which has discovered in the nucleus of the cell

> a liaison, as arbitrary as a code, between nucleic acids and proteins; better still: it has spotted, in the transcription of this code, errors, lapses, inversions, like the slips or involuntary strokes of inspiration of a momentarily distracted scribe. Throughout life, chance plays with discontinuity. (p.13)[66]

Discontinuity not only delimits us; it traverses us, teaching us that 'the dice rule us'. We recall, by contrast, that Einstein was disturbed by the randomness implied by quantum mechanics: '"God does not play dice with the world"' (Coveney and Highfield, *Time's Arrow*, p.121). For Mallarmé, in the words of Malcolm Bowie, the question becomes in *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*: 'Is structure ('le nombre', 'une constellation') attainable, whether by grace or by effort, by calculation or by intuition, over and against the teeming chaos of things?' (*Mallarmé*, p.126) In any event, how does one write of chance in a chancy way? How to construct around an event that 'polyhedron of intelligibility', without suggesting that event's inevitability?

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[65] 'Croître et multiplier', *Le Monde*, 15-16 November 1970, p.13.

[66] This idea is repeated in his 'Introduction' to Georges Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, where he affirms that 'life is what is capable of error' (p.xix).

And how, then, to construct one's narrative of chance in a way that would avoid determining the coordinates which produced a random event, and so derandomize chance? A near impossible demand to make of a historian or perhaps of any writer. And yet the preliminary task should be to question the assumptions Foucault makes regarding chance. To which end, I borrow from evolutionary theory the notion of evolution as nonrandom cumulative selection.

Scientists concur in the belief that the selection of genes that get passed down the generations is a chancy affair, even though the likelihood of their being passed on may be affected by the success of the body they helped to create (Dawkin, p.56). It goes without saying that the offspring in any one generation will, as the chancy combination of genes dictates, be different from their parents in random ways. But – and this is where one must rein in the paean to chance – the respective progeny selected to go forward into the next generation is not a random affair. Although natural selection does not choose genes directly, it does select 'the *effects* that genes have on bodies' (Dawkins, p.60). The point here is that in nature the selecting agent is death and that, in one respect, death is nonrandom. This might seem to contradict all we know about the arbitrariness of the grim reaper, who arrives at the most unexpected moments and via the most unforeseen routes. Household flies know all (and nothing) about this. And yet, statistically speaking, the more a creature is suited to its environment, is able to counter its predators and to stave off illness and find food, the greater its chances of survival and, consequently, the greater likelihood of it reproducing and passing on its genes. In an important sense, then, death may be viewed as nonrandom. Flies who avoid houses

increase their chances over their stay-at-home brethren. On a far more serious note, Foucault's own death is a stark example of this logic of nonrandomness, which should not be collapsed into determinism: his position as a gay man frequenting the bath houses of 1980s San Francisco introduced a strongly nonrandom dimension into his death.

Now, DNA can be compared to the Read Only Memory (ROM) of a computer. In the same way that ROM is read millions of times but written only once, DNA can be replicated but is burnt in once. However, there is a sense in which the notional collective data bank of an entire species can be written to: 'The nonrandom survival and reproductive success of individuals within the species effectively "writes" improved instructions for survival into the collective genetic memory of the species as the generations go by' (Dawkins, p.119). On this scale, living organisms exist for the benefit of DNA, not vice versa. The messages that the DNA molecules contain are as good as eternal in comparison with the time scale of an individual life. Each individual organism, Dawkins remarks, should be seen as a 'temporary vehicle'.

The essential element to underscore is that a social system may evolve with the help of chance; it evolves to a greater degree, though, by virtue of nonrandomness. In seeking to account for the development of the most complex pieces of biological machinery, Dawkins states the puzzle thus: 'There are billions of possible ways of putting together the bits of an airliner, and only one, or very few, of them would actually be an airliner' (Dawkins, p.7). Do these things come about through pure chance? He replies in the negative.

Such a chance scenario is statistically inconceivable:

> *however many ways there may be of being alive, it is certain that there are vastly more ways of being dead,* or rather not alive. You may throw cells together at random, over and over again for a billion years, and not once will you get a conglomeration that flies or swims or burrows or runs, or does *anything*, even badly, that could remotely be construed as working to keep itself alive. (Dawkins, p.9)

Not surprisingly, given the fantastic complexity of design and the efficiency with which a cell or an organ or a wing can carry out its functions, the temptation to invoke a creator is strong. And yet, however improbable they may appear to us, these 'machines' should be understood on the basis of cumulative nonrandom transformations over vast periods of time. In the last section of the chapter, I should like to call on a final strain of thought from the field of theoretical science in order to elucidate this tension between chance and nonrandomness, before turning to some final reflections on *La Volonté*. I hope that my *bricoleur's* approach to contemporary science will then be seen as having a certain pertinence to the Foucaultian concern with systems, with the history of systems of thought.[67]

Deterministic chaos theory: between chance and necessity

To what extent might scientific theories of deterministic chaos, as opposed to 'pure' chaos theory, offer valuable insights for humanities-based models of the interaction between social systems and power? I shall suggest that theories of deterministic chaos, theories which, like *La Volonté*, live and breathe disequilibrium, offer an instructive reminder to the effect that thinking

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[67] We recall that Foucault changed the name of the Chair he came to occupy at the Collège de France to 'Chair of the History of Systems of Thought'.

time, mobility, instability and change does not necessarily mean succumbing to a massive non-principle of disorder. I should say before looking at such theories that I dissent from Barbara Riebling's suggestion that Foucault's notions of social systems dynamics, which she wrongly says are 'equilibrial, unchanging, and symmetrical', could not be further from current scientific thinking. Nor do they, as she would have it, violate the second law of thermodynamics (Riebling, p.180). I shall argue, on the contrary, that *La Volonté* goes some way towards respecting that important law.

In physics mobility and perpetual disequilibrium do not necessarily give on to chaos, do not, that is, prevent a certain system from holding. To illustrate this hypothesis, let me take Coveney and Highfield's discussion of Thermodynamics, the Second Law of which states that all physical processes are irreversible because some energy is always dissipated as heat. By turning the crankshaft through a full 360°, an engine may be returned to a position indistinguishable from its initial state. 'But the wasting of energy as heat will have ensured subtle changes that cannot be wiped out' (Coveney and Highfield, pp.150-151). The concept of *entropy* introduces an important distinction and, in the process, furnishes an explicit arrow of time. From the Greek *en* (in) and *trope* (turning), it is defined as 'a quantity that relentlessly grows with dissipation and attains its maximum value when all the potential for further work is spent' (p.151).[68] The distinction lies in the fact that zero entropy

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[68] Interestingly, Foucault uses the headings 'Increasing Entropy' and 'Decreasing Entropy' to divide up his reply to two (as Foucault sees it) ill-informed reviewers (one of whom is George Steiner) who respectively manage to increase or decrease the entropy of *The Order of Things*. Foucault, 'Monstrosities in Criticism'.

change results from a reversible process, while entropy always increases in an irreversible one. Thus, 'increasing entropy coincides with time's forward movement' (p.151).[69]

In a piece on Jules Verne from 1966, Foucault maintains that Verne's boffin figures are entrusted with the precise task of preventing the world from coming to a halt through an equilibrium which would be fatal. Their function, he says, is to find new sources of energy or organize the colonization of another planet, to discover a *foyer ardent* which will 'assure disequilibrium and guarantee the world against death':

> Above this monotonous murmur in which the end of the world is articulated, [fictional discourses] fused the assymetrical ardour of chance, of improbable fate, of impatient unreason. Jules Verne's novels are the 'negentropy' [*négentropie*] of knowledge. Not science become recreative; but re-creation based on the uniform discourse of science.[70]

At one time it was believed that the universe itself, rather after the fashion of a Thermos flask, could be considered an *isolated system*. As Coveney and Highfield remark (and we shall shortly relate this observation to Foucault's system), 'what else is there outside it'? The First Law of thermodynamics would then state that the total energy of the universe is constant and the Second, that the total entropy of the universe is inexorably increasing towards its maximum value. But this leads to a cosmic degeneration

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[69] As far back as the 1930s Borges argued that the Second law of thermodynamics was enough to refute Nietzsche's idea of the eternal return. Jorge Luis Borges, 'La doctrina de los ciclos', in *Prosa completa*, vol.2, pp.55-63.

[70] Foucault, 'L'Arrière-Fable', *L'Arc*, 29 (1966), 5-13 (pp.10, 11). This is of a piece with a paper from 1967, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', *Diacritics*, 16:1 (Spring 1986), 22-27 (first publ. as 'Des espaces autres', *Architecture Mouvement Continuité*, 5 (October 1984), 46-49), in which Foucault affirms that the nineteenth century found the quintessence of its mythological resources in the second law of thermodynamics but that our own era is that of space. This article is perhaps the most explicit statement of Foucault's one-time structuralist orientation.

scenario whereby the universe finally grinds to a halt at thermodynamic equilibrium when all change ceases, 'where entropy and randomness are at their greatest, in which all life has died out' (p.153). Now, as I tried to show in Chapter 2, the system of power which Foucault formulates in *Discipline and Punish* is on a par with these isolated systems. Useful energy is extracted from individuals by the system in proportion to the formers' increased docility and the latter's equilibrium. But in Foucault, on the contrary, equilibrium supervenes not at the end of a temporal process, but belongs to the system as a spatial property: the carceral network, he says, 'has no outside'.

However, the discovery that the universe is expanding contradicts this equilibrium theory and suggests the universe cannot be anywhere near a state of thermodynamic equilibrium:

> in a very real sense, equilibrium is also a dead end. Since it is concerned with the end-state of thermodynamic evolution and thus of time, it cannot describe the very processes by means of which time becomes manifest. [...] Life consists of many processes, from cell division and heart beat to digestion and thinking, all of which can only occur because they are out of equilibrium. (p.158)

The question then arises – and this is what interests me where Foucault's model of social systems is concerned – if one is to think non-equilibrium, can there be anything like a system, or are we confined to thinking only disorder? What happens if a system tending towards eventual equilibrium is stopped *in medias res*? Coveney and Highfield cite the example of thermodiffusion which contradicts the belief that entropy equals disorder. One heats a vessel containing a mixture of hydrogen and hydrogen sulphide gas. By maintaining a small temperature difference at opposite extremes of the vessel – and thereby preventing it from reaching equilibrium – a gradual separation of the gases

emerges along the vessel, rather than the chaotic mixing that one would expect.

One therefore has the unexpected combination of increased entropy plus a less

random arrangement of molecules:

> In spite of the popular interpretation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics
> as linking entropy in a facile way with 'disorder', thermodiffusion shows
> how structural organisation can spontaneously emerge from randomness. [...]
> To be sure, there is randomness in the frantic motions of the gas molecules,
> yet overall this is clearly less than at equilibrium. Thermodiffusion provides
> the first indication that irreversible, non-equilibrium processes can give rise
> to organisation. Thus there is a link between the arrow of time and the
> possible emergence of structure. (p.160)

Ilya Prigogine showed that where systems are not pushed too far from

thermodynamic equilibrium, the rate of change of the system's entropy declines

and the system as a whole evolves to a steady state in which the dissipation is

at a minimum. And so long as there is some minimal outside influence to

keep a system out of equilibrium then it will persist in a steady-state rather

than collapse into total randomness.

However, does this phenomenon hold for cases where systems are

maintained far from equilibrium? Glandsdorff and Prigogine argued that it

does. Despite the fact that a steady-state when pushed far from equilibrium

may reach a crisis point, at which the system evolves into some other state, it

is still possible to find beyond this point – and despite massively increased

global entropy production – highly organized behaviour in time and space.

> Indeed, it is important to appreciate that a system can only be held away
> from equilibrium if it is open to its environment: this enables the entropy
> produced by the system to be exported to the surroundings, thereby
> permitting the maintenance of organisation while allowing an overall increase
> in the entropy of the system *and* the environment. (p.164)

As an example of the phenomenon of order emerging at a point far

beyond equilibrium one may take the Belousov-Zhabotinsky reactions. Boris

Pavlovitch Belousov mixed together assorted chemicals in order to simulate the

process by which living cells break down organic foodstuffs. Instead of the mixture settling into one uniform colour, as one would expect when enough stirring has gone on, the solution changed with clockwork regularity from a colourless appearance to a shade of yellow and back again, and so on and so forth. One witnesses therein the creation of order from disorder through the phenomenon of self-organization. But not everything is order. If one changes the concentrations of the chemicals and pushes the process too far beyond equilibrium the result is random colour change such that predicting the moment of change becomes impossible.

Even in this instance, understanding and indeed harnessing such randomness is not entirely denied us. The notion of a *strange attractor* proves decisive here, one of the distinguishing features of which is that it is a *fractal* object. This word, coined by Benoit Mandelbrot in 1975, describes the peculiar geometry of irregular shapes, any region of which may be magnified and will be found to contain the entire structure of the attractor:

> This property of showing a motif within a motif within a motif *ad infinitum* is known as self-similarity. The motif is mirrored at every scale of length: the edges of a clover leaf will be bristling with smaller clover shapes which will bristle with still smaller clover shapes. (p.204)

One is thus forced to rethink dimensions. Instead of a line being one-dimensional, it must be thought of as one-and-a-bit dimensional, that is, fractal. Mandelbrot's example of the difficulty of measuring the length of the British coast illustrates the point well. An as-the-crow-flies measurement would be extended by the walker who, replete with pedometer, has to follow the twists and turns of every cove and promontory; which would in turn appear a short measure in comparison to the ant's journey up and over every pebble, etc.

'Indeed, if we could shrink the scale to the infinitesimal, then the coastline would have an infinite length. The apparently paradoxical result is that the coast is in fact a "line" of infinite length contained quite happily within a finite area (draw a circle round Britain)' (p.205).

If we return to our example of the chemical reaction, the fractal property of a strange attractor means that a point in a chemical reaction can explore an unending series of points. And this in turn leads us to its chaotic property. In the words of Coveney and Highfield: 'the system samples different configurations as time passes, never repeating itself. [...] Armed with the notion of fractal forms, it becomes easier to see how a system, though restricted to a finite region – the strange attractor – can nevertheless discover unlimited opportunity' (p.206). The parallel with Derrida's notion of *play* is inviting. One also returns to the problem of measurement. Unless the initial conditions of the system are known to a literally infinite degree of precision at the outset, subsequent developments will be entirely unpredictable. The slightest uncertainty – 'which will always be the case in the real world' (p.207) – denies the capacity for prediction.

There are, however, regularities within this deterministic chaos. Because the chaos is internally generated by and is intrinsic to a system, it is not wholly random. Therefore, as Coveney and Highfield put it, 'deterministic chaos blurs the ideas of order and disorder' (p.207). Nor should one be blinded by the buzzword 'chaos'. 'Order and deterministic chaos spring from the same source – dissipative dynamical systems described by non-linear differential equations' (p.207).

Finally, then, to what extent, if any, might scientific theory on deterministic chaos be useful in the humanities?

> Societies can be regarded as open and highly non-linear dynamical systems, in which feedback loops and competition abound. Scientists have begun to draw parallels between the self-organisation and chaos which can be seen in, for example, chemical reactions, and the phenomena which develop in human and animal societies, typified by words like 'revolution', 'riot' and economic 'crash'. (p.294)

The parallel is seductive but the central difficulty of comprehending time remains, merely glossed over. Throughout the book, the authors insist on the need for any scientific theory to be able to explain the common phenomenon of the passing of time. They write:

> It is the crucial role of indeterminism, of random fluctuations, controlling the denouement at the crisis points, that makes time an innovative entity: between one stable state and the next, the system's entire future lies in the precarious hands of chance, unlike its past. One can see the asymmetry of time revealed in a bifurcation diagram in the same way as we experience it: a one-week-old baby may become a prince or a pauper, whereas the history of a 50-year-old man is fixed. Likewise, imagine that there is a beetle crawling up and down the bifurcation tree. It could have crawled from anywhere in the foliage to end up on the trunk. But to get to a particular twig from the trunk, it had to take a particular path through the branches. Thus even a beetle sitting on a twig in the bifurcation tree has a specific history. (p.212)

This deeply misleading passage is rather like the contents of the Belousov-Zhabotinsky reactor: a murky amalgam out of which a logic of sorts emerges. The logic, in this case, is a classical historicism: the present is a dicey thing, Fortuna looks on, amused; but the past, despite those crisis points of vacillation, uncontentiously has been. But to argue that a system's entire future lies in the precarious hands of chance is to contradict all that the authors have said about the dynamic between organization and chaos, between structure and event. After all, a one-week-old baby seldom mutates into a globe artichoke. Likewise, ascribing necessity to the past can be maintained only

thanks to the most facile of examples (and it is not without interest that the example is predominantly spatial: the path metaphor raised to a historiographical principle). As soon as one asks why the beetle took that route, why it was on the tree in the first place or what conditions allowed the tree to thrive, specificity itself begins to bifurcate.

Where human and social machines are concerned – and it is apparent that the timescale is massively telescoped by comparison with biological organisms – one should not assume, as Foucault at one level seems to, that chance rules. Chance opens up the horizons of possible alternatives; it cannot account, though, for the work which is done to build and sustain a social structure, institution or system of power. (This is the criticism levelled at Saussure: rather than the arbitrariness of language, one should speak of its conventionality.) In this respect During is correct to criticize Foucault for intimating that the epistemic shifts in *The Order of Things* are based on chance and reversibility (During, p.102). On the other hand, nor is it a matter of attributing everything to intentionality.[71] Perhaps we could slightly alter the expression Dawkins uses to capture the not-quite-random, though not-fully-determined nature of biological objects (I substitute 'probable' for 'improbable'): he speaks of the quality of being 'statistically-[ ]probable-in-a-direction-specified-without-hindsight' (Dawkins, p.15). The reduced time scale of the development of human institutions, the importance of short-term objectives (even if never fully attained), the place of human intentionality, and

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[71] For Derrida the peculiar condition of the gift lies in the necessity that it be structured simultaneously by the aleatory and the intentional. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, pp.122-123.

the aim of power over others, all suggest the need for that substitution. But they in no sense amount to determinism, nor to teleology, a point made by Raymond Williams in a discussion of Dickens.[72] In fact I think Foucault says something similar in 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'. The world of effective history (Nietzsche's *wirkliche* history, as opposed to traditional history)

> knows only one kingdom, without providence or final cause, where there is only 'the iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance.'[73] Chance is not simply the drawing of lots, but raising the stakes in every attempt to master chance through the will to power, and giving rise to the risk of an even greater chance.[74] ('Nietzsche', pp.88-89)

The difficulty facing the historian remains that of recapturing something of the aleatoriness and contingency of the past as it presented itself, while retaining something of the systemic without which chance would not even be recognizable as such. The division between history and literature does not pertain here, and it would be left to a certain kind of literature to allow the enactment, in the reading process itself, of the experience of living between necessity and chance, system and chaos.[75]

It is, I think, this play between chance and necessity which leads to the

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[72] Williams speaks of Dickens' view of London in his novels as a seemingly paradoxical one in which variation and the apparent randomness of the city coexist with a determining system. *The Country and the City*, pp.190-191.

[73] A footnote reads: 'Nietzsche, *Dawn*, no. 130.'

[74] A footnote reads: 'Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, II, sec. 12.'

[75] The most important problem facing Mallarmé was that of 'realising a poetic structure which will allow chance its weight and its omnipresence while allowing the fragile ordering impulse of the human being its proper dialectical edge [...] creating for his "hero" the role of a beleagured pattern-seeker. And a fine balance is kept as the contest unfolds. The worst that can happen and the best that can happen are not equally possible and mutually exclusive futures: they are twin versions of the present moment, twin ways of seeing and inhabiting the world. Every moment is the complete wager.' Malcolm Bowie, *Mallarmé*, p.143. For Foucault on Roussel, by contrast, 'there is only random language, methodically treated' (*Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, trans. by Charles Ruas [London: The Athlone Press, p.38]), as if, though, language were not in its essence order.

growing realization in Foucault – articulated with pessimism in *Discipline and Punish*, with increased optimism in *La Volonté* – of just how untenable is the notion of any massive principle of disorder equating to the slaying of order. In 'Questions of Method' he speaks of not feeling himself capable of effecting the 'subversion of all codes', preferring 'to give some assistance in wearing away certain self-evidentnesses and commonplaces' (p.11). Chance may be enough to disrupt teleology, but if power is itself non-teleological then Foucault's stress on force, disequilibrium and kinesis need not suggest to us the precariousness of a system on the verge of a nervous breakdown, about to slip into chaos.[76]

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[76] As far back as 'The Thought From Outside' one reads: 'Sovereignly, the law haunts cities, institutions, conduct, and gestures; whatever one does, however great the disorder and carelessness, it has already applied its might' (p.33).

CHAPTER 5

FOUCAULT AND A GUILT-EDGED EUROPE

Introduction

This chapter continues the theme of the play between chance and necessity, disorder and order, here exploring such issues in the context of Foucault's attitude towards the system and constitution of 'Europe'. Yet it also marks a break. I have hitherto respected a chronology of sorts, tracing a development in Foucault's thinking from the archaeological work through to the first volume on sexuality. This chapter punctures the time and trajectory of the thesis. It may be read as a (long) polemical aside which, ranging across Foucault's entire oeuvre rather than concentrating on any one text or period, returns to and reworks selected strands first woven in previous chapters. Notably the constitutionalist model of *Discipline and Punish* and its relation to guilt; the issue of subject-positions and the individual's motility in negotiating between positions; the question concerning the 'economy' of power; the all-pervasive theme of the relationship between power and knowledge.

The chapter focusses on Foucault's attitude towards Europe as a geopolitical and cultural configuration, and responds to the many charges

levelled at him according to which his work is fundamentally Eurocentric.[1] It argues that despite his questioning of Western thought's pretensions to universality, it remains the case that the disjunctive, iconoclastic character of Foucault's *écriture* helps furnish an idiom for the accusations of Eurocentredness subsequently directed against him. In this respect, Foucault's relationship to the preceding intellectual generation (the latter at once very real and eminently constructed) and his apparent shift away from *le vécu* to matters of system assume important dimensions. One detects in Foucault's work and *écriture* two conflicting energies, the one a centrifugal, de-colonizing movement, which would estrange him from the Western tradition, the other a movement of re-colonization – precisely in the name of system. The chapter's polemical strain begins to emerge when it addresses the general issue of what might be at stake in the way one poses the question of the value of 'European' or 'Western' thought. Appropriating Foucault's ideas on power, I question the worth of two expressions employed by Robert Young in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (a book influenced by and sympathetic towards Foucault) concerning the 'decolonization' of European thought and the 'dissolution' of the West. To what extent are such aims attainable and even desirable, and to what extent do they betoken a misplaced iconoclasm, an immodest inflation of the power of thought? - as though thought and language could so easily withdraw from areas formerly colonized, as though, further, they could leave such areas independent and self-determining. Precisely what

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[1] A shortened version of this chapter has appeared as 'Foucault and a Guilt-Edged Europe', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 37 (1994), 104-120.

economy of thought would be capable of such a repatriation of metaphors and logos? I make no bones about the fact that such a discourse seems to me both ill thought out and a gross simplification of political reality. At the most elementary level, it is a matter of common knowledge that an aspirin which dissolves does not cease to work. That is a question of *realpolitik*. The more intractable question would be whether dissolution, understood in its stronger sense as disintegration, 'injurious relaxation or softening; enfeeblement', 'the action of bringing to an end; the state of being ended; destruction or ruin of an organized system', 'termination of the existence of a constituted body or association', is even something meritorious. What interests me particularly is the possibility that the panoply of expressions of disjuncture that one finds in Young harks back to a voluntaristic and undialectical strain in Foucault's genealogies (without Foucault's ever constituting a simple origin here) which returns to shape those denunciations of his own Eurocentrism. Finally, the chapter will suggest that a central weakness of such axiological thought lies in the model of constitution, or projection, it employs, a model clearly, in the case of someone like Edward Said, adapted from Foucaultian thought. So long as one attributes exaggerated constitutionalist powers to old Europe, one can continue to think guilt, despite the possibility of an etymological relation to *guild*, 'payment', 'reward' and 'sacrifice', in the most classically uneconomic terms. How satisfactory is it to adapt the model of the bloated carceral order of *Discipline and Punish*, which depicts a necessarily narrow canvas of humankind, to the problematic of the 'colonial other'?

The question of Foucault's Eurocentrism

I should like to attempt an initial approximation to the question of Foucault's perceived Eurocentrism by asking why the charge relates to Europe and European thought rather than simply to France and Gallic bias. It is fair to say that Foucault has been much reproached for his narrowly European, not to say French, centre of gravity. Merquior writes that he is parochial in his intellectual reach; During, that he does not take national differences seriously enough and ignores the relations of the West with the Third World; Said, that compared to Fanon, who scrutinizes the Western system of knowledge and discipline *and* seeks to treat colonial and metropolitan societies together, 'as discrepant but related entities', Foucault never gets beyond the first project and even then his later work seems to represent 'an irresistible colonizing movement that paradoxically fortifies the prestige of both the lonely individual scholar and the system that contains him'; Paglia, in the most vehement attack, not only on Foucault but on the entire 'French school' of Saussure-influenced thinkers who 'bankrupted a whole generation of American critics', that his work suffers from an overintellection characteristic of the French tradition which means that it is simply not relevant elsewhere.[2]

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[2] J.G. Merquior, *From Prague to Paris: A Critique of Structuralist and Post-Structuralist Thought* (London and New York: Verso, 1988), p.186; Simon During, *Foucault and Literature*, pp.12, 128; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p.278; Camille Paglia, 'Junk Bonds and Corporate Raiders: Academe and the Hour of the Wolf', in *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), pp.170-248 (p.191). The loose-cannon, deliberately scurrilous low-style of the Paglia piece invites a take-it-or-leave-it response. One should try to avoid this alternative. Despite the slightly pathetic narrative of degeneration-from-outside which it pedals, whereby US academics are cast as 'victims' of a 'rigid foreign ideology', of a 'foreign fascism', of a 'grotesque head trip' 'imposed on us', the piece does make many telling (and serious) points, some of which I shall return to in the final chapter.

Let us take stock, in the most provisional fashion, of the general character of Foucault's thought. What does he deal with? Despite sporadic allusions to non-Western countries (Ancient China, for example, in *The Use of Pleasures*), Foucault's work, generally speaking, concerns itself with Western Europe. Occasionally, it is true, the latter functions as little more than a cipher for France – as in *The Birth of the Clinic*, where the concluding words about 'Western man' and 'European culture' must read like undue homogenizations, for while the book does touch on other European countries, it deals for the most part with the development of clinical medicine in France. Nonetheless, while the principal social and institutional focus of his work may well be France (he states in *The Archaeology* that all his archaeologies have thus far been centred on the French Revolution [p.177]), his purview usually extends to continental Western Europe, only infrequently going beyond (to America in *Discipline and Punish*). Indeed, even when he deals with a specific individual like the Belgian surrealist painter René Magritte, Foucault nevertheless has in his sights some of the founding principles which 'ruled Western painting from the fifteenth to the twentieth century'.[3] Likewise with Roussel, whose strange motifs represent but one moment of a larger history which is that of the 'tropological space' of the West itself. Roussel constructs and crisscrosses

> the two great mythic spaces so often explored by Western imagination: space that is rigid and forbidden, surrounding the quest, the return and the treasure (that is the geography of the Argonauts and of the labyrinth); and the other space – communicating, polymorphous, continuous, and irreversible – of the metamorphosis, that is to say, of the visible transformation of instantly crossed distances, of strange affinities, of symbolic replacements. (Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, p.80; cited in During, p.77)

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[3] Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, p.32.

This 'other space' anticipates the sympathies of the Renaissance *episteme* with their capacity to communicate across great expanses. Together the two spaces (and the title) also echo Borges, of whom more later.

In fact, if one adds to the above the extensive use Foucault makes of Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger, one would certainly need to stretch the accusation, if it is to be made at all, to one of Euro- rather than Franco-centrism. I do not thereby mean to apprehend what Michelet calls the 'pure selfishness of the calculator without fatherland', to erase the importance and particularity of national traditions, which may be national in the sense of distinctive lines of appropriation rather than in the sense of origin.[4] For her part, Paglia insists on the significance of national context, contrasting the United States with France. In the USA there is the Sixties Dionysian attempt to return to nature:

> We asked: why should I obey this law? and why shouldn't I act on every sexual impulse? The result was a descent into barbarism. We painfully discovered that a just society cannot, in fact, function if everyone does his own thing. And out of the pagan promiscuity of the Sixties came AIDS. Everyone of my generation who preached free love is responsible for AIDS. The Sixties revolution in America collapsed because of its own excesses. It followed and fulfilled its own inner historical pattern, a fall from Romanticism into Decadence.

In France, by contrast, the student and worker revolt was quashed from without, by the government, and hence Foucault's generation 'never saw the errors of their ideas because those ideas, through lack of French moxie, were never tested against reality by being put through their full organic cycle' (Paglia, 'Junk', p.216). The analogy is deeply flawed. The American

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[4] Cited in Roland Barthes, *Michelet*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), p.198.

movement ran its course because it was not first and foremost an attempt to topple a political administration (though of course it contained very real political elements, most obviously the opposition to the Vietnam war). The French equivalent posed a much greater and more immediate threat to the political order. However, despite the obvious importance of a notionally 'French' tradition of thought, which we here treat in the most etiolated socio-political manner, the charge with which we are dealing concerns '-centrism' and really the centre at stake is greater than France.

Simon During's criticism of Foucault is that he appropriates ideas from elsewhere without taking national differences seriously enough. This he relates to three things: first, to Foucault's early flirtations with the French Communist Party; second, to the overvaluation of French nationalism by the right especially from the period of the Dreyfus affair up until the Second World War; third, to the grand style and universalizing sweep characteristic of a confident and glamorous French intellectual élite. These speculations are helpful in sending us to a *moment* and a *milieu*, but a predilection for the arresting pronouncement is hardly exclusive to French intellectuals and can be traced back at least as far as Scholasticism. Notwithstanding this caveat, as an example of such a pronouncement we may cite Foucault's averment that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries those who could not find work were regarded as slothful, as moral reprobates, whereas today 'we know quite well that whoever is not working cannot find work, is unemployed. Work has left

the domain of morality and entered into that of politics'.[5] The journalist's response ('It's clear that you are not Italian') speaks volumes, and indeed one could happily substitute a community of adjectives for 'Italian'. Ultimately, though, this line of reasoning is self-fulfilling. To attribute Foucault's remarks simply to race or, in less discredited terms, national difference, is to counter one failure to differentiate (we Europeans, or we French, think thus) with another (it's because you're French). For in his case we come up as much as anything against an amalgam of poor personal judgement and suspect logic. A logic invested with and undermined by a bold style of pronouncement where the grand claim is for division – the *partage* – rather than continuity, the division working along an epochal rather than national axis in order to emphasize (though often, as here, overstate) historical differences and the contingency of present values. The irony of the word *partage*, a hallmark of Foucault's work, is that, as Derrida notes in *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, it means both 'partition' and 'sharing'. But we shall come to that in due course.

If we are right in thinking that a concern for the national differences of intellectual production did not greatly exercise him, it remains the case that Foucault's treatment of France and Western Europe is certainly not marked by indifference. Apparently severing the above thread which stretches between experience and nationality, he develops an entire geopolitical thematics of estrangement. This is perhaps not surprising, given his extensive travels and

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[5] Foucault, 'An Historian of Culture', in *Foucault Live*, p.85. Though Foucault does not say as much, he is restating an argument from *Histoire de la folie* (p.427), where it is more nuanced: 'poverty was perhaps not only of the order of a moral failing'.

numerous soujourns in other countries. One thus finds him employing, specifically in the context of experiences of colonialism, the topos of the estrangement from one's country which follows the experience of being abroad.[6] The topos returns in his reflections on the composition of *Histoire de la folie*, written largely in Sweden and Poland, a text he describes as echoing his experience of those two countries at a time when France was being convulsed by the Algerian War and by the end of the period of colonization. Detachment, he suggests, affords a privileged vantage point. He understood the absurdity of the war and divined its necessary conclusion all the better for experiencing events 'somewhat like a foreigner' (*Remarks on Marx*, p.74). The simile is as problematic as it is commonplace. It casts Foucault's specific difference from his compatriots, perhaps of necessity, in the form of a huge generalization (precisely which foreigner's experience did he experience?) and as if he already knew what that experience was.

Except for a fleeting visit to Paris, Foucault was again absent from another of modern France's decisive experiences, living in Tunisia at the time of May '68. As with his remarks on the Algerian War, so too here necessity is made something of a virtue. He speaks of taking back to Paris his 'foreigner's way of seeing things', with the result that what he had to say was 'not always easily received' (*Remarks*, p.132). Tunisia in fact experienced its

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[6] Estrangement patently does not guarantee sound judgement. On his first trip to the United States, Foucault repeats the topos but achieves only disingenuousness, saying that New York made him aware that poverty still existed in advanced countries. 'A Conversation with Michel Foucault', *Partisan Review*, 38 (1971), p.198. Derrida remarks in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning, and The New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.70-71, that 'there is a French tradition, a kind of "French speciality" of peremptory diagnoses upon returning from a quick trip to a faraway land whose language one does not even speak and about which one knows next to nothing'.

own student turmoil while he was there, which biographer Eribon says touched

Foucault profoundly, galvanizing him into political activism. Much later,

Foucault himself states that it was the courage of the Tunisian students in the

face of a brutal police and no less ruthless penal system that triggered his

engagement: 'It wasn't May of '68 in France that changed me; it was March

of '68, in a third-world country' (*Remarks*, p.136). Following the Tunisian

students, Foucault speaks of channelling his energies in the years immediately

after 1968 into actions implying a 'personal, physical commitment' within a

determinate situation (*Remarks*, p.139). There is a potentially very real gap

here between the subject of the *énonciation* and the subject of the *énoncé*,

between the mature Foucault in dialogue with Duccio Trombadori (the Marxist

interlocutor is doubtless an important detail) and the much younger protagonist

of thought and action. It is for example true to say that, unlike a Simone de

Beauvoir, Foucault's major books up till the end of the 1960s provide no real

commentary on contemporary events and make no reference to important

contemporary reflections on the injustices of the time.[7] One does not find in

Histoire de la folie, written at the time of the Algerian war, either allusions to

the fate of the colonized or to the work of someone like Fanon (whose *Black

Skin, White Masks* from 1952 already dealt with questions of the exclusion of

the marginalized by a dominant order), from which one could adduce that

colonialism was really not a burning issue for him. Furthermore, Foucault

(like Fanon) makes no reference to de Beauvoir and seems little interested in

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[7] The point about de Beauvoir is made by Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), p.186.

the situation of women's oppression, an issue which Toril Moi believes was even more marginal in France than questions of colonialism and racism (Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir*, p.190). Nor does he allude to Barthes' mythologies (1954 onwards), in which a model of the social construction of otherness is clearly employed. However, generic considerations impose themselves. Foucault's are histories, mainly of the French Classical age. Their field of concerns is simply not contemporary events, even if they are occasioned by them, and therefore the demands of the genre simply do not invite personal observations and political commentary. That said, in the articles and journalism of the same decade, which lend themselves to commentary on contemporary political and social concerns, no such commentary appears, and it does seem that Foucault's politicization coincides with the era of student revolt. In any event, and if his memory serves him, Foucault's radicalization, his shift towards the work on Western European disciplinary societies and on power, is propelled at least in some small way (let us not overstate this) by a responsiveness to 'the intolerable nature of certain conditions produced by capitalism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism' (*Remarks*, pp.136-137). Even if we detect vainglorious mythologizing in Foucault's feelings of strangeness vis-à-vis events in France – and this is particularly the case with the Algerian war, which does not appear to have exercised his conscience unduly – there is a case to be made for the importance of working from within.[8] To a nation conscious, like France, of dwindling influence abroad, the sight of its intellectual élite turning on its own

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[8] Cf. *The Birth of the Clinic*, where Foucault is himself sceptical about the topos of 'the foreign spectator in an unknown country' (p.65), which he describes as one of the great mythical experiences on which eighteenth-century philosophy had wished to base itself.

institutions, on the very foundations of its self-image, 'is not a small matter for a country whose culture has always been bound up in national glorification' (*Remarks*, p.110). Whence Foucault's work on the prisons and public health, and his concern – voiced through his participation in the *comité Djellali* – over the living conditions of Arabs in France (specifically, those in the Goutte d'Or, the Arab quarter of Paris).[9] Again, though, the award, and acceptance, of a Chair at the Collège de France clouds the picture of glorious subversion.

Nevertheless, to the experiential estrangement one must therefore add the intellectual project of a defamiliarization of certain key concepts of the European tradition. There is an entire thematics in Foucault – up to and including the 'Introduction' to *The Use of Pleasures* – surrounding the notion of estrangement. *Histoire de la folie* names the madman of Tuke's Retreat *l'Etranger* (p.507). In *The Order of Things*, Foucault writes of language once more lying both at the limits of Western culture and at its heart, for 'it is what has been most foreign to that culture since the sixteenth century; but it has also, since this same century, been at the very centre of what Western culture has overlain' (p.44). Likewise, in his thoughts on Pierre Rivière's memoir he writes in the opening sentence of a text of great strangeness (*étrangeté*) ('Les

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[9] Spivak, commenting on an exchange between Foucault and Deleuze, finds it unremarkable that the two should touch on third-world issues, given the topicality of France's relations with her erstwhile colonies, but unacceptable that they should do so and yet still ignore in their books 'both the epistemic violence of imperialism and the international division of labor' ('Can the Subaltern Speak', [p.289]). Now, I will try and show that Foucault did not exclude these concerns altogether from his books. I would add that this interview ('Intellectuals and Power', in Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory*, pp.205-217) is ill-equipped to do justice to either thinker. For the most part it pedals a version of power which is still 'naked', 'brutal', 'global', that is, pre-*Discipline and Punish*. Further, it is marked by a naive populism (which I think accounts for the uncritical remarks, on which Spivak bases much of her argument, concerning the masses and prisoners as privileged subjects of knowledge). Considerations of genre (the interview), of place and time (Paris, 1972), of the specificity of their own positions, would not go amiss.

Meurtres', p.265). In this respect once more, Foucault's relationship to Nietzsche is pivotal, describing Nietzsche's work as bearing 'an outsideness, a kind of mountain peasantness' that might enable one 'to exit from philosophy', and viewing Nietzsche as 'the outside edge' of philosophical discourse.[10] And again, here on a different influence, he speaks of Pierre Boulez allowing him to feel (a) strange(r), foreign(er) in the world of thought in which he had been formed.

> I only know that having divined – and through the mediation of another, most of the time – what Boulez was doing allowed me to feel a stranger (*me sentir étranger*) in the world of thought in which I had been formed, to which I still belonged and which, for me as for many others, was still prominent.[11]

This in a sense answers the doubt regarding the earlier simile 'like a foreigner'. Here the place of others is crucial: to the extent that this sense of feeling oneself a stranger is achieved most of the time through the mediation of others, it must remain a foreign, improper estrangement.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is thus possible to take a more sympathetic view of Foucault's work on European thought, seeing it, following Robert Young, as a contribution, rather than to the direct analysis of colonialism, to the 'decolonization' (a problematic word to which I shall return) of Western thought from within. Young cites one of Foucault's inquisitorial moments where he writes of

> the movement which, at the close of the colonial era, led it to be asked of the West what entitles its culture, its science, its social organization, and finally its rationality itself, to be able to claim universal validity: was this

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[10] Foucault, 'On Literature', *Foucault Live*, pp.118-119.

[11] Foucault, 'Pierre Boulez ou l'écran traversé', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2 October 1982, p.51.

not a mirage associated with economic domination and political hegemony?[12]

As the Foucault piece on Canguilhem (from which the above is taken) makes abundantly clear, the spirit of Husserl remains vital here. Not only because Husserl introduced phenomenology into France, a tradition out of which Canguilhem's work emerges, but because Husserl makes the connection, which Foucault is precisely anxious to deny, between the spirit of geometry and a universal (though of course profoundly Western) reason.[13] Nonetheless, and leaving aside the problem of Foucault's own position in that quote (what purchase could possibly be achieved by a critique of Western reason which did not itself have recourse to that reason?), his work is well served by Young's description of it as 'a relentless anatomization of the collusive forms of European knowledge' (Young, *White Mythologies*, p.9).[14]

Arguably the most relentless aspect of Foucault's work is its effort to fracture the metaphor of history as continuity and, with it, puncture a certain self-image of the West's. Nineteenth-century Western historicism had looked backward upon the past as if it constituted a single lineage, the outcome of which was modern Western man, 'and what could not be regarded as having had a role in his development was not regarded as having been part of the historically significant past'.[15] By contrast, and producing a different version

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[12] Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990; repr. 1992), p.9; he is quoting from Foucault, 'Introduction' to Georges Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*, trans. by Carolyn R. Fawcett (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1978), pp.ix-xx.

[13] See Husserl, 'The Origin of Geometry', Appendix VI to *The Crisis*, p.378.

[14] Cf. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.210.

[15] Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason*, p.131.

of the nineteenth century, *The Order of Things* breaks the line, as we have seen in Chapter four. 'History' is dispersed into plural, autonomous temporalities specific to individual phenomena. Thus, as Foucault says, the eighteenth-century image of the continuous ladder of living beings (Lamarck's *scala viventium*) is supplanted by that of multiple rays spreading out from an ensemble of centres. Naturally, this conclusion owes much to anthropology and to nineteenth-century philology's work on non-Western languages. To learn about this pluralization, one does not go to Foucault. Paglia makes the same point but infers from it that Foucault should therefore be ignored as derivative. A hasty judgement this, since one goes to *The Order of Things* to see how this mutation is worked out in the slenderest detail of three disciplines of thought, not for the mere statement of the shift. Similarly, when Foucault says that man loses his History in favour of histories, it is not a matter of heralding as innovatory his displacement of Western man from the centre. Foucault's particular concern (which is certainly a wider, 'generational' affair) is to disrupt the very concept of the human subject, its 'sovereignty' as he is fond of saying (and the geopolitical terminology is not without interest).

For the same reason, that is to say, for questions of genre and convention, one should not expect that text to become a treatise on colonialism, and in this respect I dissent from Robert Young. Young expresses the view that when Foucault turns to ethnology at the end of *The Order of Things*, one would expect him to discuss colonialism, an opportunity not taken, he says, even if one does get something like an analysis of the predicates which made

Eurocentric thought possible.[16] This opinion echoes Said's claim that Foucault seems unaware of the extent to which ideas of discourse and discipline are 'assertively European' and of how discipline was also used to 'administer, study, reconstruct – and then subsequently to occupy, rule, and exploit – almost the whole of the non-European world'. 'This dimension,' he continues, 'is wholly absent from Foucault's work even though his work helps one to understand it' (Said, 'The Problem of Textuality', p.711). This is strictly speaking inaccurate, as I hope to show in this chapter. Even in *The Order of Things* Foucault writes that there is a certain position of the Western *ratio* which provides a foundation for the relation that the *ratio* can have with other societies. 'Obviously,' he observes, 'this is not to say that the colonizing situation is indispensable to ethnology', but the latter can assume its proper dimensions 'only within the historical sovereignty – always restrained but always present – of European thought' (p.377; trans. mod.). I remain uneasy with the expectations of Young and Said for another reason. To expect *The Order of Things* to mushroom into an exploration of colonialism is not an expectation produced by the book itself. By the time one reaches the question of ethnology, the archaeological character of the book, together with the systematic absence of social and political history, invite anything but such an expectation. The section on ethnology has to be read as part of the text's climactic acceleration towards the conclusion regarding the disappearance of man. The detailed analytical work has been done and Foucault is now

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[16] Paper delivered at the University of London Union as part of the Foucault Anniversary Conference, 25 June 1994.

unfurling a manifesto in support of three new disciplines. The barest outline of their project, not their historical formation. And that project will come to bear, he envisages, precisely on a culture's 'norms', 'rules', 'systems', and 'limits', rather than on the positive contents of consciousness or on the representations a civilization gives of itself. Here one has a formal statement of the formal possibilities of ethnology; no analysis of colonialism but hardly a denial of its importance. The expectation, I think, derives from later concerns, and those who harbour them must ask themselves whether their objections to certain omissions from a text like *The Order of Things* do not, rather, constitute a rejection of philosophical epistemology itself.[17] Naturally, one could object that responding to colonialism by attacking the classical subject of philosophy represents a curious form of struggle. One should certainly be heedful of a position like that of Fanon, whose retention of the bond between subjectivity and the body perhaps corresponds to a greater emotional and political need, but one should avoid asking Foucault to be Fanon.

If we are to circumvent a hasty criticism of *The Order of Things*, if we are to avoid repeating what Foucault does to Descartes' *Méditations*, we need to respect questions of convention, of levels of analysis, and of intentionality. It is not a matter of denying politicization *tout court*; the text demands a specific form of politicization, a formalist politics which questions the epistemological link between words and things, and in the process the efforts

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[17] Hardly a new phenomenon. Nietzsche criticizes the increasing disparagement of philosophy in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 204.

of a preceding generation to underwrite the position and privilege of the human subject. However, it is interesting that in both the structuralist wager on linguistics in *The Order of Things* and the later wager on power, the homicide, which is also a parricide, bears the same apocalyptic semantics (which, incidentally, pre-date May '68). And this is worthy of consideration. In the following section, therefore, I should simply like to recall, in the most traditional manner, though without abandoning myself to formalism, that Foucault's work on institutions, corpuses of knowledge, and power is also a practice of writing. A practice which has a significant bearing on its subject matter.

Foucault's *écriture*

At this juncture, on the verge of considering aspects of Foucault's writing, I borrow the notion of *écriture* from Barthes' *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*. Although he applies the term to literature, not to history, it remains apposite for a discussion of Foucault.

Barthes observes that Hébert never began an issue of *Père Duchêne* without slipping in the odd 'fuck' or 'bugger', vulgarities which of themselves meant little but which achieved the overall desired effect of signalling 'Revolution'. Such, for Barthes, is *écriture*, 'a set of signs unrelated to the ideas, the language or the style, and setting out to give definition, within the body of every possible mode of expression, to the utter separateness of a ritual

language'.[18] Compare this to Foucault's exposé of ritual in *The Order of Discourse*:

> Ritual defines the qualification which must be possessed by individuals who speak (and who must occupy such-and-such a position and formulate such-and-such a type of statement [*énoncés*], in the play of a dialogue, of interrogation or recitation); it defines the gestures, behaviour, circumstances, and the whole set of signs which must accompany discourse; finally, it fixes the supposed or imposed efficacity of the words, their effect on those to whom they are addressed, and the limits of their constraining value. (p.62)

In Barthes, *écriture* is the set or *ensemble* of signs which defines ritual; in Foucault it is the other way round. What separates the two thinkers (for the police haunts both alike) is the question of choice: excluded as an irrelevance by Foucault, for Barthes *écriture* implies choice (though not unlimited) and as such is to be rigorously distinguished from language (*langue*) and style. Language is a 'horizon', at once a limit and a perspective; property of all, 'it remains outside the ritual of Letters; it is a social object by definition, not by option' (p.15). Style, by contrast, comprises the images, delivery (*débit*) and lexicon born of the writer's body and past, and which become the automatisms of his art. Style wells up from the writer's personal, secret mythology; never the product of choice, it is properly speaking a 'germinative phenomenon', the 'transmutation of a Humour' (p.17). *Ecriture*, on the other hand, entails choosing a tone, an 'ethos'; it is an act of historical solidarity, the choice of a social area at the heart of which the writer decides to situate the Nature of his language (which does not by any stretch of the imagination mean this is achieved). Naturally, this freedom is not unlimited since both history and tradition delimit the range of possibilities.

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[18] Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), p.8.

The question of Foucault's style (narrowly conceived) has prompted varying responses. The dismissive: Lawrence Stone's malicious citation of 'what an unkind critic has called "his obscure, arrogant, sensationalist, and opaque form of discourse"'.[19] The admiring-though-it does-not-save-him: Merquior considers him a 'superb writer' but ultimately thoroughly wrong-headed (Merquior, *From Prague*, p.211). However, when Dominick LaCapra writes that the critical dialogic exchange within *Histoire de la folie* destabilizes a positivistic rendition of the past, I submit that he is describing Foucault's *écriture*. In the weave of chiaroscuro lyrical interludes, positivistic structuralism and more problematic, self-questioning liminal overtures, this third, hybridized voice represents a challenge to traditional historiography.[20] This is the choice of a tone and an ethos, an act of historical solidarity which establishes its own ritual language by virtue of a Bloomian swerve away from prior rituals.

According to François Chatelet, the turning away from traditional Marxism in French intellectual circles occurred in the years following the Algerian War, the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the seizure of power by De Gaulle in 1958.[21] He describes the will to leave behind an 'overfull and stereotyped historicity', a resolve which gained in cachet from the forced dissolution of the structuralist group of the Sorbonne philosophy students' cell.

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[19] 'An Exchange with Michel Foucault', *The New York Book Review*, 31 March 1982, p.42. He is quoting H.C. Erik Midelfort.

[20] 'Foucault, History, and Madness', *History of the Human Sciences*, 3.1 (1990) 31-38 (p.37).

[21] 'Récit', in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, ed. by Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979), pp.13-28 (p.18).

The difference between the responses of an Althusser and a Foucault lies for Chatelet in the fact that the former remained obsessed, like Sartre, by a unitary conception of Being and Truth, which led to the reinforcement of intellectual authority and the communist party.[22] In a voluminous series of interviews (mostly from the 1960s), Foucault elaborates what amounts to a parricidal discourse, the targets of which are invariably the preceding generation of phenomenologists, existentialists and Marxists. Merleau-Ponty is frequently invoked but the Father, condensing all the aforementioned traditions, is Sartre.

One of the most instructive statements of the swerve is found in a 1966 interview, which drew a response from Sartre himself.[23] The piece has its own precedent since it is profoundly redolent of Nietzsche's challenge to the 'grey-beards' in *The Use and Abuse of History*. Like Nietzsche's essay, it alludes repeatedly to age and generation, urging the reign of youth and a distancing from the generation of *Les Temps Modernes* which had been their 'law for thinking' and their 'model for existing' (p.13). It also follows Nietzsche's call to break up the past and bring it to the bar of judgment. The butt of Nietzsche's invective is the Darwin-influenced historian of continuity who thinks he sees in the 'too proud European of the nineteenth century' the completion of Nature (Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse*, pp.55-56). Life, for Nietzsche, suffers from the malady of history, the antidotes to which are the 'unhistorical' and the 'superhistorical'. The latter, embodied by art and

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[22] In his *White Mythologies*, ch.3, Robert Young makes the same point about Sartre.

[23] 'Entretien' (with Madeleine Chapsal), in *La Quinzaine littéraire*, 16 May 1966, pp.13-14. See Chapter three for Sartre's response.

religion, is turned towards the eternal, while the former is 'the power, the art, of *forgetting* and of drawing a limited horizon round oneself' (p.69). In Foucault, this limited horizon corresponds to his generation's predilection for 'system'. He argues that Sartre's understanding of 'meaning' led him to a prescriptive thought where the assumption is made that meaning must already be in the world. For Foucault, this ignores the anterior systems which make meaning a surface-effect. Although the interview is marred by an inflated and deterministic vaunting of system (in remarks on genetic codes for instance), it ends on an interesting note when Foucault, responding to accusations of abstractness, argues that the charge should, rather, be made against humanism, since the latter has successfully managed to cut off things like the 'human being' or 'existence' from the real, scientific and technical world. In the later 'Introduction' to Georges Canguilhem's *On the Normal and the Pathological*, Foucault repeats the idea that the true dividing line of the time ran between the two modalities according to which phenomenology was taken up in France, namely a philosophy of experience/sense/subject versus a philosophy of *savoir*/rationality/concept, that is, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty versus Cavaillès, Bachelard and Canguilhem (p.ix-x).

It is important to remember that the Nietzsche essay does not claim that the unhistorical should always take precedence over the historical; it represents a polemic against a particularly overbearing and dominant form of historicism. Likewise, Nietzsche suggests that youth will suffer both from the historical malady *and* its antidotes, even if he then proceeds to posit youth as true destroyers owing nothing to the past:

> [their mission] can use no idea, no party cry from the present-day mint of words and ideas to symbolize its own existence; but only claims conviction from the power in it that acts and fights, breaks up and destroys; and from an ever heightened feeling of life when the hour strikes. (p.71)

It seems to me that it is this destructive movement that Foucault annexes. Absence of 'fuck' and 'bugger', Foucault's is the *écriture* of the prefixes 'de-' and 'dis-', closer to Nietzschean demolition than to Derridian deconstruction.[24] A modern *Praise of Folly*, a 'dam-burst' which would wash away everything: 'popes, kings, monks (of course), scholars, war, theology – the whole lot'.[25] In the Chapsal interview, Foucault speaks of getting rid (*débarrasser*) of humanism. In his rejoinder to the response Sartre had made to the Chapsal piece, man is 'volatilized', 'disappears'.[26] *This Is Not a Pipe* speaks of 'demolish[ing] the fortress where similitude was held prisoner to the assertion of resemblance' (p.49), and of the power of similitude to 'destroy' identities (p.50).[27] In 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History': 'The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration' (p.83). In *The Birth of the Clinic*, he writes: 'At this level, all structures are dissolved, or, rather, those that constituted the essence of the clinical *gaze* are gradually, and in apparent disorder, replaced by those

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[24] See Derrida, 'Lettre à un ami japonais', in *Psyché*, pp.387-393, on his choice of 'deconstruction'.

[25] Kenneth Clark on Erasmus (*Civilisation*, p.112).

[26] Michel Foucault, 'Foucault répond à Sartre', *La Quinzaine littéraire*, 15 March 1968, pp.20-21.

[27] 'All knowledge at the moment of its construction is a polemical knowledge; it must first destroy to clear a space for its constructions.' Bachelard cited in Dominique Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology*, p.88.

that are to constitute the *glance*' (p.121). *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is a paean to disjuncture: to the traditional repugnance shown towards conceiving of difference, separations and dispersions, it opposes general history as the 'space of dispersion' (p.10), operates a 'decentring', vaunts 'discontinuity'. *The Order of Things*, to cite but three instances which will acquire significance for us later, tells of a man doomed to 'absolute dispersion', to 'dissolution', of a man whose 'disappearance' is announced. But perhaps one finds the quintessential Foucault in his review of Deleuze's *Différence et répétition*, 'Ariane s'est pendue', more precisely in the 'fable' that he 'invents' apropos of the Deleuze text. Tired of waiting for Theseus to emerge from the labyrinth, Ariadne has hanged herself, while Theseus, the thread broken, leaps and dances through the tunnels and passageways:

> In the skilful geometry of the artfully centred labyrinth? No, rather all along the dissymmetrical, the tortuous, the irregular, the mountainous and the sheer [*l'à-pic*]. At least towards the end of his trial, towards the victory which promises return? No: he goes joyfully towards the monster without identity, towards the disparate without species [...]. And he moves towards it, not to wipe this unbearable form from the face of the earth but to lose himself with that very form in its extreme distortion. And it is there, perhaps (not at Naxos), that the Bacchic god keeps watch: Dionysus masked, Dionysus disguised, indefinitely repeated. The famous thread has been broken, the one that was thought so solid; Ariadne has been abandoned for rather longer than had been thought: and the entire history of Western thought is to be rewritten.[28]

And yet the figurative and mythological resources of the fable themselves suffice to suggest the inadequacy of the metaphorical alternative which opposes the single continuous thread (as if there could be but one) to the image of severance.

As with his relationship to Heidegger, Foucault wants to radicalize

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[28] 'Ariane s'est pendu', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 31 March 1969, pp.36-37 (p.36).

Nietzsche. As R.J. Hollingdale observes, Nietzsche's philosophy emerges from a Lutheran Pietism and contains many parallels with the teachings of Christianity.[29] His 'will to power' is a variant of divine grace, his concept of 'self-overcoming' corresponding to a Christian conception of unregenerate nature redeemed by the force of God's grace. Foucault adopts the scheme but tries to remove the last vestiges of Christianity by refusing the very notion of the individual. If one looks again at Foucault's statement of the 'dehistoricization' of man from *The Order of Things*, one sees that it is written in terms of secularization. For this man who finds himself 'dispossessed', 'nature no longer speaks to him of the creation or the end of the world, of his dependency or his approaching judgement; [...] language no longer bears the marks of a time before Babel or of the first cries that rang through the forest' (*The Order*, p.368). Similarly, if in *This Is Not a Pipe* the embrace of similitude (over resemblance), which 'develops in series that have neither beginning nor end, [...] that obey no hierarchy' (p.44), reads like the return to a Renaissance *episteme*, it is a return devoid of the micro- and macro-cosm, that is, a return to a space from which God is absent. What Foucault denounces (following Nietzsche) is the divinization of man, the man who, as subject of his own consciousness and freedom, is a correlative image of God. Nineteenth-century man is God made flesh, the theologization of man. However,

> when Nietzsche announces the coming of the overman, what he announces
> is [...] the coming of a man who will no longer have any relation to this God

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[29] 'Introduction' to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

whose image he continues to bear. ('Foucault répond à Sartre', pp.20-21)[30]

In the face of a certain nineteenth-century divinization of man, one gets in Foucault an apocalyptic, homicidal discourse, a 'dynamite of the spirit' as Nietzsche puts it, in which negative and disjunctive prefixes strive to formalize estrangement into divorce.[31]

And yet belief (how could it?) does not disappear. The apocalyptic tone suggests that Foucault still moves in a largely eschatological universe, where the new order will be that of 'system'.[32] When Chapsal asks: 'When did you stop believing in "meaning"?', Foucault's reply makes it apparent that it was when he started believing in 'system', when he discovered another 'passion': 'the passion of the concept and of that which I would call "system"' ('Entretien', p.13). If God and man are displaced, the place of belief they have vacated is left intact: 'In a certain way we come back to the point of view of the seventeenth century, with this difference: not to put man in the place of God, but an anonymous thought, of knowledge without subject, of the theoretical without identity' (p.14). '– It is a curious thing, do you know, Cranly said dispassionately, how your mind is supersaturated with the religion

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[30] See the christological parallel in Foucault et al, Moi, Pierre Rivière, p.130, where Rivière compares himself to Christ. He too is prepared to die for others (in this case his father, on behalf of whom he has slain his family).

[31] Derrida says that eschatological themes were, for those schooled philosophically in 1950s Europe, their daily bread, the 'bread of apocalypse'. Specters of Marx, p.14.

[32] Elsewhere, defending the syllabus put together by colleagues and himself, Foucault speaks of the teaching of philosophy in France as itself 'the Lutheranism of a Catholic and anticlerical country'. Foucault, 'Le Piège de Vincennes', Le Nouvel Observateur, 9 February 1970, pp.33-35 (p.34).

in which you say you disbelieve.'[33]

Notwithstanding this caveat, one can begin to imagine the significance of this destructive discourse for the question of Europe, for the cultural, social, political and economic position of Europeans, a question which exceeds the philosophical, as Nietzsche recognizes in *The Use and Abuse of History*, criticizing the dangerous influence of Hegelian philosophy when it attempts to raise man to the status of godhead, 'the true meaning and object of all past creation' (p.51). However, these words from Nietzsche immediately remind us of the presence and continuity of a destructive *tradition*. In the movement by which Foucault's discourse punctures European thought, deflating the sovereignty both of the subject and of a certain practice of historiography, it simultaneously confirms another European tradition, that of *Destruktion*. Heidegger points up the place of anthropology in all this:

> the more extensively and the more effectually the world stands at man's disposal as conquered, and the more objectively the object appears, all the more subjectively, i.e., the more importunately, does the *subiectum* rise up, and all the more impetuously, too, do observation of and teaching about the world change into a doctrine of man, into anthropology.[34]

By the same token, Foucault's puncturing discourse does not amount to positioning France as the *pointe*, the tip, the headland, the advanced point.[35]

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[33] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Paladin Books, 1988), p.244. It is also licit to see a profound continuity between Foucault's discourse and that of traditional Marxism. In Barthes' terms, Foucault's writing would tread a fine line between the litotic and the emphatic (Barthes, *Writing Degree*, p.29). I shall return to this observation at a later stage.

[34] 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology*, p.133. Dreyfus maintains that if at one time Heidegger believed that man was dominating everything, he later came to hold that man was not in control, that technology rendered him a mere effect of forces, a trajectory Foucault follows in the later work on prisons (Dreyfus, 'On the Ordering', pp.86-87).

[35] In the aforementioned 'Entretien' with Chapsal, Foucault suggests the interest in systems is far from simply French: 'It takes all the monoglot narcissism of the French to imagine – as

The rhetorical distance from someone like François Mauriac is apparent, Foucault rejecting the tradition of French national mythography descending from Michelet based on the personification of France.[36]

The absence of a discourse on the *patria* does not necessarily mean, though, that patriotism is foresworn. The recourse to Borges in the preface of *The Order of Things* is revealing in this respect. The appeal which Borges holds for Foucault relates to the former's exploration of the labyrinth and the metamorphosis, the 'mythical spaces of the Western imagination', to borrow Foucault's judgement of Roussel. In Borges, the labyrinth is transformed from the image of a forbidden enclosed space into a metaphor of the imprisonment which results, paradoxically, from infinity. Most obviously in 'The House of Asterión'. Similarly, metamorphosis disrupts the identity, and mutually defining properties, of thought and individual.[37] In the preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault uses Borges' famous piece from 'The Analytical Language of John Wilkins' concerning that classification of animals found in 'a certain Chinese encyclopaedia' which breaks up all the 'ordered surfaces and all the planes (*plans*) with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things' (p.xv; trans. mod.). (At stake is the disruption of a projection.) That category of animals 'included in the present classification' ruins the site

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they do – that it is they who have just discovered this whole area of problems. This movement developed in America, in England, in France, on the basis of work which had been done immediately after the First World War in the Slav- and German-speaking countries.[...] We have a hexagonal awareness of culture which means that paradoxically de Gaulle can pass for an intellectual' (p.15).

[36] Malcolm Scott, 'François Mauriac and the Politics of the Sermon on the Mount', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 36 (1993), 54-69.

[37] See 'The Immortal'.

of taxonomy, the classificatory tableau, effecting instead a 'distortion of

classification'. As Foucault notes, it is interesting that Borges gave as the

mythical homeland of this distorted tableau a precise region (China), 'whose

name alone constitutes for the West a vast reservoir of Utopias' (p.xix).[38] In

a move which is remarkably Borgesian, Foucault allows this vast reservoir to

well up in his own prose:

> In our dreamworld, is not China precisely this privileged *place* of *space*? In
> our imaginary, Chinese culture is the most meticulous, the most
> hierarchically ordered, the one most deaf to temporal events, most attached
> to the pure unfolding of extension (*l'étendue*); we dream of it as a
> civilization of dikes and dams beneath the eternal face of the sky; we see it,
> spread out and frozen, over the entire surface of a continent surrounded by
> walls. Its very writing does not reproduce the fugitive flight of the voice in
> horizontal lines; it erects in vertical columns the motionless and still-
> recognizable image of things themselves. So much so that the Chinese
> encyclopaedia quoted by Borges, and the taxonomy it proposes, lead to a
> thought without space, to words and categories that lack all life and place,
> but which ultimately dwell in a ceremonial space, overburdened with
> complex figures, with tangled paths, strange places, secret passages, and
> unexpected communications. There would thus be, at the other end of the
> earth we inhabit, a culture entirely devoted to the ordering of extension but
> one which would not distribute the multiplicity of existing things into any
> of the categories that make it possible for us to name, speak, and think.
> (p.xix; trans. mod.)

As with Borges on the kabbalah and on Arab thought, though in much less

detail, Foucault is content to allow the mythical otherness of China to resonate

in all its, for our thought, disturbing aspects. Amid the metaphors of the

disruption and transgression of space, China is momentarily annexed to aid in

the centrifugal movement of thought. In the final sentence of the preface, this

movement presages both a groundswell and an earth tremor: 'In attempting to

bring to light this profound "dislevelling" (*dénivellation*) of Western culture,

we are restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its

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[38] In the related 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias' from 1967, Foucault locates
the oldest example of a heterotopia again beyond the West, this time in the traditional garden
of Persia.

instability, its faults; and it is this same ground which is once more stirring under our feet' (p.xxiv; trans. mod.). Maintaining the central metaphor of archaeology, Foucault assimilates the disruption of the ground of our thought to that of our geopolitics (the word *sol* extends from 'ground' to 'soil', in the sense of 'on French soil'). The awkward word *dénivellation* suggests not only a difference in levels within Western culture but a 'making uneven', a 'lowering' of that same culture. I shall question later in what sense the metaphorics of disjuncture may be termed disruptive and similarly the degree of 'levelling' that Foucault operates here between thought and geopolitics, that is, the extent to which tremors in the first may truly be said to resonate in the second.

Be that as it may, there is obvious irony in allowing a text by Borges to stand as an *ébranlement*, a 'shaking', 'weakening', 'disturbance', 'unhinging', of Western culture. Borges is not nearly so formalist as the Foucault of *The Order of Things*. If there is transgression of space in Borges, there is also a strong sense of continuity: firstly, in the notion that history is but the repetition of a few metaphors (as in 'Pascal's Sphere'), that the 'system' thus stretches far back into the past and cannot be conceived of in terms of discrete *epistemes*; secondly, in the idea that ancestry and blood are binding ties to tradition. In 'The Dead Man', Benjamín Otálora responds to the call of ancestry: 'That life is new to him, and at times cruel, but it is already in his blood, because just as men of other nations venerate and make offerings to the sea, so we (including the man who weaves these symbols) long for the inexhaustible plain that reverberates beneath the hooves' (Borges, *Prosa*

completa, 2, pp.256-257).[39]   Ariadne did not hang herself. Mythical or not,

there is a forceful centripetal tendency in Borges which betokens a different

attitude and ethos towards the notion of tradition, a key theme in the question

of Europe.[40]   Borges uses the following words from Francis Bacon (*Essays*

LVIII) as an epigraph to 'The Immortal': 'Solomon saith: *There is no new*

thing upon the earth. So that as Plato had an imagination, *that all knowledge*

was but remembrance; so Solomon giveth his sentence, *that all novelty is but*

oblivion' (p.239).

Euro-*centrism* and the idea of economy

But let us return to our main argument, to the question of Foucault's

putative Eurocentrism. I shall argue in this section that the charge contains a

fundamental misreading and a troubling aggression. For even if one senses

vast generalizations about European thought in the sweep of *The Order of*

Things ('Taking a relatively short chronology and a restricted geographical cut

[*découpage*] – European culture since the sixteenth century' [p.386]), Foucault

eschews universalization and acknowledges, here as elsewhere, the Western

limits of his scope at the same time as he questions the possibility of *any*

proper limits. Thus, Said's judgement on Foucault ('his Eurocentrism was

almost total, as if history itself took place only among a group of French and

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[39] 'Story of the Warrior and of the Captive' would contradict this pull of ancestral ties. The barbarian Lombard warrior, Droctulft, changes sides and ends up defending the civilized city (Ravena) whose destruction he had sought. The English woman turns her back on European civilization and remains with the Indians in the desert.

[40] For Foucault on tradition as the embodiment of a constructed continuity, see *The Archaeology*, pp.21-25.

German thinkers') is a gross simplification.[41] First, neither Pierre Rivière,
Herculine Barbin nor many of the inmates of La Salpêtrière were schooled in
Königsberg or Paris. Second, and without claiming for Foucault's work an
unimpeachable intellectual reach, not to explore other histories is not *ipso facto*
to deny them – and Foucault never proscribed the question of colonialism.
Third, to write exclusively about French or German thinkers may be to exhibit
a broadly European perspective; it is not necessarily to be Eurocentric.
Eurocentrism involves holding up European thought or values as the self-
identical centre around which all else orbits and against which everything else
is defined.

In this respect, the art historian Kenneth Clark, whom one might
condemn on the above grounds, is an interesting case. The preface to the book
of the television series *Civilisation* unfurls the classic humanist discourse
(history as continuity; the progress of the 'human mind', of 'mankind', and of
the 'European mind', all in the singular; the national stereotypes: Spain is
omitted because 'she has simply remained Spain') and by 'civilization' means
'Western Europe'. Yet, as Clark himself remarks, it would be obtuse indeed
to believe he thought it the only civilization. The 'ancient civilisations' of
Egypt, Syria, Greece, Rome, China, Persia, India and the world of Islam,
would simply have necessitated many more programmes, and in any case he
fears assessing cultures whose language he does not know.

> However, I confess that the title has worried me. It would have been easy
> in the eighteenth century: *Speculations on the Nature of Civilisation as
> illustrated by the Changing Phases of Civilised Life in Western Europe from*

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[41] Edward W. Said, 'Michel Foucault, 1926–1984', in *After Foucault*, pp.9-10.

the Dark Ages to the Present Day. Unfortunately, this is no longer practicable. (Clark, *Civilisation*, p.xvii)

Compare this to Foucault's Preface to *Anti-Oedipus*. The opening words: 'During the years 1945-1965 (I am referring to Europe), there was a certain way of thinking correctly' (p.xi). That's a long time and a big place. In fact, statements of specificity can always look like the most unsatisfactory of generalizations. Spivak's averred positionality ('feminist, Marxist deconstructivist') certainly begs more questions than it contains epithets.

An unfair concession seems already to have been made, though, if we allow that Foucault's interest lies exclusively in Western knowledge and power as commodities produced solely through the labours of the West. In fact, there are references in his work to beyond Europe and the West, points of fugue which demand quotation marks (even though they form part of the West's system of script) around 'Western'. In *Discipline and Punish*, the colonial question is not altogether neglected. Foucault alludes to an increase in the theft at the port of London of products arriving from America and the West Indies (pp.85-86), and to the birth of an empiricism 'that covered the things of the world' at a time when the Western world 'was beginning the economic and political conquest of this same world' (p.226). And just for the record, in the 1967 piece 'Of Other Spaces' (therefore long before *Discipline and Punish*), Foucault cites both the seventeenth-century Puritan colonies founded by the English in America and the Jesuit colonies established in South America as examples of heterotopias, describing the 'totally regulated' existence of the latter. In *Histoire de la folie*, and as far as knowledge is concerned, Foucault evokes the possibility (his expression is timid: 'It is not impossible that...') that

the Orient together with Arab thought had played a determining part in influencing the formation in Europe since the Middle Ages of a 'medical humanism' which had reached out to the insane (p.133). Possibly as early as the seventh century a hospital reserved for the mad had been founded at Fez, an Arab connection which explains for Foucault why the first such European institutions should have appeared in Spain.[42]

Where political and economic power are concerned, on the other hand, he argues that the internment of the insane and other 'unreasonable' elements at the end of the seventeenth century in Europe was a response to economic crisis probably due to a collapse in the Spanish economy brought on by a cessation of mining in the Latin American colonies (*Histoire de la folie*, p.77). Further, he cites the intention of the English to use the newly discovered lands of the East and West Indies as escape valves for their own steadily growing mendicant population (p.78), and also mentions French exploitation of the North American colonies in the early years of the eighteenth century, achieved by means of those among the interned population considered '"bons pour les Iles"', who were then embarked at La Rochelle and put to work for the French economy in the New World (p.422).[43] I would venture at this juncture that the values attached to these examples are not fortuitous: what comes freely from beyond Europe (medicine) is good, what Europe does to its colonies (extract

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[42] Foucault restates the indebtedness of European development in the Middle Ages to the Arab world in a Spanish interview, 'Le Pouvoir, une bête magnifique', in *Dits et écrits*, III, pp.368-382 (first publ. as 'El poder, una bestia magnífica', *Cuadernos para el diálogo*, 238, 19-25 November 1977).

[43] The first and fourth examples are excised completely from the English translation while the explanation for Spain's crisis is omitted from the second.

wealth) is bad.   When Foucault notes that another product of the Latin

American slave colonies were the 'technologies of power', we note in turn that

they are not, of course, an indigenous invention (*Remarks*, p.170). If anything,

Foucault's discussions of Europe and its others valorize the latter, even if to

accomplish this he occasionally resorts to positive stereotypes, as happens with

the over-spiritualized judgement of the Iranian revolution, of which more later.

In any event, although it assumes only a minor role in Foucault's writings,

there is a recognition on his part that European knowledge and power do not

spring Minerva-like out of themselves, that any genealogy of European

capitalism must necessarily pass by way of the colonial projects.

That said, and despite its theoretically borderless economy which we

praised in the previous chapter, the theory of power that Foucault elaborates

in *La Volonté de savoir* is not exempt from problems, theoretical and

geopolitical, which risk reinstituting false boundaries and illicit homogeneities.

Against its better instincts, the book seems to want to restore a form of epochal

and geopolitical unity to the modern West. Since power in 'our society' can

no longer wholly be embodied in a unique central point or source of

sovereignty, Foucault writes that our representations of power should likewise

cut off the king's head. It is noticeable, though, how absolutism marks this

announcement of the end of sovereignty. The *partage*, or guillotine, mentality

still lingers: here and now, disciplinary power; there and at that time, a

sovereign force. Elsewhere, Foucault remarks that disciplinary power 'is in

every aspect the antithesis' of the sovereign model.[44] This discourse of the

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[44] Foucault, 'Two Lectures', *Power/Knowledge*, pp.78-108 (p.104).

guillotine would constitute a sort of surrogate form of revolution, a revolutionary language without the revolution. Barthes says of the writing of the French Revolution that its exercise was tied to 'the Blood which had been shed' (p.27):

> The Revolution was in the highest degree one of those great occasions when truth, through the bloodshed that it costs, becomes so weighty that its expression demands the very forms of theatrical amplification. Revolutionary writing was the one and only emphatic gesture commensurate with the daily presence of the guillotine. What today appears turgid was then no more than life-size. This writing, which bears all the signs of inflation, was an exact writing: never was language more incredible, yet never was it less spurious. (*Writing Degree*, pp.27-28; trans. mod.)

Despite moving us away from the *supplice* in *Discipline and Punish*, the discourse of the scaffold persists in Foucault, bearing the signs of a modern form of inflation. Let us say that we are not in an absolutely different, and modern, era of power, a point betokened by an awkward shuffling in *La Volonté*, where power is at once specifically modern and yet irrascibly general. Even when it would seem that power was held in the fist of a single great sovereign, there must still have been class, sexual, religious and economic power, the shifting sands of which might coalesce just enough to depose him (Charles I of England, for instance). Equally, not all modern power is subtle, faceless disciplinary coercion, as evidenced by 'the exceptional forms of capitalist State (fascism, military dictatorship, etc.) which infest to-day's world'.[45]

Furthermore, the division between power regimes in *La Volonté* is predicated on a precarious geopolitical faultline, emerging on the heels of a

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[45] Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, trans. by Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1980), p.80.

certain relationship between life and history. Foucault argues that although life has always impinged on history (in the shape of epidemic and famine), only in recent times, and only in the West, has a certain 'threshold of biological modernity' been reached, whereby techniques for the control and management of life mean that the species enters a society's political strategies as one of the conscious stakes.[46] Again positivism lurks, as if power regimes (like *epistemes* or discourses) existed in a state of uncontaminated purity at a specific time and in a specific place.[47] Foucault seems, therefore, at one level of his discourse, to erect and conform to all three types of border limits that Derrida refers to in *Aporias*: namely, the geopolitical and cultural separations, those between domains of discourse, and finally the forms of the border that separate concepts or terms.[48] Spivak, who rightly contests the geopolitical division, relates Foucault's separatist instinct to the theoretical lack in his work of a thought of inscription, which means that he 'buys' a self-contained version of the West, symptomatically ignoring its production by the imperialist project. It is not strictly the case, however, that he omits to think inscription. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, and it is a theme taken up by *The Order of Things*, Foucault is at pains to show the formation of the 'technical and conceptual trinity' of life, disease, and death. Before Beckett, Bichat:

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[46] The English translation contrives to omit 'biological'. *The History of Sexuality*, p.143.

[47] Foucault invokes an untenable division even between the contemporary dictatorship of Poland and those of Latin America. Foucault *et al*, '"En abandonnant les Polonais, nous renonçons à une part de nous-mêmes"', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 9 October 1982, p.36.

[48] Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. by Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p.23.

> Bichat relativized the concept of death, bringing it down from that absolute in which it appeared as an indivisible, decisive, irrecoverable event: he volatilized it, distributed it throughout life in the form of separate, partial, progressive deaths, deaths that are so slow in occurring that they extend even beyond death itself. (*The Birth*, p.144)

Be that as it may, Spivak maintains that Foucault forgets that the new mechanism of power invented in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which he says is 'absolutely incompatible with the relations of sovereignty', is secured precisely by means of territorial imperialism elsewhere, in places, moreover, where the representation of sovereignty is still pertinent:

> Sometimes it seems as if the very brilliance of Foucault's analysis of the centuries of European imperialism produces a miniature version of that heterogeneous phenomenon: management of space – but by doctors, development of administrations – but in asylums, considerations of the periphery – but in terms of the insane, prisoners, and children. The clinic, the asylum, the prison, the university, seem screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism. (Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p.210.)

It is true that the section of *Discipline and Punish* which deals with the distribution of individuals in space elects not to explore the question of imperialism or colonialism, though it does not thereby preclude consideration of it.[49] Indeed, despite a metaphorical use of the term *colonization* (he writes of the 'colonization' of delinquency by the dominant illegalisms [p.285]), Foucault touches briefly and unmetaphorically on the plans (soon abandoned) of the July monarchy to use deportees in the colonization of Algeria (*Discipline and Punish*, p.279).[50] Likewise, he is not oblivious to the 'racism of expansion' of the second half of the nineteenth century (*The History of*

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[49] 'I shall choose examples from military, medical, educational and industrial institutions. Other examples might have been taken from colonization, slavery and child rearing' (*Discipline and Punish*, p.314, n.1).

[50] He mentions Algeria fleetingly in Foucault, 'Michel Foucault on Attica', p.157.

Sexuality, p.125).[51]

One wonders, on the other hand, if Spivak herself goes far enough in her criticism, or if she is not reluctant to relinquish the hubristic idea of a categorical geopolitical difference between First and Third World. To think that the reinscription of sovereignty comes only from 'elsewhere', as though Europe did not bear the traces of sovereign power from before the imperialist project, would be to restitute a certain *partage*. As though, too, the Third World did not already carry within it disciplinary possibilities. In García Márquez's novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, the portrayal of a monstruously archetypal Latin American dictator, the *supplice* sits side by side with the surveillance technology of a modern, late twentieth-century state, the symbols of a sovereign and a disciplinary regime respectively.[52] And again, Foucault's earlier remark regarding the technologies of slave colonies further suggests a more complex order of power.[53]

The strictly theoretical dimension of Foucault's formulation of power in the first volume on sexuality is more successful than the historical aspect in evoking this complex *economy* of power. His theory, which emerges precisely in contradistinction to an 'economism' – a Marxist economism but also the liberal, juridical variant, where power is taken to be a right, which one possesses like a commodity, or understood as something one exchanges –,

[51] See also Foucault, 'Eugène Sue que j'aime', *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 12 January 1978, p.3.

[52] Gabriel García Márquez, *El otoño del patriarca* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1975), pp.226-231.

[53] Compare Foucault, 'Two Lectures' (p.93) where he intimates that the division of power regimes might be a matter of degree.

posits that power is literally everywhere, produced from one moment to the next 'in every relation from one point to another' (*The History of Sexuality*, p.93). There is no outside of power, merely an economy of forces (always understood that *oiko-nomia*, as 'the law-of-the-house and the law of the proper', precisely exceeds the economic narrowly defined[54]), an economy in which relations of power are 'not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter' (*The History of Sexuality*, p.94). An economy of power in which *logos* matters profoundly: 'Has not the practice of revolutionary discourse and scientific discourse in Europe over the past two hundred years freed you from this idea that words are wind, an external whisper, a beating of wings that one has difficulty in hearing in the serious matter of history' (*The Archaeology*, p.209)?

Post-colonial theories of discourse: economics and critique

Foucault's work on the power-effects of knowledge relationships has proved an important resource for post-colonial theories of discourse. Even if his work provides no direct analysis of colonialism, it does offer a theoretical and historical model of the complicity between forms and institutions of knowledge and forms of power, though its limitations are clearly exposed on the question of resistance. Said, Bhabha and Spivak have all variously mined Foucault's writings for insights. Said: 'The parallel between Foucault's carceral system and Orientalism is striking. For as a discourse Orientalism,

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[54] See Jacques Derrida, 'Le Retrait de la métaphore', in *Psyché*, pp.63-93 (p.75).

like all discourses, is "composed of signs; but what they [discourses] do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this 'more' that renders them irreducible to the (sic) language and to speech"' (Said, 'The Problem of Textuality', pp.711-712; quoting from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*). This 'more' lies in the power of discipline to differentiate, classify, exclude, and ultimately constitute an entire domain called 'the Orient'.

The notion of Europe's or the West's constituting or constructing other peoples and places can readily be disengaged from Foucault's texts. His analyses are centrally concerned with the processes of objectification by means of which a body of knowledge, a *savoir*, comes to be institutionalized and a subject (knowing or known) constituted therein. It is not my intention to examine the manner in which Foucault's work is taken up by the aforementioned thinkers. Rather, my concern touches upon an overstatement of the link between knowledge and power, whereby European historicism is condemned for its collusion in European geopolitical hegemony but European postmodern thought, by a neat turn of the wheel, invested with the power to put an end to this dominance. I shall suggest in the remainder of this chapter that Foucault's work must take its share of responsibility for this inflation, firstly because of the genealogies' Manichaeism in respect of the nexus Europe–thought–power, and secondly because of the voluntarism which marks the disjunctive discourse explored earlier.

I should like to address these issues by turning to Robert Young's *White Mythologies*, a text which assumes the link between knowledge relationships and power but proposes to make positive use of it. I choose

Young because he draws explicitly on Foucault but also, and perhaps more importantly, because he draws on what I would call the spirit of Foucault, even if his project would advertise itself as primarily Derridian rather than Foucaultian in nature. Young harnesses Foucault's genealogies to a wider project of deconstruction involving the 'decentralization' and 'decolonization' of European thought – insofar as the philosophical tradition of the latter makes '"common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same"' (Young, *White Mythologies*, p.18; quoting Derrida). For Young, the result of this project of our 'Postmodern' era is nothing less than the 'dissolution' of 'the West'. At this point, it seems licit to ask what might be put in the place of 'Europe'. What other economy, of knowledge and power, could avoid the sins of old Europe? Might a postmodern economy accomplish these objectives? Let us suspend these questions for the time being. For now, we note that there is a causal chain in Young borne, curiously, by disjuncture, by a surfeit of disjunctive prefixes the like of which we have observed in Foucault. Through an activity of thought (deconstruction), we can effect a process – more than simply a thought process – which leads to the decentralization, decolonization and eventual dissolution of the concept 'the West'. The inverted commas are important: Young is not saying that with the aid of deconstruction a piece of Brittany will slip into the sea. In the final paragraph of his book, by contrast, there is a strategic *removal* of quotation marks. Young writes that the analysis of colonialism shows the enactment of the links between Western history and Western historicism 'in the colonial past and the neocolonial present' (Young, p.175). Leaving aside the question of

mischaracterization – Young's text barely analyzes colonialism and the 'links' between history and historicism remain heavily overdetermined – Young rightly contests the credo that thought, rather like quotation marks in relation to a word, is suspended in an ideal realm above reality: 'The effect of this [analysis] has been to produce a shift away from the problem of history as an idea towards an examination of Western history's and historicism's contemporary political ramifications' (Young, p.175). Western historicism, like Western history, has contemporary political ramifications, without quotation marks. This is Said territory: 'The simple fact is that between 1815, when European powers were in occupation of approximately 35 percent of the earth's surface, and 1918, when that occupation had extended to 85 percent, discursive power increased accordingly' (Said, 'The Problem of Textuality', p.711). The point, for Young, is to embrace the political character of thought, only this time to de- rather than re-colonize.

There are certain questions that I should like to pose: Is the decolonization of European thought possible through thought alone? What of economy as economics in the narrow sense? And finally, what in all this is the value of 'Europe'? Let us be guided by Young's praise of Spivak's analysis of *Jane Eyre*: 'It is impossible to forget that the moment when Jane achieves her independence by inheriting a fortune – from the West Indies – is also the moment in which she becomes complicit with the history of slavery' (Young, p.166). For we can see here a cameo of the Western academic's position. The bid for academic independence from the paradigms of a constraining institution takes place at the same time as we invest our salaries in Western banking and

commercial interests, many of whose activities consist in cementing economic imbalances between 'the West' and the former colonies, and much of whose effort goes to removing the inverted commas. Take the example, from Latin America, of the foreign debt.

Significant changes in the world economy took place in the 1970s, including a process of deregulation of the financial world, the disintegration of controls on the movement of private capital, the emergence of private banks as principal lenders to the Third World.[55] The OPEC crisis of 1974 fuelled recession in the West and led to a fall off in the demand by Western governments for new loans. Certain Third World countries, on the other hand, were anxious for loans, $60 billion worth of which was forthcoming from private and commercial Western banks to Latin America between 1975 and 1982. In point of fact this was vastly more money than the banks had left in their vaults – a flagrant transgression of one of the cardinal rules of banking. Furthermore, there was scant analysis of the risks, no monitoring of the debtor countries' ability to pay, little consideration of to whom the money was being lent.

In Latin America in the mid-1970s, the money was being lent to a series of unelected regimes, be they military dictatorships or bureaucratic-authoritarian machines. This was the case in Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia and Argentina, the latter receiving a $290m loan from the International Monetary Fund in the wake of the military seizure of power in 1976. A

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[55] What follows relies heavily on Jackie Roddick, *The Dance of the Millions: Latin America and the Debt Crisis* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1988); and Susan George, *A Fate Worse than Debt* (London: Penguin Books, 1989).

sizable proportion of the money went on purchasing military hardware but the flight of capital was perhaps the most acute problem: the World Bank estimates that between 1979 and 1982 $19.2bn left Argentina. Now, and this is the crux of the matter for my limited purposes, on the return to democratic governments the debts still had, and have, to be honoured, and at vastly higher interest rates than those in place at the time at which the bulk of the debt was contracted. In other words, it is perfectly possible for a deconstructed, decentralized, decolonized and dissolved conglomeration of bodies to break down national boundaries, transgress the rules of their own institution, lose, and still win.

Therefore, and as Foucault's first volume on sexuality is keenly aware, the question of contesting an already fragmented dominant order (as Young urges us to) is a complex one. Firstly, if resistances, like power, are plural, mobile and transitory, 'fracturing unities and effecting regroupings' (*The History of Sexuality*, p.96), then it is difficult to say what is resistance and certainly to guarantee that it will continue being so. For this reason, we ought to question the contemporary signs of inflation which have got into the discursive system and which manifest themselves in the widespread tendency (which does not belong exclusively to modernity and even less to Foucault) towards a metaphorics of disjuncture and destruction. Stephen Kern, for example, compares the disruption wrought by Cubism with a certain levelling (a word he insists on) of spatial and even social hierarchies on the battlefields of World War I: 'If an artist, aviator, or anyone should actually see the earth

as no one has ever seen it before, then the old world must go smash.'[56] Again,

this time on the levelling brought about the communications 'revolution':

'Telephones break down barriers of distance – horizontally across the face of

the land and vertically across social strata. They make all places equidistant

from the seat of power and hence of equal value' (Kern, p.316). Yet if all

places were of equal value, there would be no 'seat' of power.[57] Indeed,

perhaps disjuncture is and has been for some time (strictly speaking, Derrida

would say it has always been) a *modus operandi*, a *modus vivendi*. As Richard

Terdiman says apropos of nineteenth-century newspapers, they instruct us in

the irreducible fragmentation of daily experience and prepare us to live in it.

Furthermore, 'there is a real sense in which the principle of organization of

these structures – of the market, of the daily paper – is a systematic emptying

of any logic of connection. They rationalize disjunction; they are organized

as disorganization'.[58] For this reason, the prefixal weighting of a book like

William Rowe and Vivien Schelling's *Memory and Modernity: Popular*

Culture in Latin America, which aligns 'pluri-', 'multi-', 'hetero-' with the

culturally desirable and progressive, should be closely examined, even if one

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[56] *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.312.

[57] Kern says as much: 'The distance between the fighting and the decision-making created an experiential and emotional gap between the generals and the men at the front [who presumably could not telephone their fellow foot soldiers: AS] that enabled commanders to continue to spin table-top plans for offensives and be shielded from direct contact with the disastrous consequences' (p.309).

[58] *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.127. The same point about newspapers as a kind of metonym of capitalism is made by Gerald Graff, *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p.92. Terry Eagleton argues similarly that capitalism is *the* great dismantler of the sacred and the fixed (*The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p.375).

is broadly in sympathy with its attempt to valorize that continent's popular cultures.[59] Historically speaking, and as Kenneth Clark argues, it is the self-same emphasis on unshackled, freely-circulating processes – fluid capital, free economy, dislike of state interference – which gives rise both to the great artistic, intellectual and architectural achievements of the seventeenth-century Netherlands for instance and to the soon to be squallor of industrial society (Clark, p.154). Such decentralizing forces thus need not necessarily cut across the grain of large power conglomerates and in fact may even be gilt-edged.[60] Foucault speaks precisely of the 're-colonisation' of subjugated knowledges by unitary discourses ('Two Lectures', p.86). Conversely, even the state – stick-in-the-mud centralizer to the last – need not always and everywhere represent the forces of oppression and may even, as Derrida observes, help us to fight against private and transnational empires.[61]

Secondly, it would indeed be a lacuna in the economy of power for economics to figure as metaphor but not as economics in the narrow sense. While Foucault is no economist, he nevertheless does not reject economics: 'It effectively remains the case that the relations of power do indeed remain profoundly enmeshed in and with economic relations and participate with them

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[59] London: Verso, 1991.

[60] *Gilt-edged*, '(of a security, esp. British government stock) having a high degree of reliability as an investment' (*NSOED*). As Sheldon S. Wolin puts it: 'The hoariest cliché is that we live in a changing world. The second hoariest cliché associates change with progress toward freedom, democracy, and the alleviation of mass suffering. The significance of Reaganism and Thatcherism is that change has become a conservative category. We live in a constantly changing world because change is institutionalized and manufactured.' 'On the Theory and Practice of Power', in *After Foucault*, pp.179-201 (pp.183-184).

[61] Jacques Derrida, 'The Other Heading: Memories, Responses, and Responsibilities', in *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.37.

in a common circuit' (Foucault, 'Two Lectures', p.89). (One assumes that at least part of that common circuit is occupied by daily world-wide foreign exchange flows of around one trillion dollars.[62]) It is worth recalling that *Discipline and Punish* postulates that the disciplines emerge precisely as a response both to the great demographic increase and the growth in the apparatus of production in the eighteenth century, and that disciplinary power is marked emphatically by the economic in the narrow sense since it serves simultaneously to increase the subjected forces and improve the force and efficacy of that which subjects them. Foucault's portrait of the insane in *Histoire de la folie* is about madness as a medical, moral but also economic affair. There is a vital economic principle running throughout the book, whereby madness is perenially linked to the question of non-productivity and indigence, and indeed a good measure of the text's tremendous power derives from the poignancy and pathos which attach to Foucault's immersing the mad into the same mire of poverty and squallor as all the other children of St Francis. It would be a lacuna, then, for Foucault's rhetorical question, cited by Young, regarding the West's claim to universal validity ('was this not a mirage associated with economic domination and political hegemony?') to be dissolved by contemporary efforts at enlightenment. For his part, Young uses the metaphor of a 'conflictual economy' to which colonial power is subject (Young, p.142), yet virtually elides the role of economics in Spivak's work

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[62] Paul Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p.51.

(alluding to her neolithic-sounding 'residual classical Marxism').[63] It makes

interesting reading to compare this elision of economics with his inflation of

'critique', the latter able to inflect both theory and detailed historical material

towards 'an inversion of the dominant structures of knowledge and power'.[64]

A case of making a revolution easy for all.[65]

And yet the 'decolonization' of European thought could not be

accomplished strictly by thought, unless bank deposits count as thought-less (an

aim, it must be said, which automation renders plausible), nor by the restitution

of a strict causality between thought and politics, for thought is never self-

identical, can never be purged of undesirable traces. In this project of

deterritorialization, it is pointless, if well-meaning, to try and cede the

uncedable. Young is well aware of this fact ('it is not an issue of removing

colonial thinking from European thought, of purging it, like today's dream of

"stamping out" racism' [Young, p.119]). And again, when he construes the

relationship between thought on the one hand and colonialist politics and

commercial exploitation on the other as mutually reinforcing, though *not*

isomorphic (since thought has lagged behind the other areas in 'decolonizing'

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[63] Spivak herself writes: 'A "culturalism" that disavows the economic in its global operations cannot get a grip on the concomitant production of barbarism' (Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p.168).

[64] Young, p.173. In fact an economic concern creeps in at the death. Young paraphrases Salman Rushdie to the effect that Europe no longer colonizes to exploit labour power, since the latter comes to Europe. He adds: 'If the imperial situation has thus been reversed, the power-structure remains exactly the same' (Young, p.175). Ironically, Young's economism is suddenly far greater than the economism I accused him of ignoring. However, that the power-structure remains 'exactly the same' was certainly not what I wanted to suggest. For a similar inflation of *critique* and *critical strategy* in relation to Foucault's work, see David Carroll, *Paraesthetics*, p.77.

[65] Cf. *The Archaeology*, p.208.

itself), he touches on the intractably residual quality of thought. Rather than a project for a new, pristine order, Young's objective, following Fanon whom he cites unquestioningly, appears to be disorder.[66] The effect of the negative prefixes is to situate Young as one who feels neither anxiety nor nostalgia at the 'loss' of Europe, as one who escapes the condition of a Western culture 'which constantly fantasizes itself as constituting some kind of integral totality, at the same time as endlessly deploring its own impending dissolution' (Young, p.139). However, if we are witnessing the 'dissolution of "the West"', then 'we' should know that something – here a concept or a notional geographical entity – cannot dissolve into nothing; it simply changes form or state. I suggest that this is why Derrida would be circumspect about any such dissolution. Using a cognate word, Derrida writes of the danger that European cultural identity might find itself 'dispersed' into 'a multiplicity of self-enclosed idioms or petty little nationalisms, each one jealous and untranslatable' (Derrida, *The Other Heading*, p.39). The fate of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are two obvious cases where ethnic rivalry and regional separatism have resurfaced in the wake of national disintegration. At a world, as opposed to European, level, Paul Kennedy observes that by the early 1990s there were almost three times as many states compared with sixty years before (Kennedy, p.330). The concomitant danger that Derrida points to takes us close to Foucault. It concerns a new centralization which, by reconstituting 'places of an easy consensus' through 'mobile, omnipresent, and extremely

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[66] '"Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously a programme of complete disorder"' (Young, p.120).

rapid' media networks that immediately cross every border, breeds a normalization which would establish a cultural capital 'at any place and at all times [...] *remote control* as one says in English for the TV, a ubiquitous tele-command, quasi-immediate and absolute' (Derrida, *The Other Heading*, pp.39-40). Although the stress falls in Foucault's economy of power on its unstable, mobile and micro-physical character, nonetheless, and as I argued in the last chapter, he never discounts the 'more general powers or economic interests' ('Two Lectures', p.99), the large-scale 'major dominations' which, he says, 'are the hegemonic effects that are sustained by all these confrontations' (*The History of Sexuality*, p.94), that second '"power"' (*'le' pouvoir*), which is the 'over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities [...] and seeks in turn to arrest their movement' (*The History of Sexuality*, p.93). Again, Kennedy makes the point that, at one level, 'far from national borders being dismantled, they are simply being folded into a bigger entity – the EC, a North American free-trade zone, a yen-dominated area – with the world economy increasingly dominated by three enormous regional trading blocs' (Kennedy, p.285).

The gamut of expressions used by Young which tell of the West losing power, seeing its control and authority subverted, appear to overlook those forces through which the West is, in the same movement, gaining control, albeit in an uneven fashion. Even if the shareholders of multinational corporations have become the new sovereigns, as Kennedy submits, the presence of a certain critical mass – institutional, infrastructural, financial – ensures that control remains largely in Western hands. In fact, in economic terms, and despite the flow of development aid from North to South, there

remains a huge net transfer of capital from the Third to the First World – an estimated $43 billion every year (Kennedy, p.224). At another level, and as Derrida puts it, it is quite possible that Europe itself renounces the role as the centre or capital of the planet 'only at the moment when the fable of a planetarization of the European model still seems quite plausible' (Derrida, *The Other Heading*, p.36). So then, there is a certain irony in Young's voluntaristic, decidedly uneconomic inflation of thought. First, because he has precisely not wanted to divorce cultural, symbolic power from the general power of the colonial situation, insisting that the deconstruction of European thought is part of the process of European decolonization, as before it the humanist project was bound up with the original acquisition of colonies. Second, because he himself takes Homi Bhabha to task for a similar voluntarism: for suggesting that thinking the 'hybridization' of colonial power allows us to read between the lines of the colonizer's discourse to see another, subversive colonized voice at work, and even '"to change the often coercive reality that [those lines] so lucidly contain"'. Is this a real historical resistance, Young asks, or does it have to wait for the astute critic many years later? 'And precisely what reality can such a reading between the lines hope to change?' 'What political status can be accorded the subversive strategies that Bhabha articulates', and what is their relation to 'the general text of colonialism' (Young, pp.148-151)? I read these remarks as objections to the literary theorist's failure to think through the relationship between subject-positions and the individual which we explored in Chapter three. Again, if it is a question of economy broadly understood, then thinking *oiko-nomia* as 'the

law-of-the-house and the law of the proper' need not amount to finding a single site, intellectual discipline or force (say economics narrowly defined) as *the* seat of power. However, economy would require consideration of degree, proportion, distribution.

Maria Daraki has some interesting musings apropos of the relationship between economics and intellectual production in Foucault. She argues that Foucault's work offers a plausible description of the very real psychological overdetermination of modern man by consumer society and its massive capacity to overdetermine desires. However, his work gives no cure, merely attacking 'anthropolitical finitude'. While the situationists denounce economic power as the fundamental power, he denies the existence of any fundamental power, proclaiming only powers plural and fragmented, and no promise of liberation. And yet by the same token, by replacing the economic overdetermination of desire with an anthropological determinism, Foucauldism, she insists, perpetuates the basic ideology of economic power, namely, determinism itself, merely rendering it more acceptable to our delicate ears.

> Today, economics is, without a doubt, *determining in relations of power*. On this level the proof is in the action. Where power is exercised, one is on the strong side. On the weak side, one makes theory. Theory is in local economic power. One enters a complicated field. There is the weight of traditions, the realities of cultural Europe. It is not easy to tell people on the go: you are submitting to the economic power which others exercise. You cannot brutally give them economic determinism. You have to dilute it. These are refined people; even under occupation, they have pretensions, they believed themselves 'the cradle of civilization.' You have to dilute it. Economic determinism must be served in a sauce of philosophical determinism, where it will be essentially a question of man. (Daraki, 'Foucault's Journey', p.109)

I have some sympathy for her argument, though it would be wrong to rule out the possibility that the surpassing of anthropological finitude might represent

precisely a form, or better, a force of liberation (however limited). In addition, Daraki passes over the phenomenon according to which the relative autonomy that Foucauldism (and she is right to say that this trend exceeds Foucault) cedes to non-economic powers paves the way precisely for an explosion of subversive work on power which largely brackets out the economic to produce an undeterministic-sounding socius. It is this subversion-speak which leaves its imprint on Young and one would have to ask (precisely because it is not necessary) to what extent the success of this largely literary-based iconoclasm is programmed by a certain historical receptivity of academe, by the demands for productivity, output and enterprise, where 'research' is allied more than ever to the post-Classical sense of technical production, of making something appear which was not formerly there (and generating profit as a result).

It is worth recalling, though, and in order to complicate what has just been claimed, that Foucault's discourse on 'specific intellectuals' is rather sanguine about the subversive possibilities of the humanities.[67] He instances Oppenheimer, post-Darwinian evolutionists, and physicists as specific intellectuals, distancing himself pointedly from the literary or philosophical figure. For Foucault, the specific intellectual has importance – and a certain power – commensurate with his or her capacity to reach beyond the local and the specific to touch the life of a population in a dramatic way. This would not disqualify the humanities from political work; it would merely counsel a

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[67] Foucault, 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge*, pp.109-133.

of proportion.[68]

Constitution beyond good and evil

Finally, let us return to complicity and guilt. In this last section of the chapter I shall suggest that a Foucaultian model of constitution has potentially debilitating implications both for the study of other cultures and for our sense of truth.

There is a persistent economic metaphorics at work throughout Foucault's writings which introduces into notionally uneconomic areas the theme of profit and loss, of winners and losers, of the obvious 'interest' or 'benefit' a discourse may have (this is thematized explicitly in *La Volonté* as the 'speaker's benefit'). One of the best examples of this metaphorics (and it is an instance closely bound to the fortunes of constitution) is provided by Foucault in an interview from 1983:

> This is my question: at what price [...] can subjects speak the truth about themselves as mad persons? At the price of constituting the mad person as absolutely other, paying not only the theoretical price but also an institutional and even an economic price, as determined by the organization of psychiatry. [...] How can the truth of the sick subject ever be told? That is the substance of my first two books. *The Order of Things* asked the price of problematizing and analyzing the speaking subject, the working subject, the living subject. [...] I went on to pose the same kind of question in the case of the criminal and systems of punishment: how to state the truth of oneself, insofar as one might be a criminal subject. I will be doing the same thing with sexuality, only going back much further: how does the subject speak truthfully about itself, inasmuch as it is the subject of sexual pleasure? And at what price?[69]

The metaphor of paying a price understood as sacrifice is a well-worn figure

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[68] Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, pp.180-181: 'Don't certain intellectuals hope to lend themselves greater political weight with their "ideological struggle" than they really have? A book is consumed very quickly, you know. An article, well...'

[69] In Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, pp.17-46 (p.30) (first publ. as 'Structuralism and Poststructuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault', *Telos*, 55 (Spring 1983), 195-211).

of common language and it would be impossible to locate a precise predecessor, such is the number of users through whose hands (and mouths) it has passed. But there are nevertheless interesting Nietzschean overtones here. In Foucault's metaphorics (and it is inferred rather than stated explicitly), 'cost' is linked to responsibility and guilt, in a moral economy different from, though not unrelated to, that posited by Nietzsche in the Second Essay from the *Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche's hypothesis concerning the origin of guilt and bad conscience posits a crossing of the moral and the economic, in which the moral concept of *Schuld*, 'guilt' and 'ought', descends from the economic concept of *Schulden*, 'debts'. To become conscious of owing something to someone was to become aware of an obligation, a sense of duty. Guilt is thus inseparable from the idea of repayment. Nietzsche argues that the ghastly highpoint of this complex, Christian guilt and self-abnegation, is the result of an original tribal association in which the living generation always acknowledges an indebtedness (*Schuld*), a legal obligation towards the earlier generation, and particularly to the founding fathers. The ancestors of the most powerful tribes, Nietzsche speculates, grow to an immense stature before finally assuming the proportions and aura of a god. Christianity continues this tradition, raising guilt to new heights of self-flagellation.

In Foucault, the one who pays the price, offers the tribute, the *guild*, is the one who, and this strictly in keeping with Nietzsche, experiences the *guilt*; but in contradistinction to Nietzsche, the guilt ought by rights to belong, together with the guild, to the creditor. Foucault is involved in an overt

turning away from Nietzsche insofar as the inculcation of guilt into the weak and oppressed by the strong is precisely what is injurious and shameful. However, this turning away is itself anticipated in Nietzsche's scheme, at the point where Nietzsche postulates that the ultimate ruse of Christianity is to have none other than God sacrificing himself for man's guilt, none other than God paying himself back. The point being that man thus becomes even more indebted to God, especially since the guilt cannot be paid off once and for all, being inexpiable and the punishment eternal. In Foucault, it is psychiatry, the human sciences, the Western disciplinary order that must assume the guilt.

Problems arise, though, when the guilty party is an entire system, be it Europe or the West. When Spivak postulates that the complicity between cultural and economic value-systems is 'acted out in almost every decision we make' (Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p.166), we are at once condemned and absolved: responsibility is ours and yet is a function of the system. Thus the question of value, which, she says, must be asked 'as the capuccino-drinking worker and the word-processing critic actively forget the actual price-in-exploitation of the machine producing coffee and words', is more complex than the innocent 'actual' would suggest – insofar as coffee machines give you capuccinos, not actual price-in-exploitation. Interestingly, this analysis of value 'is certainly not required of every literary critic' (Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p.167), a sentiment echoed by Young (p.90) and which I take as a salutary reminder of the importance, for the sake of the value of thought, of thinking other things besides power (which would not amount to thinking outside power). For there is a real danger (especially since no machine can ever

calculate its reality) of the simultaneous hyper- and a-trophy of thought on power, which promotes the argument that because force is everywhere, so too should the condemnatory thought of power be – a spectacular misunderstanding of Nietzsche, for which Foucault was in part responsible (and from which he extracted his own gain).

Foucault's contribution to the misunderstanding derives from the same root as his major methodological insight, namely, that objects of knowledge are 'constituted'. In *The Order of Things*, which, as we have seen, foregrounds the activity of pro-jection, the way in which knowledge goes ahead in advance of the thing to be known, the decisive moment in the passage from Renaissance to modern learning is the 'mathematical' project, in which things are in a sense evaluated beforehand and determined according to universal laws in axiomatic fashion. Foucault's achievement is to carry these philosophical insights into social history, charting the manner in which Western knowledge and its institutions variously constitute the insane, *les choses*, delinquents, sex. In *Histoire de la folie*, he traces the attempts to comprehend the truth of madness which, for him, succeed only in controlling it. Derrida observes, we recall, that Foucault's own position remains deeply disquieting since his archaeology is by definition itself a logic, a project, an order. The connection between the projects of knowing the mad and knowing the colonial other is apparent here, for both operate from within the treacherous problematic according to which the attempt to comprehend the other always threatens to collapse the alterity of the latter into sameness. For Spivak, Europe has constructed itself as sovereign subject while constituting the colonized, '"for

purposes of administration and the expansion of markets, into programmed near-images of that very sovereign self"' (cited by Young, *White Mythologies*, p.17). And even the most well-meaning attempts to restore self-determination and a proper name to 'madness itself' or to 'the subaltern as such' do not escape the perils of objectification and control.

The error that Foucault makes is to let sensitivity to the costs of constituting the other as object ossify into an inculpation of *all* formalized knowledge of marginalized others, as though the speaker's benefit precluded any gain accruing to those represented, or indeed any deficit befalling the speaker – be it that exacted by the academic system, or the price of persecution (Argentina post-1966), or the price, even, of success (Eribon's biography suggests the difficulties encountered by Foucault in living up to the public's expectations). This was certainly not always the case with Foucault. As Megill points out, *Mental Illness and Personality* talks of closing the gap between patient-as-object and doctor. Phenomenological psychology seeks to place itself at the centre of the experience of mental illness by entering the consciousness of the ill person (Megill, p.201). Early caveat apart, the theme of guilt, and more especially that of inculpation, pervades his texts. *Histoire de la folie* details the two great forms of the experience of madness known to the Classical Age. For the law, the madman is innocent; in the world of internment, on the contrary, madness cannot be divorced from will and the madman is thus guilty. Madness is therefore linked, in the latter view, to an ethical choice and to freedom. But it is important to bear in mind that madness is only the empirical form of unreason; and the madman, in his

animality, a figure precisely of inhumanity who reveals the unreason which always threatens man. Whence the paradox of the Classical experience of madness. Madness is at once enveloped in the moral experience (and potentially guilty one) of an unreason which the seventeenth century proscribes in internment; but it is linked also to the experience of an (innocent) animal unreason which forms the absolute limit of reason, and the scandal of the human condition. Later, the text rounds on nineteenth-century psychiatry for introducing madness into 'the game of culpability' (p.346), for organizing the madman's culpability into a conscience by placing him in a field of perpetual judgement so that, through remorse, he might return to an awareness of his status as responsible (bourgeois) subject. In this later organization one again finds two forms of madness, with two different connections to law: a guilty madness abandoned to its perversion and which no determinism can excuse, and a madness, on the contrary, whose heroism forms the mirror image of bourgeois values. Only the latter will be given a *droit de cité* within reason. Although Foucault describes the efforts of the new psychiatry as a double movement of liberation and enslavement, the accent falls heavily on the latter. The question remains, though, as to how far it is possible for *any* corpus of knowledge to avoid the non-reciprocal gaze which Foucault says psychoanalysis has inherited from earlier, objectifying practices. When, many years after the skirmish which distanced him from Foucault, Derrida returns to *Histoire de la folie*, he addresses precisely the question of guilt and

condemnation.[70] The incrimination of psychoanalysis found in that text he links to Foucault's separatist rhetoric of 'age', 'epoch' and 'episteme'. What interests Derrida is not the age described by the book, but the age describing; not a psychoanalysis objectified and reduced to that about which one speaks (a describable phenomenon on the other side, from another age, the object of a history), but a psychoanalysis from which one speaks. All of which would be enough to cast doubt on the very possibility of an age of psychoanalysis, on the possibility of a temporal division between the guilt of the time of psychoanalysis and the innocence of the time of the denunciation of psychoanalysis and, finally, on the possibility of *a* psychoanalysis (as though there could only be one).

The discourse of *conscience*, *regrets*, guilt and remorse is internalized by Pierre Rivière and animates his account throughout, but the attribution of guilt finds its most totalizing expression in *Discipline and Punish*, with Foucault's understanding of 'the carceral' – Western disciplinary society – as a species of self with powers to constitute the other, *ex nihilo* and unfailingly, as subject subjected. I am persuaded that, despite the belligerence of 'Mon corps', he subsequently took to heart Derrida's observation that his efforts could not but constitute a project or order which risked repeating the act of appropriation perpetrated against madness. As a result, and as we suggested in Chapter two, *Discipline and Punish* does not even attempt to restore the truth of the prison experience, fearful of that tendency characteristic of the

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[70] Jacques Derrida, '"Etre juste avec Freud". L'histoire de la folie à l'âge de la psychanalyse'.

medical world to 'thingify [*chosifier*] the other', as he puts it.[71] Foucault turns away utterly from what the inmates might have to say for themselves, in favour of analysing the disciplinary machinery that elicits the content and form of that speech, and as though the oppressed subject 'could seemingly speak for himself' (Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p.208). Rather than any representation of the being and meaning of others, his work targets the social machinery, the 'political technology', of projections and orders. The indictment of disciplinary society, which covers the Enlightenment and the European human sciences, secretes a sort of *a priori* fear of representing others, the trauma of which is expurgated through the attention lavished on the detail of the disciplinary machinery (none of which prevents him campaigning in the same period on behalf of the politically marginalized such as the Vietnamese boat people). In a later interview, Foucault alludes to the theme of guilt but sides uncharacteristically with intellectuals: 'an intellectual is one who is guilty. Guilty of a little of everything: of speaking, of remaining silent, of doing nothing, of mixing in everywhere. In short, the raw material for a verdict, a sentencing, a condemnation, an exclusion' (Foucault, 'The Masked Philosopher', in *Foucault Live*, p.194). Notwithstanding this late recantation, the price one pays for technological pointillism is a canvas of human sameness, where diversity and novelty belong to the technologies rather than to the human beings. One therefore misses the point by saying that Foucault barely touches on non-Europeans; he does not touch much on Europeans either. There are very few people in Foucault (likewise in Young), and you seldom

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[71] Foucault, 'Médicine et lutte des classes', *La Nef*, 49 (1972), 67-73 (p.68).

learn if they have a sad countenance or, as in Mauss, walk differently.[72] The generational dimension is undeniably important here. If the preceding generation was humanist and subject-centred, then parricide meant talking systems. But the price of this homicide is an exploration of otherness which studiously decolonizes itself, divests itself of others.

There are, however, notable exceptions to this rule – a series of newspaper articles by Foucault on the Iranian revolution. I shall concentrate on two articles published in the French press, though there were some fourteen items (letters and interviews among them) all told, the majority of which appeared in the Italian newspaper *La Corriere della sera*.[73] It is worth dwelling on the two pieces for what they tell us about Foucault's deliberate eschewal of the model of constitution. One should quite properly bear in mind questions of genre and convention at this juncture. A first-person account aimed at the newspaper market could not involve the depth and rigour demanded of a major academic work. Furthermore, there is certainly a sense in the early pieces written before the Shah's overthrow of a tangible personal investment on the part of Foucault, a sheer indignation at the corruption and violence of the Shah's regime. However, we shall have cause to remark, curiously, on a certain *philosophical* rather than journalistic tone adopted in these dispatches, a tone and a turn which are not without significance. In the first piece, 'A quoi rêvent les Iraniens?', Foucault is not interested in any

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[72] The exceptions are, of course, Herculine Barbin and Pierre Rivière, though the issue of representation is sidestepped somewhat by allowing them to represent themselves, which is not without its problems.

[73] All the items can be found in volume three of the *Dits et écrits*.

Western *dispositif* constructing the Iranians and remains sceptical of the standard Western line (the Iranians know what they don't want, but not what they want).[74] He therefore decides to travel to Teheran and Qom. His focus is clearly on the socio-historical moment of crisis and the great (international) forces in play. But it is also on individual Iranians' relationship to the crisis. Government and governmentality. He pointedly and selflessly canvasses people's opinions and his report, which synthesizes the testimonies of many, represents a studious attempt to be colonized by others. A significant majority of those questioned reply that they seek 'Islamic government' and Foucault sets about exploring what this might mean in a largely muslim, but not Arab (and not Sunni), country like Iran. The picture he paints is that of a tradition of religious tolerance. That Shiite Islam awaits the return of the imam, does not, he explains, prevent the desire for good government in the interim. No-one in Iran understands by 'Islamic government' a political regime presided over by the clergy. Rather, it designates a utopia and an ideal. Foucault is sceptical about a list of things which he is informed are objectives of Islam (including common ownership of land and natural resources; respect for minorities, where they do not harm the majority; different, but not unequal, rights for men and women, since they have different natures), noting that they are remarkably similar to the tired bourgeois and revolutionary formulae of the West. However, he seems to accept the response that the Koran had enunciated these formulae well before Western philosophers, and that if the Christian, industrial West has lost sight of them, Islam will not. And this is really where he wants

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[74] *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 16 October 1978, pp.48-49.

to get close to the specificity of Iran, which he says manifests itself in two particular ways. First, the wish to accord the traditional structures of Islamic society – the political forums lodged in the mosques and religious communities to resist the Shah – a permanent role in political life. Second, and inversely, the dream of introducing a spiritual dimension into political life. It should be noted that Foucault does pose the question of whether the political will is sufficiently deep-rooted really to take a permanent hold or whether it will be dissipated like a cloud when 'political reality' sets in. He ends the piece with two questions. At the dawn of history, he writes, Persia invented the State and confided the recipe for it to Islam: the ranks of the Caliphate were filled with state administrators. But this same Islam spawned a religion which gave its followers the wherewithall to resist the powers of that state. In this will for an 'Islamic government', therefore, should one see a reconciliation, a contradiction, or the threshold of something new? The second concerns Iran's position in the geopolitical world order and gestures to a peculiar and very special dimension which has long been lost to Europe: a *political spirituality*. Coming from Foucault, the final line ('I can already hear some French people laughing but I know they are wrong') is as remarkable as this last sentiment.

In the second piece, some seven months later, there is a flight from these systemic, institutional and individual questions of Iranian society into a general libertarian discourse on singularities.[75] Foucault argues that moments of uprising are an irreducible element which both belong to history and in a certain way escape it. Just because there may be established forms, like

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[75] Foucault, 'Inutile de se soulever?', *Le Monde*, 11 May 1979, pp.1-2.

religion or 'revolution', ready to receive, order, legitimize, and ultimately appropriate such moments, one should not deny their validity. It is not a matter of judging them by the overall outcome, by the final system within which they are subsumed, 'disqualifying the fact of the uprising because today there is a government of Mullahs' (p.2). One must instead show what is precisely irreducible in such a movement, what is disturbing for any despotism. The final three paragraphs, which are not about Iran, touch on general questions concerning the rights of individuals, power, and the morality of intellectuals. No one, he argues, has the right to pronounce 'Your revolt is useless, things will always be the same' to he who risks his life in the face of a great power. It is in rebelling that subjectivity – that of ordinary people – is introduced into history. 'Another principle: the power exercised by one man over another is always perillous.' Not because power is evil; rather, because it is infinite. Finally, to the strategist who dismisses a particular act of revolt or a death as insignificant in the grand scheme of things, be that strategist a politician, a historian, a supporter of the Shah or of the Ayatollah, he opposes his own, 'antistrategic' morality: 'be respectful when a singularity rises up in revolt, intransigent when power infringes the universal'. The final lines synthesize the impression that there is a distancing taking place from both the immediately historical and political.

The first piece can be criticized because Foucault was too uncritical, because he did not know enough about Iran and the character of Shiite Islam, and allowed himself to dream. The second, because it takes refuge in a simplistic libertarianism. To say, as Foucault does, that the man who revolts

is 'finally inexplicable', may be a truism. But to valorize this singularity *qua*

singularity is to forget that a singularity cannot but impinge on the path of

another singularity and another... and that this contact with a system, with an

economy, with law, with others, this difficult political, sexual, economic,

ethical contact, which is not an option, a take-it-or-leave-it, is the 'intense and

complex' text (to borrow his adjectives) for the intellectual. Ironically, it is

as though Foucault can only be respectful of a singularity by turning to a

general discourse on singularities which purges all the perillous, awkward

impurities of Iranian history and society from its weave. What counts is the

rigour with which one handles the shuttling between the specific and the

general, not the mere stating of the problematic, the rigour with which one

relates the 'system' of Iran to particular instances of it, the respect one accords

antinomies. What remains unsatisfactory in 'Inutile de se soulever?' is not the

shift into abstraction *per se*; it is the lauding of a form of analysis which seeks

not the 'deep reasons' of the Iranian uprising but the way in which it was

'lived', which tries to understand what was going on 'in the heads' of those

men and women when they risked their lives, yet which then takes the

irreducible movement of revolt as a given, an inexplicable given, on the basis

of which the philosophical antistrategist can elaborate his discourse.[76]

Yet as Young says, following Derrida, following Levinas, the condition

of being constitutively unable to capture the absolutely-other, to let the other

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[76] Cf. Vincent Descombes' important critique of the uneasy yoking together in Foucault of philosophy and a concern with current events. *The Barometer of Modern Reason: On the Philosophies of Current Events*, trans. by Stephen Adam Schwartz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.3-22.

remain in a state of singularity, is the fate of any concept, and even of language itself, for both must by definition invoke forms of generality. What counts is the rigour with which one thinks the relation of words and concepts to the tradition of which they are a part, which is why *The Order of Things*, for all its faults, remains an important work. One may query the absolutism of the difference between Aldrovandi and Buffon, but their respective 'systems' are traced with admirable meticulousness. Even if he dissents from Aldrovandi's knowledge, the respect Foucault accords it lies less in his relativist conclusion and more in the patient and painstaking exposé of its system.

On the other hand, one must question the potential for determinism which attends a thought premised on the idea of constitution or projection, with its beautiful and satisfying theoretical constructs. Thus Said:

> The challenge to Orientalism and the colonial era of which it is so organically a part, was a challenge to the muteness imposed upon the Orient as object. Insofar as it was a science of incorporation and inclusion by virtue of which the Orient was constituted and then introduced into Europe, Orientalism was a scientific movement whose analogue in the world of empirical politics was the Orient's colonial accumulation and acquisition by Europe. The Orient was therefore not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent other. (Said, 'Orientalism Revisited', p.17)

'The muteness imposed upon the Orient as object'. To *impose* muteness suggests an *a posteriori* fate which befalls an already existing entity – just what Said is trying to deny. But once one accepts this model of constitution, intractable difficulties ensue. Young addresses this same point. As he says, Said wants to argue that the texts of Orientalism '"can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe"' (Young, *White Mythologies*, p.129). However, the problematic phrase 'the very reality'

implies that an indigenous population is fundamentally living someone else's reality, another's 'project': a fatally deterministic view which unavoidably tends towards a denial of indigenous life. To dissent from this view is precarious. If Europe constituted the Orient, if the latter is nothing but a European construct, then how can we know that what Europe has constructed is wrong, inaccurate, shameless deception? If we know that it *is* wrong, this can only be because we have access to some kind of true 'Orient', the reality of which would refute the chimerical version of it. And if we have such access to the real Orient, does this presuppose that we have not only given the European construct the slip, but any construct whatsoever, and that we therefore claim to know the objective Orient, objectifying it in the process in fact just like the Orientalists of the past? Again, as so often, the problematic is phenomenological. Apropos of Husserl's concept of constitution, Sokolowski speaks of the need to retain both the dependence of reality on the subject and its transcendence towards subjectivity (Sokolowski, p.197). To avoid the dualism, one needs to be far more circumspect in the powers one assigns to the 'project'. Foucault's model of power from *Discipline and Punish* looms large here. Not reality versus ideology, he says; power produces *du réel*. *Du*, the partitive. The French, though difficult to translate, is certainly less ambiguous than the English translation's 'power produces reality', which smacks of a totalizing understanding. *Du* suggests some, not all. In other words, one refuses the dichotomy: the Orient versus 'the Orient'; but rejects also the totality and plenitude of the projected 'Orient', with the attendant lamentations according to which we knowers will only ever have

access to our own ideological constructions of the other. Rather, one enters an *economy* of knowledge and truth, where rigour, evidence (empirical or otherwise), historical understanding, and probity must compete.

It is therefore not a question of abandoning (as though that were possible) the constitution metaphor and returning to the realists' position against which Nietzsche rails. But neither is it a matter, again as Nietzsche warns, of a simple nominalism:

> How foolish it would be to suppose that one only needs to point out [...] this misty strand of delusion in order to *destroy* the world that counts for real, so-called '*reality*.' We can destroy only as creators. – But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new 'things.' (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p.122)

Daniel James' analysis of Juan Domingo Perón's discourse of the 1940s and 1950s shows convincingly that Perón in a very real sense 'constituted' an Argentine working class, in the sense that he returned to a heterogeneous mass of people a language that was familiar to them, a way of addressing and relating to others which was their own.[77] In the process he was able to foster an awareness of a common condition and fate (not least by means of a clever harking back to the injustices and prejudices of the notorious *década infame*), which is not to claim that this activity created a Peronist working class *ex nihilo*. One can also see how this constitution has both a positive and negative valence, empowering the working classes, empowering Perón's brand of populist-authoritarianism.

Where Europe is concerned, it is thus not a matter of celebrating

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[77] Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1973* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.38.

naively what Husserl regards famously as the unity of a 'spiritual life', 'a

spiritual shape'.[78] However, nor is it a question of simply standing Husserl on

his head. What is lacking in Young is any attempt to think Europe plurally,

to evaluate Europe in different ways. There is little attempt to conceive of

Europe as anything other than malevolent, which undoubtedly harbours a good

deal of truth, particularly with respect to the period of colonization. Applied

to the present, though, to the question of 'decolonization', it is less easy to see

how one could begin to valorize others, to restore historical and cultural

sovereignty to them, without drawing on a whole series of values, institutions,

rights, and assumptions towards the establishment of which Europe has made

a not insignificant contribution. Without ceasing to be the creditor, Europe

shoulders the burden of guilt, becomes the debtor, is asked to repay. Like

Europe, Young's discourse is guilt-edged. It has an edge to it – inculpatory

– which gives it the edge over others. Decolonization is a project of

inculpation whose end would be the final purging of guilt, disculpation.

European thought repays its moral debt through decolonization, by recognizing

the abuses perpetrated by its constitutionalist powers. But what if, as we have

suggested, one cannot decolonize thought, one cannot cease constitutionalism?

Might it be that the failure to realize this is what lends Young's discourse (and

Foucault's to a certain extent) its edge, its gilt edge? *To gild*:

> 1. Cover with a thin layer of gold, esp. as gold leaf. OE. b *transf.* Smear
> (with blood). [...] Esp. of the sun: cover, tinge, or adorn with a golden
> colour or light. [...] 4. Supply with gold or money; make reputable or
> attractive by supplying with money. Now chiefly as passing into sense 5.
> [...] 5. Give a (specious or illusory) brilliance or lustre, esp. by the use of

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[78] Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity', Appendix I in *The Crisis*, pp.269-299 (p.273).

favourable or complimentary speech. (*NSOED*)

The brilliance which radiates from Young's dissenting, disjunctive *écriture* (brilliance in all senses: the book has a cleverness which we should not deny), which precisely gives it a cutting edge, is simultaneously what makes it a safe bet, a reliable security.

Positing a drastically undifferentiated 'Europe', Young approximates what Barthes calls a 'political writing', where writing is charged with the task of joining 'the reality of acts and the ideality of ends'. The mission of writing, Barthes says,

> is fraudulently to identify the original fact with its remotest avatar by lending the justification of an action the caution of its reality. This fact about writing is, by the way, typical of all authoritarian regimes; it is what might be called police-state writing: we know, for example, of the eternally repressive content of the word 'Order'. (Barthes, *Writing Degree*, pp.31-32; trans. mod.).

One thinks of the semantic network in Foucault surrounding the necessity of *disorder*, the attempt to break or de-prescribe the link between origin and avatar, along with the 'fraudulent' use of the word *order* on the other hand to persuade us of the existence of such coincidence in the past. To that extent, 'power, or the shadow cast by power, always ends up creating an axiological writing, in which the distance [*trajet*] which usually separates fact from value is suppressed within the very space of the word, which is given at once as description and as judgement' (Barthes, *Writing Degree*, p.26; trans. mod.). Young's writing at times 'intimidates', as Barthes would say. It is at once language and coercion. And what it tries to intimidate us with is our own appurtenance to Europe. Which is to think Europe univocally, suppressing the *trajet* between fact and value, the movement of and within Europe. And

because one thinks Europe univocally, one is seduced by the possibility of putting an end to it.

We might say, on the question of economics, that dissolution, decentralization and decolonization do not necessarily lead to equitable trade, as Paul Kennedy makes amply clear in his *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*. There is also the much more unpleasant question, the Nietzschean question, of whether it is even possible to have something like a gift economy working at an economic, rather than simply academic, level.[79] How far would European academics working on gift economies go with their gifts? And how far would an egalitarian, redistributionist economics redistribute away the conditions which make academic work on gift economies possible? The discourse of disjuncture and the praise of disorder posit the break while failing both to expatiate on the future order and to think the nonrandomness of the passage between systems. It is true that without the imagination of another possible order one would not even begin to think the passage. But the failure to think the transition marks this discourse out as Utopian, as idealist and multilateralist. Like language, equality must be born in one fell swoop, *d'un coup*; its constitution seemingly the outcome of random accident. But if chance, as we said in the last chapter, opens up the horizon of possible alternatives, it cannot account for the work which is done, and the strength and

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[79] Nietzsche's political attitude towards Europe is characteristically stark. He saw it as suffering from a general paralysis of will caused by a senseless sudden attempt at class and race mixture. The main exception was Russia, where the will was waiting menacingly. The rest of Europe would have to resolve to acquire a single, terrible will of its own since the next century would bring with it 'the struggle for mastery over the whole earth – the *compulsion* to grand politics' (Nietzsche, *Beyond*, p.138). Elsewhere he foresees a kind of 'European league of nations' when the process of democratization gains pace (Nietzsche, *Human*, II, 292).

power which are necessary, to build and sustain an effective social order.

Nietzsche coins a bad word for a bad thing, *misarchism*:

> The democratic idiosyncracy against everything which rules and wishes to rule, the modern *misarchism* (to coin a bad word for a bad thing), has gradually but so thoroughly transformed itself into the guise of intellectualism, the most abstract intellectualism, that even nowadays it penetrates and *has the right* to penetrate step by step into the most exact and apparently the most objective sciences. (Nietzsche, '"Guilt"', pp.91-92)

What the Utopian discourse neither can nor wants to think – and it is from this position that it derives its creativity, that it drives politics without having to suffer the slings and arrows of polity – is the work, the working, the being-in-the-*polis*, of its ideas. We might say of this discourse (whose extension today is in proportion to the denials of its extension) what Sheldon S. Wolin says of Foucault, namely, that it 'consistently confuse[s] politics with the political' ('On the Theory', p.198), that it fails to see the constitutive slippage between the practice of a theoretical project(ion) and the practice of politics.[80]

In contrast to *The Order of Things*, the genealogies' unnuanced reproach to the nineteenth-century reformers, of prisons and asylums alike, harbours a negative teleology and a naive libertarianism. There is a sense in which Foucault expects Tuke and Pinel to stand outside their time – and in effect they are condemned for not managing this, for belonging all too clearly to the nineteenth century. Which is tantamount, and this is one of the costs of a project aiming at a 'history of the present', to condemning that entire century (save Nietzsche) and the entire 'West' during that century on the grounds that it was not another, future time, without ever specifying what the precise nature

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[80] The Wolin article is among the best on Foucault. I shall return to the theory/practice debate in the final chapter.

and values of more acceptable penal and clinical institutions might be. By thus attributing an overwhelmingly negative value to Europe, he paves the way for those later, undialectical criticisms of his own Eurocentrism. Although he cites Baudelaire's dictum 'You have no right to despise the present', this does not prevent him from showing every sign of despising a good part of the past.[81] Casting our minds back to an earlier reference left in abeyance, we may say by way of further comparison and by way of conclusion that the interest of Kenneth Clark's book lies in its more economic consideration of the relationship between Western Europe and civilization. Clark is keenly aware of the horrors of urban poverty and the 'dismal' countermeasures of bureaucracy and regimentation found in so-called civilized nineteenth-century Europe. However, he tries to understand this abject poverty as far as possible, as far as impossible, with a split conscience divided between the late twentieth and the nineteenth centuries. Thus:

> Poverty, hunger, plagues, disease: they were the background of history right up to the end of the nineteenth century, and most people regarded them as inevitable – like bad weather. Nobody thought they could be cured: St Francis wanted to sanctify poverty, not to abolish it. The old Poor Laws were not designed to abolish poverty but to prevent the poor from becoming a nuisance. (Clark, p.323)

A Foucaultian cynicism is in attendance but so too a perhaps less teleological understanding of being-in-the-world, which allows space for Clark's claim that the early reformers' struggle with industrialized society illustrates the greatest civilizing achievement of the nineteenth century, humanitarianism, without

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[81] Dennis Potter, whose *The Singing Detective* explores both the institutional and the individual – the gold-fish bowl gaze and alienating, scientific idiom of the medical authorities, versus the well-spring of personal memories, their scars and pleasures – remarked of the past that one should view it with equal parts of affection and contempt.

which we might say that there could be no Foucaultian cynicism. Speaking of the abolition of slavery in 1835, Clark says:

> One must regard this as a step forward for the human race, and be proud, I think, that it happened in England. But not too proud. The Victorians were very smug about it, and chose to avert their eyes from something almost equally horrible that was happening to their countrymen. (Clark, p.324)

We could properly take issue with the generalization 'a step forward for the human race'. Nonetheless, at the same time as these few lines articulate some of the concerns of *Histoire de la folie* and *Discipline and Punish*, they rehearse, perhaps better than Foucault's texts (since they reject simple inculpation), the attempt to go beyond good and evil, which is not a once-and-for-all step and which would not involve any simple comprehension of the ends of Europe or the West.

CHAPTER 6

SEXUALITY: A RUSE OF THE *LOGOS* THAT PRESIDES OVER THE WORLD?

Introduction

The foregoing chapters have largely dealt with the ordering and distribution of energies (conceptual, subjective, enunciative), postulating the dehiscence in *La Volonté de savoir* of a certain conceptual rigidity present in the earlier work. At least at the theoretical level, something of the interplay between Apollo and Dionysus makes itself felt (Chapter four), the necessity of which is then exemplified (Chapter five). In this chapter, the concern is with the distribution of sexual energies; the focus, the three published volumes on sexuality (thus including a reprise of *La Volonté*). Constitutionalist powers are once more under scrutiny, this time with regard to their possible abstracting, rationalizing impulse, especially in relation to human beings. Chapter four has already militated on behalf of abstraction, claiming that it holds the key to an understanding of Foucault's notion of power. But what about his treatment of sex and sexuality?

The first part of the chapter highlights the function fulfilled by abstraction in the early polemics Foucault conducts against certain powerful

claims for nature. The bulk of the chapter addresses more fully the repression of the chthonian in Foucault's work on sexuality. This theme is dealt with in the final sections in relation to volumes two and three on sexuality, which, as is widely appreciated, discover a new role and value for *humanitas*. But can this *retour au sujet*, the discovery of both the individual and the spectrum of his emotions (in question is the Greek male), the exploration of the individual's self-constitution as a subject of sexuality, be construed as marking an epistemological *coupure* with respect to the early work, bringing in its wake a concomitant shift in the tenor and tone of Foucault's writing? Chapter one pointed to the thematics of *mente concipere* and to the Galilean, Leonardian understanding of *ragioni*. We shall see something similar at work in Foucault's writings on sexuality and have cause to question two things: firstly, the extent to which philosophy is drafted in, in classical fashion, to represent social life; secondly (and it is a familiar question), the extent to which reason lies in things themselves (in accordance with a Stoic-inspired view of *logos* as that which presides over the world) or belongs, rather, to the narrative narrating (as a particular ruse of *logos*).

The function of abstraction in the pre-sexuality work

> **abstract** *v.* LME [OFr., or L *abstrahere*, f. as ABS- + *trahere* draw.] '1 *v.t.* Separate, disengage, *from*. LME. 2 *v.t.* Withdraw, take away; *euphem.* steal. L15. b *v.t.* Esp. *Chem.* Extract, distil. E17-E18. 3 *v.t.* Summarize, abridge. L16. 4 *v.t.* Separate in mental conception; consider abstractly. E17. 5 v.refl. & *i.* Withdraw oneself, retire *from*, (*lit. & fig.*). M17.
> **abstraction** [...] 2 A state of withdrawal from wordly things or things of the senses. LME [...]

We recall that the Chapsal interview from 1966 performs a deft trick.

Vaunting the idea of system, it at the same time turns the conventional association made between system and abstraction on its head. The charge of abstractness, Foucault says, pertains to humanism; it is the latter which has successfully managed to cut off the 'human heart', the 'human being', 'existence' from the real, scientific and technical world. The work of his own generation purports to show that thought, life and even 'our most everyday way of being', form part of the same systematic organization as the scientific and technical world. It should be noted that Foucault is not simply proposing here a scientific, technical *description* of a world which would be other than those things; the world itself is systematic. This (structuralist-informed) view represents, at root, a challenge to the text of the natural attitude. As Jonathan Culler puts it: 'We speak of people as having minds and bodies, as thinking, imagining, remembering, feeling pain, loving and hating, etc., and do not have to justify such discourse by adducing philosophical arguments.'[1] We might profitably construe Foucault's work as an effort to disrupt this natural attitude, to query the quality of possession implied by 'having' and in so doing contest the 'world picture' (though the obvious question concerns the extent to which Foucault's *écriture* corresponds to the world or paints a particular, technico-scientific picture of it).

With respect to a slightly different, though not unrelated, subject matter, Foucault writes convincingly in a later piece, his 'Introduction' to Canguilhem's *On the Normal and the Pathological*, of the constant concept-

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[1] *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p.140.

forming activity of human beings:

> That man lives in a conceptually architectured environment does not prove
> that he has been diverted from life by some oversight or that a historical
> drama has separated him from it; but only that he [...] has a relationship with
> his environment such that he does not have a fixed point of view of it [...].
> Forming concepts is one way of living, not of killing life; it is one way of
> living in complete mobility and not immobilizing life. (p.xviii)

To conceptualize, to abstract, is not to be opposed to life. In this regard,

Foucault is allied to Derrida, whose concern about philosophical abstraction

could not be a doubt about abstraction itself; merely about a practice of

abstraction. Derrida questions philosophy's tendency to think what a concept

means in itself by abstracting the word from 'every context and from every use

value, as if a word were ruled by a concept outside of every conceptualized

functioning and at the limit outside of every sentence'.[2] Keeping this

important caveat to the fore, I should like to turn to Foucault's practice of

abstraction.

The question of abstraction is central to *The Birth of the Clinic*.

Foucault wants to show how the modern (European) way of representing

disease was not the first way and that it will doubtless not be the last. It was

preceded by a classificatory medicine of species which Foucault divides into

three aspects, what he calls the primary, secondary and tertiary spatializations

of the pathological. His endeavour, and I think it is persuasively realized,

consists in linking (precisely not cutting) the abstract dimension of medicine

to other, more social facets. The first spatialization deals with the structure of

disease itself. Here disease is perceived fundamentally 'in a space of

projection without depth, of coincidence without development. There is only

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[2] Jacques Derrida, 'Envoi', in *Psyché*, pp.109-143 (p.114).

one plane and one moment' (p.6). This flat surface of simultaneity constitutes a space in which analogies define essences, in which the very form of the similarity betrays the rational order of the diseases, the principle of their creation, the general order of nature. In this essentially theocentric world, the order of disease imitates the world of life; 'the same structures govern each, the same forms of division, the same ordering. The rationality of life is identical with the rationality of that which threatens it' (p.7). We shall see this theme later in a different guise, pushed back into Graeco-Roman times. For the Classical Age, though, in order to know the truth of the disease, the doctor must 'abstract the patient', consider him an external fact to be taken into account only by placing him in parentheses.[3]

In the secondary spatialization, disease meets the body, its essence is articulated upon the 'thick, dense volume of the organism and becomes *embodied* within it' (p.10). Foucault stresses that the presence of disease in a particular organ does not suffice to define it; diseases 'travel' throughout the body according to the doctrine of sympathies and thus have an essential existence independent of the body. What links the disease to the body of the patient, therefore, is 'quality' and a qualitative gaze capable of distinguishing between the convulsions of an epileptic suffering from cerebral inflammation and those of a hypochondriac suffering from congestion of the viscera. Hence

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[3] The doctor, too, is bracketed out. The following offers an excellent example of the logic Foucault will later apply to argue that the Classical Age knew not man: 'In the rational space of disease, doctors and patients do not occupy a place as of right; they are tolerated as disturbances that can hardly be avoided: the paradoxical role of medicine consists, above all, in neutralizing them, in maintaining the maximum difference between them, so that, in the void that appears between them, the ideal configuration of the disease becomes a concrete, free form, totalized at last in a motionless, simultaneous picture, lacking both density and secrecy, where recognition opens itself onto the order of essences' (*The Birth*, p.9).

the individual sufferer of disease reappears: 'The patient is the rediscovered portrait of the disease; he is the disease itself, with shadow and relief, modulations, nuances, depth; and when describing the disease the doctor must strive to restore this living density' (p.15). (This portrait would be in-traction, to 'trace' or 'draw' in the patient.) Tertiary spatialization on the other hand designates, broadly speaking, the socio-political, institutional dimension – those gestures by which a disease is isolated or distributed throughout society, the ways in which it becomes a locus of politics or economics. One thus sees the formation of a collective, historico-geopolitical *conscience* of disease:

> The locus in which knowledge is formed is no longer the pathological garden where God distributed the species, but a generalized medical consciousness, diffused in time and space, open and mobile, linked to each individual existence, as well as to the collective life of the nation. (p.31)

In sum, it is because this 'locus' assumes national proportions, because this consciousness is generalized, and because Foucault's concern is to show how the three spatializations interact, that the portrait of the individual, 'with shadow and relief, modulations, nuances, depth', necessarily falls away; it is simply not within the remit of the book, as its subtitle makes abundantly clear, to 'strive to restore this living density', and for this reason the charge of undue abstraction is strictly speaking impertinent.

On the face of it, *The Order of Things* too has little time for 'man' and still less for the 'human heart'. Instead, and provocatively, man becomes that 'empirico-transcendental doublet'. This does not mean, though, that the heart disappears, for it is in effect taken up figuratively. Describing the modern *episteme* and reversing the usual spatial metaphor of the relationship between man (the external container) and heart (the internal content), Foucault

frequently uses the expression *au coeur de*, 'at the heart of', to designate the place where man is to be found. Thus, on the relationship between historicity and the thought of finitude: 'The more man makes himself at home [*s'installe*] at the heart of the world, the further he advances in his possession of nature, the more strongly also does he feel the pressure of his finitude, and the closer he comes to his own death' (*The Order of Things*, p.259). Hence, the search for man's being will not culminate in his heart; it will emerge from the 'very heart' of empiricity, and by way of an analytic of finitude (p.315). Again: the discovery of finitude is lodged not in the thought of the infinite, but at the very heart (*au coeur même*) of those contents construed by a finite thought as concrete forms of finite existence. The heart of the matter for Foucault lies in the part played by the thought of finitude in a modern understanding of man:

> No doubt, at the level of appearances, modernity begins when the human being begins to exist inside his organism, in the shell [*coquille*] of his head, in the armature of his limbs, and in the whole nervure of his physiology; when he begins to exist at the heart of [*au coeur de*] a labour the principle of which dominates him and the product of which escapes him; when he lodges his thought in the folds of a language so much older than himself that he cannot master its significations, even though they have been called back to life [*ranimées*] by the insistence of his words. But, more fundamentally, our culture crossed the threshold beyond which we recognize our modernity the day finitude was thought in an interminable reference to itself. (p.318; trans. mod.)

Foucault observes that it is true that finitude is always designated on the basis of 'concrete' man, but adds that this man – with his corporeal, labouring and speaking existence – is possible only as a 'figure' of finitude. And really, it is this necessarily abstract, archaeological 'man' which is his concern. To accuse of undue abstractness a text which treats of the formal mutations in three highly complex areas of thought would represent a failure to respect the philosophico-epistemological, always understood that the latter would not

constitute an autonomous domain.[4]

The commentaries that Foucault provides on Velázquez's *Las meninas* and Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, works which one would expect to have more bearing on human hearts, do in fact palliate the formalism. In the case of the knight of the sad countenance, Foucault's nominally Hegelian discourse produces expressions like that of Don Quijote as 'the painstaking pilgrim who breaks his journey before all the marks of similitude. He is the hero of the Same' (p.46; trans. mod.). Yet Foucault remains faithful to the novel's bathos. He recalls how the poor hidalgo, embarked on a hopeless journey which, nourished by books of chivalry, becomes a 'quest for similitudes', can turn sheep, serving girls and inns into armies, damsels in distress, and castles respectively. An always frustrated resemblance, then, which turns Don Quijote's trials into a source of derision at the same time as it exposes the hollowness of chivalric tales. Likewise, the analysis of *Las meninas* works by transgressing the line between art (represented by the canvas in the painting) and reality (here the spectator's position), taking seriously the gaze of the painter who is represented in the picture by speculating on his thought process and his next move. It is this play of gazes, light, mirrors and positions which he traces painstakingly by following the painting's lines of sight and light, recounting them in an uncomplicated prose. The complexity of the commentary derives not from any obtuse jargon; it stems from the formal paradox that the picture, as a representation of Classical representation, cannot

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[4] Vincent Descombes argues that Foucault must take his share of responsibility for this disparagement of philosophy. Descombes, *The Barometer of Modern Reason.*

represent the act of representing. If it is true that in measurement, the observer

displaces the world, while in colour, the world displaces the observer by virtue

of its basic energy, Foucault's geometrical approach to *Las meninas* does make

room for the room's colours to strike us.[5]

Merquior maintains that Foucault's Nietzschean strand of formalism

which animates *The Order of Things* comes to him by way of Bataille

(Merquior, *From Prague*, p.197), a question Foucault prefers to frame in terms

of a much larger *bataille*:

> At a time when we were being taught the privileges of meaning, of the lived,
> of the *charnel*, of originary experience, of subjective contents or of social
> significations, to come across Boulez and music was to see the twentieth
> century from an unfamiliar angle: that of a long battle [*bataille*] around 'the
> formal'. (Foucault, 'Pierre Boulez', p.51)

The question of formalism extends to diverse forms of art and thought across

many countries, and formalism becomes the 'great adversary of academic and

party dogmatisms', one of the major cultural characteristics of the twentieth

century (p.51). (Foucault's interest in the *nouveau roman* and his participation

in the *Tel Quel* group remind us of the broader context of the formalist turn.)

Now, Foucault himself describes *The Order of Things* as formalist, but he

believes it wrong to see in this general index of our experience the sign of a

'drying up, of a rarefaction of thought incapable of re-apprehending the

plenitude of contents' (*The Order*, p.384; trans. mod.). Notwithstanding such

a necessary caveat, the book's miscalculation is not its formalism per se; it lies,

rather, in extrapolating from particular experiences and experiments of

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[5] In a round table discussion on the *nouveau roman* directed by Foucault, Jean-Pierre Faye
argues that when it comes to measurement versus colour Robbe-Grillet wants nothing to do
with the latter. 'Débat sur le Roman', *Tel Quel*, 17 (Spring 1964), 12-54.

formalism a general claim for its constituting a necessarily positive force of social change throughout the whole of European culture.

In contrast to the abstract body of *The Order of Things* and the medico-philosophical, Leonardian body of *The Birth of the Clinic*, both faceless objects of speculation, *Discipline and Punish* presents the body in its all too raw lived immediacy. There, in the opening scene of Damiens' execution, Foucault restages explicitly the return of the '"*bloody heads*" and other white forms, that Hegel wanted to efface from the night of the world'.[6] The literal and rhetorical disarticulation of a live body ('the four horses gave a tug and carried off the two thighs after them' [p.5]) is carried out against a *tableau vivant* of human emotions, those of Damiens ('"My God, have pity on me! Jesus, help me!"') and those of the onlookers ('The spectators were all edified by the solicitude of the parish priest of St Paul's who despite his great age did not spare himself in offering consolation to the patient' [p.3]). But as we have seen, a new technology of punitive power grips the body ever more tightly in a disciplinary dressage. From this juncture, Foucault will never resort to the discourse of a natural body nor hold out the possibility of an untechnologized, undisciplined corpus. Neither here nor in *La Volonté* is it a matter of recapturing a natural body. His interest in Sade, he explains, bears mainly on Sade's questioning of the sovereignty of the ego, rather than on the liberation of Eros.[7] Even when *Histoire de la folie* speaks of art and literature setting

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[6] A phrase used by Foucault in a favourable review of André Glucksmann's *Les Maîtres penseurs*. Foucault, 'La Grande Colère des faits', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 9 May 1977, pp.84-86.

[7] Foucault, 'An Historian of Culture', in *Foucault Live*, p.83.

free new images of madness at the end of the eighteenth century which were no longer those of cosmic struggle characteristic of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but which had become centred on the 'unmediated dialectic of the heart' (*la dialectique sans médiation du coeur*), he remains sceptical of both nature and the principle of interiority.[8] The birth of sadism which Foucault is describing here is not, he insists, a name given to a practice as old as Eros; it is a cultural fact appearing at the end of the eighteenth century whereby unreason now becomes delirium of the heart, madness of desire. Madness is thus no longer that which brings man closer to the Fall or to animality; it is situated, rather, precisely in man's alienation from himself and from the world. And it is in this anti-*phusis* that madness finds its space; 'it is immediacy lost in the infinity of mediations' (p.393). The notion of *milieu* thus comes to occupy the place formerly taken by animality: now animality belongs to nature, and it is in escaping from the immediacy of animal life, in the formation of a *milieu*, that man opens himself up to the possibility of counter-nature and madness.

The *préjugé de nature*

As one might expect from a constitutionalist, Foucault is deeply suspicious of nature, leastwise the claim to nature (the difference is significant). Here I shall provide a brief overview of the theme of nature as it presents itself in the genealogical works up to and including *Discipline and*

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[8] *Histoire de la folie*, p.381. The English translation's 'a dialectic lacking the heart's mediation' (p.210) suggests almost the precise opposite.

Punish, before moving in the following section to a more extended discussion of Foucault's history of sexuality.

The first thing to be said is that Foucault's energies are directed against the Enlightenment's divinization of nature. For Foucault, that which fills the canvas is not nature, but the social. In addition, and most obviously, Foucault sets himself against the Enlightenment approximation of nature and truth, against the Goethian desire to claim nature as the ultimate sanction for all his judgements.[9] *Histoire de la folie* represents a great exercise in the hermeneutics of suspicion vis-à-vis the claim to nature or what he calls in the early essay on the history of psychology the *préjugé de nature* ('La Psychologie de 1850 à 1950', p.122). The text deals with the movement in the second half of the eighteenth century to cure madness by exposing the insane to nature. Nature becomes paradoxically a curing 'technique'. However, this therapeutic practice presupposes a mediating wisdom which separates out nature's violence from its truth. In other words, one does not wish to unleash savage, unfettered natural desire, but to cultivate the tea-and-cucumber-sandwiches enjoyment of nature. The latter pleasure has no need to repress desire, since it offers up a satisfying plenitude and thus disarms the madman's potentially delirious imagination. The liberation of the insane is facilitated by nature in a further sense, namely, by a system of natural obligations (adjusting to the rhythm of days and seasons, the necessity to feed and shelter oneself) which provide the madman with a necessary though gentle structure by which to regulate his behaviour. Not repression of madness, then, but the work of

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[9] The point about Goethe is made by Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation,* p.193.

natural powers to release the essence of madness. A tremendous *partage* thus operates, neatly separating out nature's qualities and presenting 'an immediacy [*immédiat*] in which nature is mediated by morality' (*Histoire de la folie*, p.358). As a consequence, madness comes to form part of a pathology and this, for Foucault, is the great lie, since this transformation does not represent the advent of the truth of madness, but the reduction of the Classical experience of unreason to a strictly moral perception of insanity.

There remains a doubt concerning Foucault's tendency to allow his opposition to certain claims to nature to cloud his view of nature itself. Because in such *préjugés* nature would be the *donnée*, the given and the fact, Foucault is inclined to recoil from it, often at the expense of simplification. Whoever thought that life and nature provided a 'reassuring stability'?

> 'Effective' history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. [...] This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting. ('Nietzsche', p.88)

Would not nature itself deprive itself of that stability, deprive itself of the reassuring *itself*? This bears on questions of the gift and the giving, on the giving of the given, on questions of the *différance*, rather than abolition, of nature.[10]

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[10] 'The history of this concept of nature [first of all as *phusis*] has an essential relation to the gift. And this in two ways: Naturizing, originary, and productive *phusis*, nature can be *on the one hand* the great, generous, and genial donor to which everything returns, with the result that all of nature's others (art, law [*nomos, thesis*], freedom, society, mind, and so forth) come back to nature, are still nature *itself in différance*; and, *on the other hand*, let us say after a Cartesian epoch, nature can be the order of so-called natural necessities – in opposition, precisely, to art, law (*nomos*), freedom, society, history, mind and so forth. So the natural is once again referred to the gift but this time in the form of the given. We cannot go beyond this outline here.[¨] One may also ally the concept of *production* with that of *phusis*. Like that of labor or work, the concept of production can sometimes be opposed to the derived (post-'Cartesian') sense of naturality and sometimes as well to the value of the gift: The product is not the given, and producing seems to exclude donation. But is not the *pheuin* of

Nevertheless, the same attempt to avail oneself of nature recurs in *The Birth of the Clinic*. Foucault charts (though is deeply sceptical of) the project of the new clinic in the final years of the eighteenth century in France to wrest medical instruction from the '"Gothic universities and aristocratic academies"'. Not an esoteric, bookish learning, then; the new clinic would be a 'temple of nature' at the altar of which – the patient's bedside – one would learn 'that form of truth open to all that is manifested in everyday practice' (*The Birth*, p.70).[11]

In *Discipline and Punish*, *techne* usurps the place of nature as the mediating force. The Rousseauistic theme of the uplifting powers of nature is lost, in favour of a constraining technology of power which 'fabricates' individuals. It is worth repeating that purple passage in which Foucault discourses on the soul as the effect and instrument of a political anatomy:

> This real, non-corporal soul is [...] the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge [...]. On this reality-reference, various concepts have been constructed [*bâti*] and domains of analysis carved out [*découpé*]: pysche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc.; on it have been built scientific techniques and discourses, and the moral claims of humanism. But let there be no misunderstanding: it is not that a real man, the object of knowledge, philosophical reflection or technical intervention, has been substituted for the soul, the illusion of the theologians. The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. (pp.29-30; trans. mod.)

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phusis first of all the donation of what gives birth, the originary productivity that engenders, causes to grow or increase, brings to light and flowering? Is it not what gives form and, by bringing things into the phenomenality of the light, unveils or develops the truth *of that which* it gives? Of the very thing it gives and of the fact that it gives? In this donating production, fortune (fate, chance, luck, *fors*, fortuity) and necessity are not opposed; on the contrary they are allied' (Derrida, *Given Time: I*, pp.127-128).

[11] A very traditional concern this and one currently being rehearsed in the British government's toying with the idea of training teachers *in situ*.

The soul is not the abstraction; 'psyche', 'subjectivity', 'personality', and 'consciousness' are themselves the concepts cut off from their respective processes of constitution. Foucault would say that the reduction and abstraction of both the body and the soul are perpetrated by the apparatus of punishment itself. However, as we suggested in Chapter two, there is a complicity to be divined in the great act of faith which assumes that between the project and the reality, no slippage or remainder; likewise in the schema between a Classicism which belongs to the *dispositio* of the technology and an older Apollonianism lodged in the *récit* of the former. An Apollonianism which, privileging the visual, takes place at the cost of, as Norman O. Brown writes in *Love's Body*, 'putting to sleep the rest of the life of the body'.[12] An Apollonianism which invests the machinic system with all those *ex nihilo* powers formerly reserved to God and the sovereign. One may well view the atomization of the body in Joyce's *Ulysses* (which literally deals with an organ per chapter) as the ultimate abstraction of human form. But it can also be viewed as a counter-catechism, combatting what Declan Kiberd calls 'a century of coy evasion', where what counts is the way in which characters experience their own bodies.[13] And this last dimension is tellingly absent from *Discipline and Punish*.

The embrace of self(-constitution): *The Use of Pleasures*

But is this dimension absent from his writings on sexuality? The best

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[12] New York: Random House, 1966, p.121.

[13] 'Introduction' to James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, 1992).

part of this chapter will be devoted to exploring the possibility that there is a heavily abstracting force at work in those texts, one closely bound to the fortunes of constitutionalism.

It should be said from the outset that it is perhaps unfair to ask the first volume on sexuality to probe individual pleasures and pains since it manifestly does not operate at that level, concerning itself instead with populations, apparatuses and regimes – even if, ultimately, self-fulfillingly so. There is a dramatic shift of emphasis, though, in the second volume on sexuality, *The Use of Pleasures*, a veritable return of the repressed (in the shape of the individual).[14] A significant change in historical period, too, as Foucault turns to Greek and Roman thought of antiquity, though constant allusions to the Christian pastoral make it abundantly clear that he keeps one eye on the present. The general difference between the first and second volumes is that Foucault will not seek to evacuate sentiment from the human being by displacing what he refers to in the context of Christian morality as the 'mysteries of the human heart' onto the machinery of 'sexuality'. Instead such mysteries will be economized, a more proactive individual drawn back into the equation of forces. The choice of Graeco-Roman antiquity also means, it should be said, that Foucault can treat of the Western principle of interiority without apparently capitulating to its modern (Christian, Rousseauist, Kantian) testamentary tradition.[15]

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[14] *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality.* Volume 2, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1986) (first publ. as *L'Usage des plaisirs. Histoire de la sexualité 2* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1984)). I shall add the 's' to the English title.

[15] On the principle of interiority in the European tradition, on the inscription of the law 'in the depths of the heart', see Jacques Derrida, 'Admiration de Nelson Mandela ou Les lois

His 'project' is now to look at sexuality as an 'experience'. This does not augur the return of a sentimental humanism. Experience is understood as the 'correlation' between domains of knowledge, types of normativity and forms of subjectivity. How did it come to pass that modern individuals were led to exercise a hermeneutic of desire and to view themselves as subjects of a 'sexuality'? He will also draw into the frame, and this is new, the individual's relationship to himself, his part in the process of self-constitution. There are two kinds of individual at stake here: the individual in general and the particular individual 'Foucault'. In the case of the latter, Foucault picks up the thread of 'Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu' apropos of the exercise of thought as a 'modifying test of oneself in the game of truth', an 'exercise of self' (p.15). Justificatory, the tone of the new book is also more personal than we are accustomed to. James Miller sees in it the end of an essential trajectory of *askesis*, of self-fashioning, which finds its complement in Foucault's lifestyle of the time, a Nietzschean project of going beyond all codes. However, if one is looking for precedents, the idea of self-examination and the genre of the essay suggest Montaigne before they evoke Nietzsche. We might also cite the final words of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*:

> The Delphic motto, 'Know thyself!' has gained a new signification. Positive science is a science lost in the world. I must lose the world by epoché, in order to gain it by a universal self-examination. '*Noli foras ire*,' says Augustine, '*in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas*.'[16]

Derrida is more circumspect than Miller about this *retour au sujet*,

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de la réflexion', in *Psyché*, pp.453-475 (p.465).

[16] A footnote reads: 'Do not wish to go out; go back into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man. – *De vera religione*, 39, n.72.'

viewing it as sitting uneasily with Foucault's wish to place himself under the sign of Heidegger, especially in the light of twenty-five years of silence on the question of subjectity in Heidegger's texts.[17] By the same token, while not strictly Derridian, Foucault's 'Introduction' is reminiscent of Derrida's *différance*. Casting off the *partage* trope, this text will operate a push-pull between continuity and rupture. Rupture: in the modern European era the question of sexuality has been placed under the sign of law and prohibition; not so in Greek and Roman antiquity. Continuity: 'one could trace the persistence of themes, anxieties, and exigencies that no doubt marked Christian ethics and the morality of modern European societies, but which were already clearly present at the heart of Greek or Greco-Roman thought' (p.15; trans. mod.). *Différance*: the existence of such common themes and principles means neither that they occupy the same place nor that they have the same value (p.21).

The text may also clearly be read as the emendation of *Discipline and Punish*, particularly the section of the Introduction called 'Morality and Practice of Self'. It argues that morality can be understood in three ways. First, as a set of values and rules of action, as a prescriptive moral code. Second, as individuals' behaviour vis-à-vis these rules (acceptance, resistance, etc.). Third, as the manner in which one ought to conduct or constitute oneself as a moral subject in relation to the code. In short, the work of the self on the self, the relationship to the code and to one's own behaviour (all but absent from *Discipline and Punish*), are finally accommodated. As a result, it

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[17] Jacques Derrida, 'Désistance', in *Psyché*, pp.597-638 (p.613).

becomes possible for Foucault to construe conjugal fidelity both as a strict respect for the law and as the mastery of desire, the hard fight one carries to temptation. The departure from *Discipline and Punish* is emphasized by Foucault's characterization of the soul. While not plural, the soul does now possess 'contradictory movements':

> What makes up the content of fidelity in this case is that vigilance and that struggle. In these conditions, the contradictory movements of the soul – much more than the carrying out of the acts themselves – will be the prime material of moral practice. (p.26)

There is thus room for a positive valorization of relationships. He speaks of the intensity, continuity and reciprocity of feelings for the partner which may lie behind conjugal fidelity. Likewise, he understands the 'mode of subjection' more plurally. One may submit to the practice of fidelity out of allegiance to the group that accepts it; or because one regards oneself as heir to a spiritual tradition; or, again, because one wishes to endow one's personal life with brilliance, beauty, or nobility. In any event, while the first and second aspects of morality (the code and behaviour towards the code) are important, there is also

> a certain relationship with the self; the latter is not simply 'self-consciousness', but the constitution of oneself as a 'moral subject', whereby the individual circumscribes that part of himself that constitutes the object of his moral practice, defines his position in relation to the precept he follows, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal; and, to do this, he acts upon himself, undertakes to know himself, controls himself, tests himself, perfects himself, transforms himself. (p.28; trans. mod.)

Note that self-consciousness (though still implicated) is not the stake: it is not a question of coming to cognizance of what is, but of constituting oneself as an on-going project. The important point is that antiquity is oriented more towards forms of subjectivation and practices of the self than towards the code,

with its strict opposition permitted/forbidden. And this is what interests him, especially insofar as it contrasts with our own time. The sexual austerity found in the Christian pastoral may have its roots in ancient Greece but the temperance demanded in the latter does not refer to the code. It refers, rather, to an 'ethics' understood as 'the elaboration of a form of relation to self that enables an individual to constitute himself as a subject of moral conduct' (p.251; trans. mod.).

According to texts of antiquity, moral reflection is not aimed at the sexual act, nor the desire behind it, nor the pleasure derived from it. It bears, instead, on the force with which one is transported by those pleasures and desires. Consequently, what counts in the use of pleasures is prudence, need, the right moment, the status of one's partner, temperance. Two points merit special mention: 1. Foucault's account of the relationship to oneself, acquiring something of the complexity formerly denied it, echoes Nietzsche on the will. Foucault:

> To constitute oneself as a virtuous and moderate subject in the use one makes of pleasures, the individual has to institute a relationship with the self that is of the 'domination-submission', 'command-obedience', 'mastery-docility' type. [...] This is what could be called the 'heautocratic' structure of the subject in the moral practice of pleasures. (p.70; trans. mod.)

Foucault will even attribute a Nietzscheanism to Plato. Whereas other thinkers begin with the question of conduct, in search of delimiting good from bad love, Plato, Foucault claims, at least provisionally rejects this question and, 'beyond the division of good and evil', poses the question of knowing what it is to love. 2. The role of economy. Diet and regimen were important influences on sexual practices in both antiquity and the Christian era. But

whereas the latter tends to dictate when sexual activity may take place according to the binary line of the permitted and the forbidden, the former was more concerned with degree, with economy, with *measure* understood as gauging, judging, comparing, regulating (the normativity of the Christian era is already present, however liberally applied) and as moderation, temperance, proportion. A properly designed regimen included '"exercises [*ponoi*], foods [*sitia*], drinks [*pota*], sleep [*hypnoi*], and sexual relations [*aphrodisia*]" – everything that needed to be "measured"' (p.101).[18] Regimen needed to 'establish a measure' (p.102), a 'just measure' (p.102; trans. mod.), for the soul as well as the body.

Foucault deals with the question of economy at some length, particularly in relation to Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*. In Xenophon's analysis of the small landowning class, *oikos* comprises more than just the house; it defines an entire sphere of activities connected to a lifestyle and an ethical order. The principal merit of such activity lies in the practice of commanding: 'To manage the *oikos* is to command, and being in charge of the household is not different from the power that is to be exercised in the city' (p.153). (Note the analogical level of thought, which we shall have cause to question later.) Into this framework of an art of 'economy' Xenophon introduces the problem of relations between husband and wife. Whereas the role of the former is that of sower, harvester, producer outside the house, the latter's function is to preserve, store and order things in the home. To facilitate this partnership, the gods endowed each with particular qualities (endurance, bravery for men,

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[18] The quoted words are from Hippocrates, *Epidemics*, VI, 6, 1.

natural fear and mindfulness for women), though both were equipped with memory and diligence:

> Hence each of the two marriage partners has a nature, a form of activity, and a place, which are defined in relation to the necessities of the *oikos*. That they remain thus is the will of the 'law,' the *nomos* – i.e., the regular custom that conforms exactly to nature's intentions, assigns each person his role, and defines what is good and fine to do and not to do. (p.158)

To modify this distribution of traits and activities is to challenge the *nomos*, to go against nature and abandon one's place, to disturb the 'natural' opposition between man and woman vital for the order of the *oikos*.

Finally, then, the importance of all these questions of self-mastery, command, temperance, etc. crystallizes in the matter of sexual relations between males. For the Greeks did not view such relations as in themselves contrary to the *nomos*. The important thing was that there should be a difference in age and status between the two males and that the older man should apply the above principles to his conduct with boys. If he could do this and preserve the boy's honour at the same time, then there was no obstacle to him maintaining that relationship with himself which would allow him to constitute himself as a reasonable subject of moral conduct.[19]

Gaudium et potestas sui: The Care of the Self

Rather than treating the problems thrown up by the second volume in isolation, it would seem more sensible to look at the third volume on sexuality,

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[19] Foucault has been criticized on this point for his blanket view of Greece. David Cohen argues persuasively that Athens, for one, manifested a profound ambivalence towards male-male relations, recognizing their existence while worrying about the corruption of the would-be future leaders of the polis. 'Law, Society and Homosexuality in Classical Athens', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), 3-21. He is particularly interesting on the possibility that the love of boys in Athens is the outcome of a fundamentally agonistic (male) sexuality, young women being simply unavailable for such sport (p.12).

before then taking the two volumes together. Again, one should not underestimate the sea-change that the book represents – *The Care of the Self* can be read as a long-neglected *Affairs of the Heart*.[20] It deals with philosophical, medical and literary texts from the Graeco-Roman world principally of the first two centuries A.D., staging its argument in miniature in the opening analysis of Artemidorus' *Key to Dreams*, which dates from the second century. Although Artemidorus organizes his analysis of sexual dreams around the distinction between three types of act – those which conform to the law, those against it, and those against nature – there is still nothing in his text suggestive of a 'permanent and complete grid of classifications between permitted and prohibited acts' (*The Care*, p.35; trans. mod.), between what is natural and what is contrary to nature. Rather, what counts is the manner or 'style' in which the individual acts and the relation he establishes between sexual activity and the other aspects of his familial, social, and economic existence (is the man active or passive? what is his social status vis-à-vis his partner?).

As Foucault observes, parallels abound with the experience of the *aphrodisia* formulated in the texts of the Greek classical age. By the same token, philosophical and medical thought of the first two centuries witness (and this is disputed by at least one critic) a new moral severity, which manifests itself in a mistrust of sexual pleasure, a valorization of marriage, and a devaluation of the love of boys. And yet this new severity does not take the

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[20] *The Care of the Self. The History of Sexuality: Volume 3* (London: Penguin, 1986) (first publ. as *Le Souci de soi. Histoire de la sexualité 3* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1984)). *Affairs* is the title of a Graeco-Roman treatise to which Foucault refers.

form of a demand for sexual legislation. It is not a matter of interdiction but of a heightened relation to oneself by which 'one constituted oneself as the subject of one's acts' (p.41). The theme of the 'culture' or 'care' of the self, already familiar to Plato's Greece, is now taken up by Imperial philosophy and placed 'at the heart of' its 'art of existence'.

Foucault is concerned to point out that this care of the self is not a thinly-disguised individualism. It represents, first and foremost, an intensification of social relations since it is a social practice which calls on the guidance and expertise of others. The subsection which includes these sentiments (number 2, pp.50-54) is a release of all the affairs of the heart hitherto suppressed. He recounts Seneca addressing a letter of consolation from exile to his mother so that she might better cope with her son's misfortune. Then there is the young provincial relative to whom Seneca addresses a long moral essay on tranquillity of mind. I cite a passage here by way of comparison with the famous lines from *Discipline and Punish* apropos of the body as the prisoner of the soul:

> His correspondence with Lucilius deepens a preexisting relationship between the two men, who are not separated by a very great difference in age, and tends little by little to transform this spiritual guidance into *a shared experience, from which each derives a benefit* [profit] *for himself*. In the thirty-fourth letter, Seneca, who is able to say to Lucilius: 'I claim you for myself; you are my handiwork,' immediately adds: 'I am cheering on one who is in the race and so in turn cheers me on.' And, already in the next letter, he alludes to the *reward* [récompense] *of perfect friendship* in which each one will be for the other that constant help which will be the subject of letter 109: 'Skilled wrestlers are kept up to the mark by practice; a musician is stirred to action by one of equal proficiency. The wise man also needs to have his virtues kept in action; and as he prompts himself to do things, so he is prompted by another wise man.' The care of the self appears therefore as intrinsically linked to a 'soul service,' which includes the possibility of *a round of exchanges* [jeu d'échanges] *with the other* and a system of reciprocal obligations. (pp.53-54; my emphasis)

Here the soul acquires a much more positive value. The emotive lexicon, the

stress on reciprocity, and the economic theme of this mutuality represent the closest Foucault gets to a 'gift' economy. The 'soul supplement' of *Discipline and Punish* is now reinvested in a mutually beneficial play of human exchanges.

The parallel with *Discipline and Punish* continues. Here, in the first and second centuries after Christ, one already encounters the theme of self-examination, the individual is already being asked to testify to his faults and receive his 'portion of praise and blame' (p.61; trans. mod.). Foucault even remarks that this examination of one's own conscience looks at first like a courtroom scene, as Seneca's metaphors ('to appear before the judge', 'plead one's cause') suggest.[21] However, he adds that Seneca uses another, more appropriate comparison: the image of administrative control, and the activity of an inspector or speculator. The relationship of the subject to itself, he says, has rather more the air of an act of inspection in which the inspector aims to evaluate a piece of work. An altogether more fitting analogy since the self-examination does not bear on infractions and does not lead to the question of culpability. It is not a matter of guilt or even remorse, but of committing to memory the best methods and the most rational behaviour for achieving one's aims. In short, Foucault is trying to fend off any suggestion that there is a bad conscience in play here, the advent of which he had previously ascribed to the post-Renaissance. The older, Graeco-Roman relation to self still emerges from an ethics of control but if the juridical scene is present, it is in terms of a

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[21] Foucault observes that these elements seem to point to a caesura in the subject, whereby it is at once the judge and the accused.

juridical model of possession in which the self itself, rather than the carceral system, takes possession (of itself). Foucault, following Seneca: 'One "belongs to himself," one is "his own master" [...]; one is answerable only to oneself, one is *sui juris*; one exercises over oneself an authority that nothing limits or threatens; one holds the *potestas sui*' (p.65).

This Graeco-Roman setting furnishes Foucault with the material to correct the imbalances of his work on power. It offers him the example of a relatively widespread social practice in which, firstly, power plays a more positive, less demonic role and secondly, individuals can intervene to their own benefit. At the same time, Foucault recuperates another devalued dimension, that of pleasure. The pleasure evoked in *La Volonté de savoir* takes the form of a mischievous delight in hearing others speak of their sexuality, an incitement to discourse in which solemn powers of *divinatio* and *eruditio* ride on the back of titillation. In *The Care of the Self*, the link between power and pleasure is otherwise. The experience of self that comes from possessing oneself is not simply that of a force overcome or of a sovereignty which is exercised over a rebellious power; it is 'the experience of a pleasure that one takes in oneself' (p.66). This kind of pleasure, *gaudium*, is the kind to which one should aspire since it is not caused by anything beyond our control; it is thus to be opposed to *voluptas* – pleasure which has its origin elsewhere and, being outside our control, is therefore precarious.

In Part Three, 'Self and Others', the title of which indicates Foucault's attempt to address the sociality of the self, there is an especially significant chapter called 'The Political Game'. It deals with the problem posed by the

political disenfranchisement of the Greeks after the collapse of the city-states which began in the third century B.C.. Foucault discusses the withdrawal of the traditionally dominant classes from public life and argues that rather than see this retreat towards a heightened concern for oneself as a shunning of civic and political life, one could instead view the cultivation of the self as a means of defining a relation to self that could be carried over into the public sphere as a model for the exercise of political power. We may summarize the main tenets of this new ethic, which will be the subject of criticism in due course, in four points: 1. The exercise of political activity should not depend on the individual's status but rest on a personal act of commitment freely entered into and based on judgement and reason; 2. In exercising power one is always the ruler and the ruled: 'In the fact that a man is one and the other at the same time [...] Aristides sees the very principle of good government' (pp.87-88). This dovetails closely with Foucault's idea of 'governmentality' developed in a series of lectures from 1978/79 in which he uses the idea of government to bridge the gap between the micro- and the macro-levels of political analysis and also, as Colin Gordon observes, to span the interface between the exercise of power and that of freedom.[22] Defining government as the *conduite de la conduite*, Foucault pinpoints an intimate connection between the growth of reflection on the art of government in the early modern period and conscious meditation on the notion of governing oneself. He still speaks of two contrasting types of power in modern societies: the mode of the *polis*,

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[22] 'The Soul of the Citizen: Max Weber and Michel Foucault on Rationality and Government', in *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, ed. by Scott Lash and Sam Whimster (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp.293-316.

functioning according to principles of universality, law, citizenship, etc.; and the mode of 'pastoral power', which valorizes above all else the need for what Gordon refers to as exhaustive and individualized guidance of singular existences. While one can perceive a mellowing of his position in regard to this second form of power, the cynicism of disciplinary power still underwrites the pastoral.

3. Knowing how to conduct oneself, attending to one's own *ethos*, is a prerequisite for leading others: 'The rationality of the government of others is the same as the rationality of the government of oneself' (p.89). Here Foucault rejoins the theme of subject-positions which we examined in Chapter three. This time one does not slip neatly into a position; it is necessary to perform work on oneself, and it is this labour that makes the functions one fulfills potentially enlightening. The following passage rewrites his former position in terms of a labour he had previously ignored:

> Such a modeling of political work – whether it concerned the emperor or a man who exercised an ordinary responsibility – shows clearly how these forms of activity became detached from status and appeared as a function to fill; but – and this is not the least important consideration – that function was not defined in terms of laws belonging to an art of governing others, as if it were a question of a 'profession' with its particular skills and techniques. It was to be exercised on the basis of the individual's 'retreat within himself'; that is, it depended on the relationship he established with himself in the ethical work of the self on the self. Plutarch says this to the prince who is not yet educated: as soon as he takes power, the man who governs must 'set his soul straight' and properly establish his own *ethos*. (pp.91-92)

The mention of Plutarch's view deserves comment. First, it is interesting that Foucault's recourse to Plutarch, which is extensive throughout the book, matches the Enlightenment's predilection for that same philosopher. As Kenneth Clark says, Enlightenment morality was to be built on two

foundations: the doctrine of natural law, and the stoic morality of ancient republican Rome. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* 'was almost as widely read in the eighteenth century as the *Roman de la Rose* had been in the fifteenth and had, through example, an equal influence on conduct' (Clark, *Civilisation*, p.183).

Second, it reminds us of Foucault's commentary on Velázquez's *Las meninas*. In fact there is gentle irony in the path of criticism *not* taken by Foucault in respect of *Las meninas*. Joel Snyder (challenging Foucault and John Searle) demonstrates convincingly that applying the law of reflection, first given geometric expression in Euclid's *Catoptics*, to the represented space of *Las meninas*, reveals the source of the mirror image to be the canvas standing before the artist in the painting; not, then, the 'real' bodies of the sovereigns as Foucault claims.[23] Snyder is in this sense even more formalist than Foucault in following through the logic of the painting's composition in a manner which recalls the painstaking care of the painter's labour. On the other hand, Snyder adds a sociohistorical dimension, recalling the genre of Spanish texts devoted to the education of princes, the *espejo de príncipes*. These texts, which indicated ideals or norms of conduct, were works of art that provided guidance for the production of the work of art that was the self. In this tradition the mirror can reflect only images existing in and through art, which is why the mirror in *Las meninas* reflects an exemplary, ideal (canvas) image of Philip IV and María Ana. Velázquez simply transforms the literary figure into a visual, sylleptic pun since the mirror reflection is both the reflection of the hidden

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[23] Joel Snyder, '*Las Meninas* and the Mirror of the Prince', *Critical Inquiry*, 11 (1985), 539-572.

portrait, and, as an allusion to the mirror of the prince, a figurative reflection of exemplary monarchs. On the subject of the interrelatedness of art and ideality in Spanish Renaissance thought, Snyder writes:

> Art represents nature, but it is also responsible for perfecting it: by means of education and the inculcation of the proper ideals, art completes the work initiated by nature. A natural prince is an imperfect one, whereas a prince who aspires to Christian virtue must be 'cultivated' – and the process of cultivation is preeminently the process of art. (p.561)

So, a portrait of the Infanta but also of her *cultivation*. We may extrapolate from this that Foucault's preference for the play of floating 'abstract designations' (his expression), as against an examination of the figures represented in the painting, overlooks something that was staring him in the face: the cultivation of an individual – of a soul or heart even – both by herself and by tradition; 4. The importance accorded the problem of oneself entails a new ethics of self-mastery in which certain forms of equality and reciprocity are demanded. The last two chapters of the book, 'The Wife' and 'Boys', explore these forms in relation to this question of the care of the self and we shall return to them in due course.

The constitution of individualism

It is time now to consider the first problematic aspect of Foucault's history, namely, the question of the extent to which he has transposed a peculiarly modern form of individualism onto antiquity and the part played by constitutionalism in this transposition. In this respect, there exist two powerful critiques of Foucault's work on Graeco-Roman sexuality, the one dealing, broadly speaking, with the socio-sexual, the other targeting the philosophico-

spiritual. This section is endebted to both critiques and it begins with the former.

Maria Daraki accuses Foucault of missing the point of ancient Greece by playing up the importance of the individual at the expense of the group.[24] If Greece witnesses a blossoming of the individual, this citizen is subordinated to the city, to one of the highest societies ever observed, which entails a very different self-construction of the subject from that depicted by Foucault. The figure of a man who by dominating himself achieves domination over others she argues is an invention of Foucault's, at odds with the model of *isonomia* which requires that one citizen could not be subject to another's power. Foucault's man is a fusion of two variants: the man of self-mastery, who must dominate himself to the extent that no one else dominates him; and the ascetic or 'divine man' (*theios anér*). By means of *askesis* this man will strive to tear himself free of his body in order to coincide with his soul alone. He will also remain outside of all use of pleasure, enjoying in return an incomparable social prestige which qualifies him for a role as public counsellor in political affairs. These abstainers 'represent the only figure of the "superior man" whose authority was accepted in the cities without any conflict with the egalitarian ideal'. Foucault simply amalgamates the two, taking from the temperate man the right to the 'use of pleasure', and from the abstainer the superiority he enjoys. The result is the man who by dominating himself dominates others

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[24] 'Michel Foucault's Journey to Greece', *Telos*, 67 (Spring 1986), 87-110. I have found no satisfactory rejoinder to Daraki's piece. It is unsatisfactory to mention it *en passant* and claim that its critique is 'methodological', as does Ed Cohen, 'Foucauldian Necrologies: "Gay" "Politics"? Politically Gay?', *Textual Practice*, 2:1 (Spring 1988), 87-101 (p.94).

(Daraki, p.98).

The significance of this 'invention' comes to a head precisely in the section of the book called 'Self and Others' which we alluded to above. It is not the case, Daraki argues, that the Greeks withdrew into themselves so as to transfer the wisdom and skills acquired through the government of oneself to the government of the polis. Furthermore, to extend to Roman functionaries, as Foucault does, his claim that one is in any case always in a certain sense both the ruler and the ruled is to miss the tyrannical power of the Romans. Daraki criticizes Foucault for preferring to the many accounts of a despotic Roman hand the testimony of a minor flatterer, Aristides, who saw Roman rule as 'the very principle of good government'. The drama of the withdrawal within oneself is due to the loss of security which had hitherto been provided by the Greek city. If one is interested in the manner in which one constitutes oneself as subject, then one should see that the entire process of human self-construction in Greece is dominated by the alacrity with which men adapt to this society: 'That is why the collapse of the city triggered a long-lasting drama: the incompatibility between a model which *formed men* and a new society which rendered ancient man maladapted' (Daraki, p.99). Thus, when Plutarch says that the political act must be a 'choice' and a 'personal act', it is not, as Foucault maintains, because such a possibility really exists, but because Plutarch is waging a tragic struggle to preserve a link between ethics and politics which has in fact already been severed. Foucault's entire analysis of this 'political game' is built on the denial of the non-coincidence (note that she does not say non-relation) of moral and political action, and on his failure

to appreciate that the drama which subtends it is the fact that being under *potentia aliena* is precisely what causes a man no longer to be a man.

Daraki then argues that if Foucault succeeds in bracketing out *homo politicus*, he inflates the political import of *homo sexualis* by establishing an isomorphism between the sexual and the political domains. This is done by conflating the use of pleasure from the temperate man with the superiority over others from the abstainer. Foucault immerses the temperate man into the semantic context of the abstainer 'to present simple self-mastery in terms of asceticism' (Daraki, p.100) and also render it synonymous with virile activity, which, as a way of being active towards oneself and towards others, becomes a social virility, establishes the temperate man in a position of social superiority. Sexual virility is construed likewise in terms of being active, in the precise sense of penetration. This model has its traditional alignments: active–masculine-subject–penetrator versus passive–feminine-object–penetrated.[25] By virtue of the virility, activity and domination over others which all three ostentate, Foucault manages to fuse together moral, social, and sexual conduct into what Daraki calls the 'incredible structure of triple virility', a modern Western virility which confers upon the act of penetration a dignity equal to that of the moral act, and renders it isomorphic with social domination.[26] But in Greece 'sexual activity is called *aphrodisia*, while *askesis* implies asceticism. As soon as one can play with words and

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[25] Aside from the obvious problem of how it is possible to construe *anybody's* participation in sexual intercourse as passive, there is also, as Moi says of Beauvoir, no appreciation of the positive aspects of passivity (the latter never understoood as inertia).

[26] See Foucault, *The Use of Pleasures*, p.215 (cited by Daraki, p.101).

write that "the physical regime of *aphrodisia*" is "at the same time" an *askesis* (2.126), everything becomes possible' (Daraki, p.102).

The other source of dispute concerns the love of boys. Foucault argues that there is an inherent antinomy in the pederast relation, an incompatibility between sexual passiveness and political activity. In fact, Daraki says, there is no continuity between the two realms. Greece knew an ancient tradition of ritual prenuptial homosexuality – for girls as well as boys – an initiatory tradition 'that relates to a global system, prior to that of politics and centered perhaps on the "sexual," but a "sexual" permeated with the religious, different from ours and from that of Greek *polis*' (Daraki, p.103). Moreover, the only form of the love of boys which was viewed favourably by the Greeks was its spiritualized form, which completely curtailed the sexual:

> Foucault says this but he regards it as a 'historical paradox' (2.245), whereas it is a matter of a *historical readjustment*. But had Foucault admitted this he would also have had to admit that the *separation* between the sexual and the political is the very key to a 'history of sexuality' in ancient Greece. (Daraki, p.104).

So much for the social self and the accuracy of the historical account. But what of the philosophico-spiritual self? For Foucault does not deal exclusively with the social text. A consideration of the second, philosophical criticism aimed at Foucault imposes itself.

This critique belongs to Pierre Hadot and its importance is especially significant since Foucault himself draws heavily on Hadot's *Exercises spirituels et philosophie antique* for his formulation of notions like philosophy as a style of life. Yet Hadot argues that Foucault's 'techniques of the self' are too

centred on a modern conception of the self.[27] Specifically, Foucault is inexact

in his presentation of the Graeco-Roman ethic of pleasure apparently taken in

the self. Foucault cannot speak of *gaudium* as '"another form of pleasure"'

since Seneca's twenty-third letter, from which Foucault quotes, explicitly

contrasts *voluptas* and *gaudium*. The Stoics set store by the word *gaudium*

'precisely because they refused to introduce the principle of pleasure into moral

life. For them happiness did not consist in pleasure but in virtue itself, which

is seen as being its own reward'.[28] Secondly, the Stoics did not find joy in the

'self' but, as Seneca puts it, '"in the best part of the self"', in that part most

likely to lead to virtue, in perfect reason, which finally means divine reason

since human reason is only perfectible reason.

> The 'best part' of the self is ultimately a transcendental self. Seneca does
> not find joy just in 'Seneca', but by transcending Seneca, by discovering that
> he has a reason in himself, a part of the universal Reason which is within all
> men and the cosmos itself. (Hadot, p.226)

This being so, the psychic content of such exercises is significantly different

from Foucault's rather modern image of self-fashioning, in that the essential

element is the feeling of belonging to 'the Whole of the human community,

belonging to the cosmic Whole' (Hadot, p.227). Equally, the point is not to

forge a spiritual identity but to free oneself from one's individuality, to raise

oneself to universality. In short, to the movement of interiorization which

Foucault traces correctly one must needs add a type of exteriorization, 'another

way of being-in-the-world which consists in being aware of oneself as a part

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[27] Foucault himself says something similar but apropos of the absence of a Greek *subject* rather than self ('The Return of Morality', in *Foucault Live*, p.330).

[28] Pierre Hadot, 'Reflections on the Notion of "The Cultivation of the Self"', in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, ed. by Timothy J. Armstrong, pp.225-232 (p.226).

of Nature, as a particle of universal Reason'.

> In this there is a radical transformation of perspective, a universalist and
> cosmic dimension which Foucault, it seems to me, did not sufficiently stress:
> interiorisation is going beyond the self in a way which leads to
> universalisation. (Hadot, p.230).

Would always be leading to, Derrida would say. In any event, Hadot fears that

Foucault's version of the cultivation of the self is too purely aesthetic, a new,

late twentieth-century form of dandyism, probably conditioned, Hadot

speculates, by the thoroughgoing modern hostility to anything that smacks of

universalism.

The criticism is telling, as we shall attempt to demonstrate. Taking

Lois McNay to task for criticizing the elitism of Foucault's focus on the

aesthetic stylization of the self, Judith Still argues that in any society in which

basic subsistence needs are met, this self-fashioning can be found in all walks

of life:

> Whether or not we approve of the way in which members of the working
> classes style themselves, surely we can agree that there is a regimen within
> which selves are constructed. For example, the machismo of the working
> man in certain times and places involves a certain relation to the body, and
> to the family. This may not be as self-consciously artful as that of the
> transvestite, for instance, but the degree to which self-construction is figured
> by the self without reference to nature is not dependent on economic, social,
> or even educational privilege.[29]

The question of elitism is not insignificant. Foucault's notion of self-

constitution emerges from a Stoic context and is defined as a primarily

aristocratic ideal. On the other hand, he patently thought it could be extended

to diverse styles of modern life, first and foremost to gay culture.[30] However,

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[29] Judith Still, '"What Foucault Fails to Acknowledge...": Feminists and *The History of
Sexuality*', *History of the Human Sciences*, 7:2 (1994), 150-157 (p.154).

[30] The question of style and freedom has a phenomenological precedent. When Merleau-
Ponty writes 'I am a psychological and historical structure. With existence I received a way
of existing, a style', he can still maintain that he is free, not in spite of these motivations, but

while it is possible to be broadly in sympathy with the idea that we are not cut

from cloth once and for all, what remains suspect, above and beyond the issue

of who can and who cannot, is the question of whether *anyone* can profitably

be said to 'construct' their own self. Compare Husserl: 'The ego is himself

existent for himself in continuous evidence; thus, in himself, he is *continuously*

constituting himself as existing' (*Cartesian Meditations*, p.66). For Husserl,

this activity is cognitive, intentional, and it will give on to an Ego which

shows, despite convictions that come and go, 'an abiding style with a unity of

identity throughout all of them: a "personal character"' (p.67). But there is

evidently more at stake in Still's defence of Foucault than intentionalism. To

self-fashion, to style the self. This is different from 'constructing' a self.

Upon what (dare we say 'foundations'?) does one construct? And why

'construct' rather than 'posit', 'project' or 'imagine'? We recall Kant's

metaphorics of the building trade and the transcendence of the subject implied

therein. Has anyone in the history of the universe ever constructed anything

themselves and much less without reference to nature? And if that with which

they are to work is not given by nature but, rather, by society and by culture,

then does a subject, an 'I', ever *himself* 'construct' (himself)? We do not

escape so easily from Nietzsche's warning regarding the hidden mythology of

language. In the words of Cortázar's narrator Michel Robert (whose name

sends us to France but also to the book of language):

> No one will ever know how this is to be told, whether in the first or second
> person, using the third-person plural or continually inventing forms that will
> be of no use at all. Whether one could say: I they saw the moon rise, or: the

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with the help of them (*Phénoménologie*, p.519).

back of my our eyes is hurting, and above all like this: you the blond woman
were the clouds that keep racing by in front of my your our your their faces.
To hell with it!.[31]

The Judeo-Christian tradition of creationism and Hegelian idealism also both loom large, though in this case the subject would be simultaneously subject and object of his own production. Although in the process he would lose his wholeness – what powers are his in the kingdom of confidence! The slave could be master for a day:

> The slave-worker represents human freedom not so much because he manipulates things, but because he establishes an idea of what he wants to make and then produces in the world a material artifact that represents that idea. The slave-worker in that way derives a sense of his powers, a confidence that his subjectivity can be the basis for the order of the world.[32]

The self swells and expands as it sucks in and subsumes within itself the centrifugal energies of tradition and alterity. And this self which one would care for and cultivate, tend to, like a delicate organism, in the most physical, material, corporeal manner possible (the semantics of the second and third volume want to convince you of the physical character of this labour) – this self threatens to be the greatest abstraction of them all, fetish fêted never fettered.

On the surface of things, the idea of the constitution or construction of the self appears diametrically opposed to the model which subtends Foucault's earlier genealogies. In these, the machinery of state institutions casts its light over the marginalized housed within its walls to produce an image of delinquents and madmen. In the later volumes, malevolent institutions recede

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[31] Julio Cortázar, 'Las babas del diablo', in *Ceremonias* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1983; repr. 1990), p.201.

[32] Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism and History*, pp.51-52.

in importance, leaving individuals to constitute themselves. Yet the contrast is relative. For in the later work, the powers and pleasures of projection rest with the individual, who literally projects the self he would like to be and grafts to make the reality conform to that projection.[33] The individual becomes the director, producer and actor of the 'movie' which is himself. The huge denial of human subjectivity which characterizes Foucault's early texts never abolished the functions and power of subjectivity. These were simply transposed onto the armature of disciplinary *dispositifs* themselves: theirs was the will to know. In the late work, the will migrates back to a more familiar, individual housing and a massive voluntarism sets in.

One of the best appropriations of Foucault's work (though in truth its connections with Foucault are often tenuous) is to be found in the efforts of Rose and Miller to think through the logic of governmentality, an endeavour mentioned here because it bears directly on the question of individualism. In the broadest terms, they argue that modern capitalist economies have become adept at harnessing the energies of self-constructing individuals.[34] The worker is thereby construed as an individual 'actively seeking to shape and manage his or her own life in order to maximize its returns in terms of success and

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[33] The periodization I have implied with the use of 'early' and 'later' is dislocated by Foucault's introduction to Binswanger's *Le Rêve et l'existence*. Paraphrasing Foucault, Gary Gutting writes: 'Imagination is a free projection of myself into a world that I constitute and pervade and that, consequently, expresses my existence.' *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; repr. 1991), p.61. The parallel with existentialism is inviting. Judith Butler reminds us that 'For Beauvoir, to become a woman is a purposive and appropriative set of acts, the gradual acquisition of a skill, a "project" in Sartrian terms, to assume a culturally established corporeal style and significance' (cited in McNay, p.71).

[34] Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, 'Governing Economic Life', in *Foucault's New Domains*, pp.75-105; originally in *Economy and Society*, 19:1, February 1990.

achievement'. Productivity, quality and innovation all improve as the enterprise's desire for betterment is made to coincide with the individual's desire for creativity, autonomy and self-fulfillment:

> Psychological consultants [...] have invented a whole range of new technologies in order to give effect to these programmes, techniques for promoting motivation through constructing a regime of values within the firm, for reducing dependency by reorganizing management structures, for encouraging internal competitiveness by small group working, for stimulating individual entrepreneurship by new forms of staff evaluation and reward.
> The 'autonomous' subjectivity of the productive individual has become a central economic resource. (p.100)

The advantage this has over the self-made man lies in the immediacy of recognition and reward, in the approving gaze of the (institutional) other. A positive hysterization, then (it would be naive to believe that sexuality did not pervade this scene.)[35] And the marvellous thing about the above is that it works – though without ever removing us from the classical liberal dilemma which pits individual freedom against common good.

In *The Care of the Self*, Foucault squares up to the question of individualism, doubtless to preempt criticisms, arguing that it can cover three things: 1. The absolute value accorded to the individual's singularity and his independence vis-à-vis institutions and groups; 2. The valorization of private life; 3. The intensity of one's relation to oneself, the manner in which one takes oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action, so as to transform, correct and purify oneself. Though the three may be connected, he says, such connections are neither necessary nor constant. He then supplies three examples of how this is so. The first two are highly dubious, the third

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[35] The parallels with contemporary academe (Research Assessment Exercise and the question of 'output', the system of 'bidding', 'staff development') are obvious.

less contentious. The first example takes those societies or social groups – he cites the case of military aristocracies – in which the individual asserts his self-worth by means of actions that set him apart from others, without his having to attribute any great importance either to his private life or the relations of himself to himself. A slippage has already occurred. That the connections are not necessarily of 'great importance' is different from saying they may not be necessary *tout court*. It would be very difficult to conceive of such assertions of military prowess without also conceiving of an individual's work on himself – his self-discipline, mastery of his energies, the balance between courage and judgement. His second example is of societies – nineteenth-century Western bourgeois typically – in which private life is highly valued in terms of family relations and the running of a home and patrimony, but in which, for this very reason, individualism is weak and the relations to self largely undeveloped. Again, this would seem to contradict those histories which see in the nineteenth century a close link between the rise of the family and the rise of individualism. The last example comes from the Christian ascetic movement of the first centuries which accentuated the relations of oneself to oneself while disqualifying the values of private life and rejecting the singularity of the individual. This would appear to be more convincing (though still not absolute) given the physical removal of the individual from private civil society and the submission of oneself to a higher being. In sum, though, this discussion is haunted by the *partage*, as if it were possible to hold apart, to abstract one from another, the three respective dimensions. It is highly debatable whether the cultivation of the self which Foucault claims took hold

in the Imperial epoch can be, as he argues, cut off, abstracted, from the other two dimensions of individualism, whether an overflowing of conceptual and lived boundaries can be prevented.

Apollonianism and *La Volonté de savoir*

This final part of the thesis will look, above and beyond the question of the abstraction of the individual, at another form of abstraction which pervades and sets the tone of Foucault's history of sexuality. This abstraction is closely bound to a final twist in the fate of constitutionalism and also to the fortunes of philosophy itself. I shall preface my remarks on the final two volumes on sexuality by returning at some length to *La Volonté de savoir*. First, though, it is appropriate to allow space for another powerful criticism of Foucault's work on sexuality.

Camille Paglia maintains that for all the talk of corporeality in Foucault, there is still something like a coy evasion of the body. The strained dichotomy Foucault effects between the terms 'sex' and 'sexuality' is part of a sanitized, constipated sex theory incapable of dealing with 'the complexity, multiplicity, and daily flux of thought, desire, dream, fantasy, mood, sensation, and action' (Paglia, 'Junk', p.180). Her fundamental criticism is that Foucault follows the path of social constructionism at the expense both of a consideration of nature and of scientific research (into such things as genetics, brain chemistry, and their relation to sex differences and personality traits). The constructionist path carries him into false abstraction and rationalism, into an Apollonianism with very precise national roots. For Paglia Foucault merely

perfects the WASP alienation of mind and culture from emotion. 'Everything is rigidly schematic, overdetermined, reducible to chart form. Contradictory evidence is never admitted. Foucault represents the final decadence of Western Apollonianism, a cold, dessicated fetishism of pure IQ divorced from humor, compassion, ethics, eroticism, wisdom' (Paglia, 'Junk', p.224).

It will have become obvious that, excesses apart, we lend this opinion a certain credence. That said, it remains the case that the article from which it is drawn contains no analysis as such of Foucault's work on sexuality, it affirms without substantiating. In fact, much of the piece is devoted to acolytes of Foucault, not to his work itself. It remains to be seen, then, in what respect her judgement is well founded.

Perhaps the first step we should take is to recap on what she understands by Western Apollonianism and on the character of the Dionysian principle, or what she prefers to call the chthonian. In order to do this, I turn to her book *Sexual Personae* in which she expounds on the competing principles at greater length.[36] Apollonianism is a constructing, geometric, objectifying quest for form, in which name and person occupy an important part:

> The west insists on the discrete identity of objects. To name is to know; to know is to control. [...] The west's greatness arises from this delusional certitude. Far Eastern culture has never striven against nature in this way. Compliance, not confrontation is its rule. Buddhist meditation seeks the unity and harmony of reality. Twentieth-century physics, going full circle back to Heracl itus, postulates that all matter is in motion. In other words, there is no thing, only energy. But this perception has not been imaginatively absorbed, for it cancels the west's intellectual and moral assumptions. (Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, p.5)

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[36] Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (London: Penguin, 1992).

I tried to show in Chapter four that, at a theoretical level, *La Volonté de savoir* subscribes to an anti-Apollonianism. This does not, however, make it chthonian as Paglia defines it:

> What the west represses in its view of nature is the chthonian, which means 'of the earth' – but earth's bowels, not its surface. Jane Harrison uses the term for pre-Olympian Greek religion, and I adopt it as a substitute for Dionysian, which has become contaminated with vulgar pleasantries. The Dionysian is no picnic. It is the chthonian realities which Apollo evades, the blind grinding of subterranean force, the long slow suck, the murk and ooze. It is the dehumanizing brutality of biology and geology, the Darwinian waste and bloodshed, the squalor and rot we must block from consciousness to retain our Apollonian integrity as persons. (Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, pp.5-6)

For its part, Judeo-Christianity, like the Greek worship of Olympian Gods, is a 'sky-cult', a manifestation of the shift away from 'earth-cult', or female 'belly-magic', to male 'head-magic' which she views as a defensive move by men, denied access by virtue of biology to the all-powerful veneration of fruitful nature. The dichotomy between the Apollonian and the chthonian is thus firmly gendered. The former is the harsh, phobic male principle, 'coldly cutting itself off from nature by its superhuman purity' (p.12); the latter is the female principle, bound by the body's cycles to nature.

Now let us return to consider further Foucault on sexuality. The first thing to be clear about apropos of *La Volonté* is what it takes its subject matter to be. Foucault claims that its objective is 'to define [*déterminer*] the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world' (*The History of Sexuality*, p.11). 'To define' (*déterminer*). Let us spare our indignation at this Apollonian verb. All academic work takes place at least partly under the sign of Apollo. Paglia herself says that one should honour the chthonian but not yield to it. Derrida would say that even to think and utter 'the chthonian' is already to be beholden

to Apollo. But let us return to the regime that Foucault evokes. An early part of the burden of it was carried by the confession, which was responsible for inciting individuals to speak of their sex, down to the slenderest (and most succulent) detail, as though it constituted an index to their inner moral truth. Foucault narrates the gradual spread of the confession which took place under the aegis of the Counter Reformation, arguing that procedures of confession then widened their domain, that a 'great archive' of the pleasures of sex was gradually constituted by medicine, psychiatry and pedagogy.

In Foucault's parlance, 'sexuality' is situated at the point of intersection of a technique of confession and a scientific discursivity as a would-be embodiment of the truth of sex. This is why he can say that the history of sexuality 'must first be written from the viewpoint of a history of discourses' (p.69). These discourses have led us to direct the question of who we are to sex:

> Not so much to sex as nature (an element in the system of living things, an object for biology), but to sex as history, as signification and discourse. We have placed ourselves under the sign of sex, but in the form of a *Logic of Sex*, rather than a *Physics*. [...] The West has managed not only, or not so much, to annex sex to a field of rationality, which would not be all that remarkable an achievement, seeing how accustomed we are to such 'conquests' since the Greeks, but to bring us almost entirely – our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history – under the sign of a logic of concupiscence and desire. Whenever it is a question of knowing who we are, it is this logic that henceforth serves as our master key. (p.78)

A '*Logic of Sex*', 'annex[ing] sex to a field of rationality'. These phrases will shortly assume importance for us. In this particular instance, though, if Foucault is interested in an 'analytics' of sexuality and power, if his discourse itself operates as an abstract 'logic' of sex, it is because he follows the object of his study. He is simply not interested in describing sexuality as a 'stubborn

drive'. In an interview from 1982, Foucault responds to the question as to whether he believes in innate sexual predisposition or social conditioning with the lawyer's retort: 'On this question I have absolutely nothing to say. "No comment."' It goes beyond his expertise, he says, and is not the object of his work.[37] The book's subject matter concerns instead the 'techniques', 'mechanisms', *dispositifs* which, he says, went into the 'very production' of sexuality:

> Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the *name* that can be given to a historical *dispositif*: not a furtive reality [*réalité d'en dessous*] that one struggles to get a grip on. (pp.105-106; trans. mod.; my italics)

It is the name that can be given to a historical apparatus. This is not the name given by Foucault; this is what a post-Enlightenment Apollonianism has produced. In any event, and as he says in *The Use of Pleasures*: '"sexuality" – the quotation marks have a certain importance' (p.3). The question of naming is vital and in this Foucault remains close to the Nietzsche of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Notwithstanding what has been said above, it should be noted that there is a tendency in *La Volonté* – a familiar tendency – to accord the name too much power. In short, something of the totalizing drive of the incitements, plans and projects to which he alludes migrates into Foucault's own deployment of 'sexuality' in his narrative. Two examples of this, the one religious, the other lay, will be of assistance. First religion. Here he cites an early injunction to confess:

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[37] Foucault, 'Sexual Choice, Sexual Act', in *Foucault Live*, p.212.

> 'Examine diligently, therefore, all the faculties of your soul: memory, understanding, and will. Examine with precision all your senses as well, [...]. Examine, moreover, all your thoughts, every word you speak, and all your actions. Examine even unto your dreams, to know if, once awakened, you did not give them your consent... And finally, do not think that in so sensitive and perilous a matter as this, there is anything trivial or insignificant.' (p.20; trans. mod.)[38]

As Foucault says, sex was taken charge of by a discourse that 'aimed to allow it no obscurity, no respite' (p.20). Thus, by the seventeenth century the scheme (*projet*) for transforming sex into discourse, which began in the monasteries, was made into 'a rule for everyone' (p.20). Almost immediately, however, he is forced to concede the virtuality of this grip on sex, to acknowledge that the vast majority of the population, who only rarely attended church, would have escaped such prescriptions. Yet this does not deter him:

> the important point no doubt is that this obligation was decreed, as an ideal at least, for every good Christian. An imperative was established: [...] you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse. Insofar as possible, nothing was meant to elude this dictum. (pp.20-21)[39]

But as he passes from the seventeenth-century pastoral to its 'projection' in literature, ideality becomes factuality. The fact of recounting the strangest of sexual practices, which at the end of the nineteenth century marks the anonymous text *My Secret Life*, had been lodged 'in the heart of' modern man for over two centuries (p.22). Better still – for what matters is the process, not the individual – the truthful confession was inscribed 'at the heart of' the procedures of individualization by power (p.59).

Foucault then repeats the scheme in a lay context, that of the emergence

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[38] Quoting Paolo Segneri, *L'Instruction du pénitent* (French trans. 1695), p.301.

[39] The translation could be slightly misleading. Foucault says 'chercher à faire de son désir, de tout son désir, discours' (p.30). The word 'transform' risks suggesting the mutation from one form (desire) to another (language), whereas the French maintains the distinction between the two. I shall comment on this difference shortly.

in the eighteenth century of a political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex, the better to manage and regulate it. Sex came to lie 'at the heart of' the problem of population. Again, Foucault turns to plans and projects – this time largely architectural. Educators designed 'projects', others 'outlines for reform, and plans for ideal institutions'. In eighteenth-century secondary schools,

> the space for classes, the shape of the tables, the planning of the recreation lessons, the distribution of the dormitories (with or without partitions, with or without curtains), the rules for monitoring bedtime and sleep periods – all this referred, in the most prolix manner, to the sexuality of children. (p.28)

A footnote cites the *Règlement de police pour les lycées* (1809) which includes such articles (of faith) as number 69: '"The masters will not retire except after having made certain that every student is in bed."' Many a slip... What Foucault does, and we have seen this in *Discipline and Punish*, is to blur the intentions of such projects with the reality of their results. To this end he speaks of psychiatry 'annexing' 'the whole' of the sexual perversions as its own province (p.30), of all the social controls at the end of the nineteenth century which 'screened' people's sexuality – 'undertaking to protect, separate, and forewarn, signalling perils everywhere, awakening people's attention, calling for diagnoses, piling up reports, organizing therapies' (pp.30-31). Here the trope of enumeration itself rhetorically 'piles up' measures, persuading us of the sheer extent of the incitements to speak of sex, which were 'orchestrated from all quarters, apparatuses everywhere for listening and recording, procedures for observing, questioning, and formulating' (pp.32-33).

And yet, as with the confession, he concedes that for a long time the working classes escaped the apparatus of sexuality, which first took hold in the

bourgeois or aristocratic family. Only around the 1830s did the organization of the conventional family surface as a key to political and economic control. Only at the end of the nineteenth century, with the development of juridical and medical control of perversions, did the apparatus of sexuality 'spread through the entire social body' (p.122). The above expressions lend weight to Baudrillard's criticism, noted in Chapter four, according to which Foucault's discourse appears to mimic the pervasiveness of the 'sexuality' it describes. Power of the *récit*. As Foucault says of Jules Verne's unwitting heroes, their function is 'to reduce (fabulous) reality to the pure (and fictive) truth of the *récit*' ('L'Arrière Fable', p.10). The occasion will present itself to say more about this very classical ruse of historiography in relation to the second and third volumes on sexuality. For now, suffice it to say that *La Volonté* is not unambiguously constitutionalist.

The text throws up an interesting question concerning that opposition between nature and culture the undermining of which always lies at the heart of constitutionalist theories. Despite his wish to think the inescapable constitution of sexuality, Foucault nonetheless articulates a separation between sex and discourse, the two apparently having different forms. He writes, for instance, of the 'putting into discourse of adolescent sex' (p.28). The French 'mise en discours' echoes the expression *mise en scène*, suggesting a staging or highlighting, an arrangement or stylized performance of sexuality. Yet not without first taking for granted the existence of an adolescent sex which it is possible to put into discourse. Similarly, when Foucault speaks of the persecution of peripheral sexualities, the existence of such forms is not in

doubt. His argument is altogether more concerned with the social machinery which organizes sexual behaviour into an unbending system of classification. The particularity of nineteenth-century law consists in its fostering of what he terms a new 'specification' of individuals. Thus, to take the case of homosexuality, if sodomy had formerly been a category of forbidden acts and the perpetrator simply the juridical subject of them, the nineteenth-century homosexual becomes 'a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood'. This example rehearses the Nietzschean scheme of the birth of modern consciousness from *Discipline and Punish*. With regard to the homosexual,

> Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; [...] The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (p.43)

In short, nineteenth-century essentialism and causalism do not aim to exclude these 'thousand aberrant sexualities'; their energies go towards making them into a principle of classification and intelligibility, into a 'natural order of disorder', towards 'the specification, the regional solidification of each one of them' (p.44). A massive Apollonian effort by the West to bring these perversions into existence *qua* perversions.

> The implantation of perversions is an instrument-effect: it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct. And accompanying this encroachment of powers, scattered sexualities rigidified, became stuck to an age, a place, a taste, a type of practice. (p.48; trans. mod.)

However, and this is the important point, it should be clear that Foucault is certainly not saying that power, simply and *ex nihilo*, 'produced' these sexualities, as though nothing like them existed before the nineteenth century. We must concede that it does look, in the following, as though the

constitution trope is too symmetrical:

> The manifold sexualities – those which appear with the different ages (sexualities of the infant or the child), those which are determined by particular tastes or practices (the sexuality of the invert, the gerontophile, the fetishist), those which, in a diffuse manner, invest relationships (the sexuality of doctor and patient, teacher and student, psychiatrist and mental patient), those which haunt spaces (the sexuality of the home, the school, the prison) – all form the correlate of exact procedures of power. (p.47; trans. mod.)

But Foucault adds – and in a more dialectical vein than is the case in *Discipline and Punish* – that these polymorphous conducts 'were actually extracted from people's bodies and from their pleasures; or rather, they were solidified in them; they were drawn out, revealed, isolated, intensified, incorporated, by multifarious power devices [*dispositifs*]' (pp.47-48). In other words, the object and the process, while still correlative, maintain a provisional autonomy. A provocative later formulation invites a similar reading. Here, Foucault writes of certain cherished notions (causality, the unconscious, the truth of the subject) finding an opportunity to deploy themselves in the discourse of sex. Not however, he continues, 'by reason of some natural property inherent in sex itself, but by virtue of the tactics of power immanent in this discourse' (p.70). We might read this as affirming that it is not *exclusively* by virtue of some natural property in sex that the above notions find their space. There is always a more, a supplement. In any case, it would be strictly speaking meaningless to detach the natural properties of sex from the 'tactics of power', as though the being of the body in no sense lent itself to such an apparatus.

Despite the nominalism, the truth of sexuality cannot be evacuated from the scene. Although Foucault states that his concern is with the 'will to knowledge' rather than with the truth of sex, in fact there is nothing Foucault

utters apropos of the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure which is not determined in some measure by the conviction that that regime is fundamentally wrong about human sexuality. Foucault himself says that the analysis of sexuality does not necessarily imply the elision of the body, anatomy, and a certain 'biological minimum'. He envisages a '"history of bodies" and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested' (p.152; trans. mod.). This materiality is not that of sex *in itself.* Sex is, rather, 'a complex idea that was formed inside the apparatus of sexuality' (p.152). The notion of 'sex' – and the quotation marks again highlight the importance of naming – made it possible 'to group together, in an artificial unity [what knowledge licenses this adjective?], anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere' (p.154). Again, he calls 'sex' the 'most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in an apparatus organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures' (p.155). Although he does not use the terms, the semantics plainly pit Apollo against Dionysus. Apollo: *artificial unity, speculative, ideal, apparatus organized by power*; Dionysus: *bodies, materiality, forces, energies, sensations, pleasures.* Paglia:

> Dionysus is identification, Apollo objectification. Dionysus is the empathic, the sympathetic emotion transporting us into other people, other places, other times. Apollo is the hard, cold separation of western personality and categorical thought. Dionysus is energy, ecstasy, hysteria, promiscuity, emotionalism – heedless indiscriminateness of idea or practice. Apollo is obsessiveness, voyeurism, idolatry, fascism – frigidity and aggression of the eye, petrifaction of objects. Human imagination rolls through the world seeking cathexis. Here, there, everywhere, it invests itself in perishable things of flesh, silk, marble, and metal, materializations of desire. Words

themselves the west makes into objects. [...] Apollo makes the boundary
lines that are civilization but that lead to convention, constraint, oppression.
Dionysus is energy unbound, mad, callous, destructive, wasteful. Apollo is
law, history, tradition, the dignity and safety of custom and form. Dionysus
is the *new*, exhilirating but rude, sweeping all away to begin again. Apollo
is a tyrant, Dionysus a vandal. Every excess breeds its counterreaction.
(*Sexual*, pp.96-97)

It is our contention that Foucault would warm to this schema, while situating

his own contribution as an uncovering of the work of Apollo and therefore an

unbounding of Dionysian energy. But the first volume on sexuality, since it

is fixated upon the grip of power and since it has vowed to remain at the level

of 'sexuality' understood as regime or *dispositif*, can only gesture to the body's

pleasures, sensations and materiality, without really transporting us towards

them.

Foucault's nominalism has one obvious benefit. It suggests that a less

rigid implantation of sexuality in the future might permit the Dionysian to

emerge. Equally, it has its problems. Firstly, once more there is no positive

valuation of the Apollonian. It is not necessary to concur with Paglia's

apparently wholly positive valorization of the social – in her contention that

the rapist is created not by bad social influences but by a failure of social

conditioning – at least to entertain the possibility that it is the loosening of

social constraints and of the rule of law which leads to a brutal use of sex-as-

power (the case of wartime rape being a prime example). Secondly, and in

terms of the accuracy of the historical record, it is possible that, since the thing

is not simply constituted in discourse, Foucault commits a vital error in

believing nineteenth-century sexualities ever really rigidified. In other words,

perhaps the Dionysian has already surfaced, has already left its traces.

Foucault's own Apollonianism would be the gesture by which he himself

captures the word and contents of a hundred and fifty years' worth of understanding of 'sexuality'.

'Problematization' and philosophy: a ruse of the *logos* that presides over the world

Strictly speaking, despite the reinstatement of a meaningful disquisition on the individual in the final two volumes on sexuality, it remains the case that the vagaries of the human heart are still less important than the process of constitution. The question of the truth of what one is has its place, Foucault says, 'at the heart of the constitution of the moral subject' (p.68). Constitution as state but also as process. In this penultimate section of the chapter, we shall draw attention to a certain philosophical constitutionalism which represents the most classical of historiographical schemas. This is related to Foucault's use of the word *problematization* as a guiding methodological tenet which announces itself as precisely different from other historiographical approaches but which may be viewed, rather, as an arch-traditional prejudice of historiography.

In Part four of *The Care of the Self*, 'The Body', we loop back to Foucault's discourse on constitution from *The Birth of the Clinic*. Attention to the body's constitution, its humours and well being, forms an integral part of the care of the self, which is itself essential to one's constitution (in both senses) as a moral subject. This attention is directed by medicine, which, together with rhetoric and philosophy, was considered essential learning for a cultivated man. Medicine contributed to a reflective mode of relation to

oneself, to one's body, to one's activities, to food and to the environment. Rather than depending overly on physicians, a working knowledge of medicine would assure the individual's ability to practise his own regimen. Now, in Foucault's account we may safely assume that the literature of regimen, with its emphasis on the correct food to eat, the proper quantity, the season of the year (winter) appropriate for honeyed wine, faithfully transcribes genuine preoccupations of the times. Hence, one would not especially object to the traditional scheme that unites 'everyday life'–'letters'–'testify to' in the following: 'The evocations of their everyday life that one can find in the letters of Seneca or in the correspondence between Marcus Aurelius and Fronto testify to this mode of attention to the self and to one's body' (*The Care*, p.103). Here the correspondence is delivered, its message received and its 'evocations' duly assert the truth of 'everyday life'.

However, it shall be our contention that it is this willingness to allow the philosophico-medical 'project' to represent and even stand in for social practice which is largely responsible for the abstraction that pervades both *The Use of Pleasures* and *The Care of the Self*.[40] Indeed, even when Foucault suggests that philosophical inquiry takes its cue from actual human behaviour, this insight is still derived from philosophical texts (see *The Care*, p.149). This tendency does not, to be sure, go unchecked. On the subject of conjugal relations, he writes that the few texts he has analysed cannot represent 'the

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[40] An additional difficulty has been highlighted concerning the fact that many of the Greek texts to which Foucault refers often survive only through collections made much later (occasionally as late as the eleventh century). Do they, then, represent exclusively the period of original composition? See Phil Bevis, Michèle Cohen and Gavin Kendall, 'Archaeologizing Genealogy: Michel Foucault and the Economy of Austerity', in *Foucault's New Domains*, pp.193-215 (p.198).

actual practice of marriage in the first centuries of our era'. They have to be taken 'in their partiality', for what they disclose of 'certain doctrines' and 'a few limited milieus' (pp.162-163). What is more, in criticizing Foucault, are we suggesting that philosophy is outside the real? Is it not the case, rather, that every historiography, in its reliance on texts, is constitutively bedevilled by the same fate? Foucault himself preempts my criticisms:

> Of course, it is not in texts like these [those of Pliny and Statius] that one should look for a representation of what matrimonial life may have really been like in the period of the Empire. The sincerity they display does not have the value of evidence. They are texts that go out of their way to proclaim an ideal of conjugality. They should not be taken as the reflection of a situation, but as the formulation of an exigency, and it is precisely on this account that they form part of reality [*du réel*]. (p.80)[41]

It is not matrimonial life in the flesh that we know; it is the fact that people worried themselves on the subject. The manoeuvre is rather Cartesian: one cannot doubt that the ancients were vexed by this matter, therefore this vexation provides the basis upon which to establish the existence of the thing under consideration (that is, matrimonial life).

There are good reasons for believing that this question of representation lies at the root of Foucault's use of the word 'problematization' which assumes such importance in his late works. The second chapter of the Introduction to *The Use of Pleasures* is entitled 'Forms of Problematization', Part I of the book is called 'The Moral Problematization of Pleasures'. Why was sexuality constituted as a moral domain? Why the problematization?

> But, after all, this was the proper task of a history of thought, as against a history of behaviors or representations: to define the conditions in which human beings 'problematize' what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live. (*The Use*, p.10)

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[41] Such a position directly contradicts the archaeologist's stance, which precisely does not treat discourse as the sign of something else (*The Archaeology*, p.138).

The stakes are high. In the interview 'The Concern for Truth', Foucault links the idea of problematization to that of truth. First, he reinterprets his own work precisely in terms of problematization, saying that this notion has served as the common thread in the work done since *Histoire de la folie*, though he did not immediately grasp this fact. Second, he binds his definition closely to the question of truth:

> Problematization doesn't mean the representation of a pre-existent object, nor the creation through discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It's the set of discursive or non-discursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and the false, and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether under the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.). (p.296)

In *The Use of Pleasures* truth remains to the fore. He writes that his change of direction has perhaps allowed him a better perspective on his enterprise of a history of truth:

> It was a matter of analyzing, not behaviors or ideas, nor societies and their 'ideologies,' but the *problematizations* through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought – and the *practices* on the basis of which these problematizations are formed. (p.11)

While we can readily concede his observation about texts and reality, the attempt to lift *problematizations* out of the realm of ideas, ideologies and, worse still, representations, is one part terrorism to two parts naiveté.[42] Or

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[42] Elsewhere, 'problematizing' amounts to not answering the question. Foucault is asked (he has just said that in *Discipline and Punish* it is only a matter of bad literature) how one distinguishes good from bad. 'Exactly. That's just what will have to be considered one day. We will have to ask ourselves just what it is this activity that consists of circulating fictions, poems, and narratives in a society' (Foucault, 'On Literature', in *Foucault Live*, p.113). I disagree with Christopher Norris' view that this idea of problematization represents Foucault shifting ground with regard to 'poststructuralism and kindred forms of modish ultra-relativist doctrine'. That Foucault or anyone could 'abandon' the 'main tenet of poststructuralist doctrine – i.e., the claim that thought is constituted through and through by the codes, conventions, language-games or discourses that make up a given cultural order' – strikes me as trusting in Foucault's capacity somehow to write history as it had never been written before. Christopher Norris, '"What Is Enlightenment?": Foucault on Kant', in *The Truth About Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp.90-91.

perhaps 'territorialism'. Derrida notes the etymology and meaning of the word

problem:

> *problēma* can signify *projection* or *protection*, that which one poses or
> throws in front of oneself, either as the projection of a project, of a task to
> accomplish, or as the protection created by a substitute, a prosthesis that we
> put forth in order to represent, replace, shelter, or dissimulate ourselves, or
> so as to hide something unavowable – like a shield (*problēma* also means
> shield, clothing as barrier or guard-barrier) behind which one guards oneself
> *in secret* or *in shelter* in case of danger. Every border is *problematic* in
> these two senses. (*Aporias*, pp.11-12)[43]

Note the work done by the word *domain* in this next passage from Foucault.

The organization of *problematizations* into a delimited area – more than a *field*,

it is the constitution of a sovereign territory (and we recall from *The*

Archaeology the role and function, the *aletheia*-effect, of expressions like the

'mapping' of discursive 'formations' and 'domains'):

> The domain I will be analyzing is made up [*constitué*] of texts written for
> the purpose of offering rules, opinions, and advice on how to behave as one
> should: 'practical' texts, which are themselves objects of a 'practice' in that
> they were designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out, and
> they were intended to constitute the eventual framework [*armature*] of
> everyday conduct. These texts thus served as functional devices [*opérateurs*]
> that would enable individuals to question their own conduct, to watch over
> and give shape to it, and to shape themselves as ethical subjects. (*The Use*,
> pp.12-13)

While the link between *text* and *practice* is undeniable (again Foucault is trying

to move beyond theory), here the role of texts is more than supplementary to

the real. They prescribe and constitute a 'domain', and to that extent would

represent what Derrida calls a 'problematic closure'[44]:

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[43] Derrida is contrasting the notion of problem with that of aporia. In the aporia, '*there
is no longer any problem*'. This is not because all the solutions have been given, but because
the aporia removes security, 'because one could no longer even find a problem that would
constitute itself and that one would keep in front of oneself, as a presentable object or project,
as a protective representative or a prosthetic substitute, as some kind of border still to cross
or behind which to protect oneself' (p.12).

[44] Elsewhere, Derrida writes that a *problem* always sketches out the lines of a construction.
Jacques Derrida, 'Cinquante-deux aphorismes pour un avant-propos', in *Psyché*, pp.509-518
(p.510).

> The problematic closure assigns a domain, a territory, or a field to an inquiry, a research, or a knowledge. All of this is ordered in relation to a thematic object, more precisely to an entity, to a modality of the entity whose identification is presupposed by the unity of this space, which in principle can be closed. (*Aporias*, p.40)

So, rather than claiming that philosophy does not represent or form part of the real (which is not our contention), it is necessary to question the *extent* to which philosophy has been drafted in to represent social practice. We recall that Foucault insists on two things concerning the cultivation of the self: first, that the injunction to cultivate the self was widespread and, further, not simply doctrinal, by which he means that it impregnated behaviour and lifestyles, formed a 'social practice' and occasionally even gave rise to institutions; second, that the phenomenon concerned only those social groups (decidedly few in fact) for whom such cultivation, by virtue of their privileged position, could have a meaning. And in fact Foucault claws back even this concession by saying that, for the philosophers, the idea of caring for oneself is a principle which holds for all. We are thus presented with the most classical of schemas,

> as though the author had at his disposal seven or eight school manuals which contained the knowledge that constitutes [the] culture [of antiquity]: a handbook of practical medicine (with notions of various illnesses and conditions), a rudimentary psychological treatise (generally accepted propositions about love, hatred, fear, etc.), a compendium of Christian and Stoic ethics, a logic, an anthology of proverbs and maxims on life, death, suffering, women, etc.[45]

With Foucault, the manuals are not the code; they are veritably the text. But the text-as-Life in the narrowest and most traditional understanding of text, where narrowness bestows the most extensive reach possible, in line with the Hegelian presupposition according to which the full consciousness and spiritual

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[45] Adapted from Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, p.142, who paraphrases Barthes' discussion of Balzac and cultural *vraisemblance* in *S/Z*.

essence of an epoch is contained in its philosophy, and philosophy reflects the entire manifold of the age.[46]

Supposing our criticism to be pertinent, what importance do we accord it? It can be argued that it is by projecting the content of philosophico-medical debate over social practice that Foucault effects a rationalization – here of sexuality – which again distances his writing from Nietzsche. That such medico-philosophical discourses are penned by men of the social élite and heavily premissed on élite male sexuality is not, strictly speaking, the issue. Foucault is the first to acknowledge as much and in any event it is hard to imagine how one could recover different, say female or lower class, testimonies. The point is not to conclude that we have 'partial' texts or 'fragments', as though we accept the truth of these texts and bemoan only their scarcity. The question concerns, rather, the degree of circumspection one brings to bear on such texts, the awareness one demonstrates concerning what they leave unsaid. To write a history is often, as Foucault taught us, to fight against repeating the exclusions perpetrated by the contemporary official versions.

To illustrate the problem, let us take two chapters from the section of *The Care* on 'The Body', beginning with the one called 'Galen', which deals with the *aphrodisia* and the body. Nature, in Galen's view, was caught between her desire to construct an immortal work on the one hand and the ephemerality of the human material at her disposal on the other. In order, therefore, to make humankind endure beyond the death of the first man and

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[46] See Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos*, p.1.

woman, Nature must contrive the means to ensure the furtherance of the species. 'In short,' Foucault writes, 'something ingenious (*sophisma*) is needed [...]: a ruse of the *logos* that presides over the world'. This ruse brings three elements into play: the organs with which animals are endowed for the purposes of fertilization; a capacity for pleasure that is extraordinary; the longing (*epithumia*) to make use of these organs – 'a marvelous, inexpressible (*arrheton*) desire' (p.106). The 'sophism' of sex therefore resides partly in 'carefully planned mechanisms'. And even if it resides also (though Foucault does not use the word) in a sort of *punctum* which exceeds these mechanisms, Nature herself has planned for this too, placing this principle of an extraordinary *dynamis* in the body and soul of every living creature. Foucault writes:

> Hence the wisdom of the demiurgic principle, which, knowing very well the substance of her work and consequently its limits, invented this mechanism of excitement – this 'sting' of desire. [...] So that, experiencing this sting, even those animals that are incapable of understanding the purpose of Nature in her wisdom – because they are young, foolish (*aphrona*), or without reason (*aloga*) – do in fact accomplish it. By their intensity the *aphrodisia* serve a rationality which those who engage in them do not even need to know. (p.106)

Parallels with natural selection aside, we should question this account (again, it is not a matter of challenging whether or not Galen and his kind thought thus; it is a question of the sufficiency of Galen's account and of Foucault's motives in following him).

Galen's highly rationalistic account would appear to conform to the main lines of that tradition which sees Nature or the demiurge as a female principle orchestrating the universe. Thus, even if many of the mechanisms described here touch on the base and the bodily, there lies behind them an

informing design of supreme sophistry. Again, though, as Foucault says, this 'order of demiurgic providence' is but one plane on which the *aphrodisia* appear. Equally, Galen explores the corporeal plane, especially the anatomical location of the processes of the *aphrodisia*, and the pathological plane (having to guard against a debilitating expenditure in the sexual act, for example).

From the chapter 'The Regimen of Pleasures', let us select the first of four variables, the auspicious occasion for procreation, which are singled out by the medical regimens of the Imperial epoch (the remaining three are: the age of the subject; the time frame; individual temperament). Foucault postulates that these medical regimens in fact take up a very traditional theme, which certainly dates back to Aristotle and Plato. Namely, that noble offspring could only be engendered if one took a certain care in the procreative act (otherwise the disorders of conception would be reflected in the progeny):

> A passage from Athenaeus, cited by Oribasius, is very explicit on this point: those who intend to beget children must have body and soul in the best possible condition. In other words, the soul must be tranquil and completely free of pain, of worries accompanied by fatigue, and of any other affliction; and the body must be healthy and not spoiled in any way. An immediate preparation is necessary as well: a period of restraint during which the sperm accumulates and gathers strength, while the urge acquires the necessary intensity (too-frequent sexual relations prevent the sperm from reaching the degree of elaboration at which it becomes fully potent). A rather strict alimentary diet is recommended: no food that is too hot or too moist, just 'a light meal which will give the impetus towards coitus, and which should not be overloaded with too many ingredients'; no indigestion, no drunkenness; in short, a general purification of the body that will ensure the quietude necessary to the sexual function. It is in this way that 'the farmer sows only after having first cleansed the soil and removed any foreign material.' (pp.125-126)

One senses that the above would effectively rule out 99% of all sexual couplings and that if the Romans had not arrived first, the Greek world would in any case have gone into terminal population decline. Furthermore, we note the figurative language of 'purification', 'cleans[ing] the soil' and 'remov[ing]

any foreign material'. This last metaphor, which comes from Soranus, is particularly instructive, since its telluric strain contrasts starkly with the foregoing blend of Stoic voluntarism. In fact, although the entire passage puts in play the body, its processes and physiology, it is the mind that rules. Not because the mind is primary, but because it is the commander, the farmer, close to nature but organizing, managing and commanding the use of nature's powers. Again, we must insist that the point is not to reverse the scheme and declare the Greeks and Romans to be helpless victims of their bodies. But one should be more suspicious than Foucault apropos of this head-cult.

In this respect, the final chapter of the section on the body, 'The Work of the Soul', is telling, if a little misleading, since it gives the impression that only now is the spiritual dimension to be explored, whereas in reality it has been at work throughout.[47] It is the soul, Foucault declares, that constantly threatens to carry the body beyond what is proper and contravene natural dispositions. In order to assign the body an appropriate regimen (in keeping with the body's nature), the soul must work on itself to eliminate its own illusions and master its own desires. It is not a question of eliminating desire, since desire is natural, but of keeping it in proportion. (We note that Foucault is content to let this notion of a natural desire go unchallenged.) One must therefore apply an ethical regimen to oneself to achieve this. As Foucault is himself aware, in this Stoic-inspired ethic the voluntary submission of the soul to the body is not, of course, a celebration of the primacy of the body. Rather,

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[47] N.b. the opening sentence: 'The regimen recommended for the sexual pleasures seems to be centered entirely on the body. [...] And yet the soul has its part to play as well' (p.133).

it obeys

> a rationality that has presided over the natural order and has designed, for its own purposes, the mechanics of the body. It is from this natural reason that the *doxai* risk leading the soul astray by creating extraneous desires; it is to this reason that the reasonable medical regimen, based on the true knowledge of living creatures, must be attuned. (pp.135-136)

Here Foucault is alive to the importance in Stoic thought of Nature as the ultimate power. And again, in a phrase much more expressive of Foucault's own view, in that it is adduced by way of summation and in order to establish a clear difference from modern attempts at a hermeneutics of the subject's desire: 'the regimen of the *aphrodisia*, the regimen of their distribution, as proposed by medicine, need be nothing more nor less than the form of their nature present to thought, their truth inhabiting conduct as its constant prescription' (p.143; trans. mod.).

To sum up. The section of *The Care of the Self* devoted to the body is physiologically explicit, it does not shy away from describing the body's primal functions and fluids, the blood and ooze of which Paglia writes (there is, for instance, a lengthy description of ejaculation, another of menstruation). Yet the preceptual tone that attends those passages from antiquity which Foucault invokes and the concern for the rational conduct of the individual and his economy, should make us pause to ask what it might be that stands over and against this conduct, and against which one proselytzes so insistently. I am not suggesting that Foucault agrees with Soranus on the need for women to be sober during coitus if the offspring is not to emerge misshapen. But something of the cool abstraction and mentalism of such passages sticks to Foucault's own narrative and it would be necessary to ask what other, perhaps

less considered, considerations, are operative in the sexual scene, over and against Plutarch's considerations of religion, exercise, eating, and digestion. Foucault's preparedness to embrace the idea of demiurgic nature and the logos that presides over the world arguably serves two purposes: firstly, it allows him to hold at bay another, chthonian nature; secondly, it permits him to gather the demiurgic principle and its ruses of the *logos* (which have precisely been divined by men) if not under the absolute control, at least under the operational control, of the self. And in so doing it becomes apparent that one has a reprise, another take, a taking again, a further grasping, of something already at work in *The Order of Things*, and which is precisely the notion, the conviction that 'there is order', order that is categorical, rational and perhaps, even, pure. Have we even begun to understand the logic, the reason, the *logos* behind Foucault's 'journey' to Greece?

The rationalization of sexuality which we discern in Foucault is not without its irony, for at least three reasons, one of which will impose itself here (and allow us to finish with *The Care*), the remaining two carrying us into the final section. Firstly, *The Care of the Self* seems to provide its own self-reflexive, ironic comment on the danger of rationalization. This moment, which comes towards the end of the book, is the culmination of Foucault's genealogy of the simultaneous formation in the West of an ontological and ethical privilege accorded to conjugal relationships and a concomitant negative change in the attitude towards the love of boys.[48] He suggests that the

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[48] Daraki reserves her praise of Foucault for his section in *The Care of the Self* on 'The Wife'. She sees in it a kind of hymn to the dual relationship, where reciprocity comes to the fore and mastery over others cedes to the valorization of others (Daraki, p.107).

principle of the dominion of oneself over oneself increasingly means that conjugal fidelity comes to conform better than other sexual liaisons to the ethos of this relation to oneself. Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love* is crucial here but we shall briefly follow Foucault's pursual of this same debate in a slightly later text called *Affairs of the Heart*, attributed to Lucian. The work stages a dialogue between Theomnestus and Lycinus in which the latter himself recounts a previous dialogue on the same theme between Charicles and Callicratidas. This anterior dialogue mobilizes two themes, Foucault says, the role of nature and the place of pleasure. In short, and to condense a lengthy debate into the barest outline, Callicratidas argues on both counts that the love of boys wins out by virtue of its spiritual superiority. Rather than imparting life, the disciple-master relationship, which is properly a philosophical relationship, imparts the more elevated 'techniques' and 'knowledges' concerning how to conduct a wise and noble life.[49]

If, in view of the strongly marked difference between the *erastes* and the *eromenos*, Charicles does not see in the love of boys the equal exchange of enjoyment which characterizes the love between opposite sexes, a *charis* which legitimates that relationship and marks it out as natural (the essential element being the fact that both husband and wife are active subjects), Callicratidas tries to demonstrate that pleasures of conversation, the sharing of feelings, the care given to a lover suffering illness, all attest to a higher, more

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[49] Foucault stresses that, differences apart, this debate between the love of women and the love of boys is fundamentally different from modern debates. It is not 'the conflict of two forms of sexual desire struggling for supremacy or for their respective right to expression'. Not, then, about a natural or biological drive. 'It is the confrontation of two forms of life, two ways of stylizing one's pleasures, and of the two philosophical discourses that accompany these choices' (p.218).

laudable bond in which equality is so perfect, reversibility so complete that the role of the *erastes* and that of the *eromenos* can no longer be distinguished (especially since in time the beloved slips naturally into the role of giving love in return). However, Foucault says, Callicratidas' discourse is double-edged. For his guiding concern seems to be to adapt male love to the descriptive and prescriptive ideal of marriage. Moreover, Foucault notes, while the love of boys is defined as the only love to combine virtue and pleasure, this pleasure is not sexual pleasure. Thus, although it is this noble argument that ensures Callicratidas' triumph in the debate, the victory is a Pyrrhic one.

The self-reflexive moment comes in an important twist. We recall that the debate between Charicles and Callicratidas is but an intradiegesis within the larger debate involving Lycinus and Theomnestus. On hearing the former's account of the anterior debate, Theomnestus responds with thinly-disguised irony. Pederastic love won because it was linked to philosophy, to virtue, and to the elimination of physical pleasure, but is one really expected to believe that this is truly the way in which one loves boys? Evoking all those tactile and sensuous pleasures hitherto banished, Theomnestus reinstates physical contact – the kisses, caresses, and the gratification – as the real reason one loves boys. This is a crucial moment and leads Foucault to the following musings. Theomnestus' spicey description is a reminder that, for the latter,

> it is not possible – without resorting to violence – to keep the *aphrodisia* outside the domain of love and its justifications. Pseudo-Lucian's irony is not a way of denouncing this pleasure which one can take in boys, a pleasure he evokes with a smile. It is a fundamental objection to the very old line of argument of Greek pederasty, which, in order to conceptualize, formulate, and discourse about the latter and to supply it with reasons, was obliged to evade the manifest presence of physical pleasure. He does not say that the love of women is better. But he demonstrates the essential weakness of a discourse on love that makes no allowance for the *aphrodisia* and for the

relations they engage. (p.227)

Theomnestus' irony, scepticism and worldliness carry a strategic weight. They could pass for the message of the twentieth-century book which gathers them up and places them in such a significant, and final, position. Care of the self and respect for others, the stylization of one's conduct – fine, but let us not exclude the *aphrodisia* from the domain of love and its justifications. But Theomnestus' intervention is doubtless doubly ironic. For its explicit criticism of an over-rationalistic philosophical discourse on love is mobilized by an enveloping discourse – Foucault's own – which perpetrates a similar rationalization of sexuality. If Foucault had widened his compas in generic terms, he would have found that the Greek authors' reticence on lovemaking techniques and positions is not matched, for instance, by vase painting of the same era, 'where a wide variety of sexual practices is explicitly depicted'.[50]

Demiurge

The theme of a stifling, constricting rationality pervades Foucault's writings. In fact it is difficult to overstate the importance of this theme and this condemnation in Foucault.[51] It is thus not without irony (and this is the

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[50] Bevis, Cohen and Kendall, 'Archaeologizing Genealogy', p.196. They in turn take this evidence from G.E.R. Lloyd, 'The Mind on Sex', *The New York Review of Books*, March 13 1986, 24-28. Their general argument is that Foucault's tale of sexual austerity is programmed by his monolithic understanding of an austere Christianity which, they contend, is made into the parent of psychoanalysis.

[51] See, for instance, Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.13; 'Politics and Reason', in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, pp.57-85 (first publ. as 'Omnes et Singulatum: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason', in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values II*, ed. by Sterling McMurrin (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981), pp.225-254); and 'Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault', trans. by Jeremy Harding, repr. in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, pp.17-46 (first publ. in *Telos*, 55 (Spring 1983), 195-211).

second reason we alluded to) that the object of so much critical energy should mark his own production at every level and in such an insistent manner. The third reason relates to phenomenology. If the transcendental subject of phenomenology represents perhaps the exemplary abstraction for Foucault, it remains the case that no-one contributed more than Husserl to questioning the as he saw it misguided rationalism of European philosophy since the Enlightenment, though Husserl did not subscribe to the belief that rationality as such was evil.[52] (Of course, this questioning of excessive cerebrality is already a Romantic theme before Husserl: the heart opposed to reason, spontaneity versus reflection. It is also easily gendered.) Husserl considered that philosophy had taken theories of the mathematization of nature too much to heart, constantly repeating the idealist geometrical projections which at one time lent valuable insights, but which now, taken literally, threaten to squeeze out the texture and diversity of the life-world. Let us say that Foucault's constitutionalist faith, his belief in the capacity of the philosophical text to stand in for the real, does not exempt him from Husserl's critique of naturalism:

> an idealizing, mathematical method of finding exact world-laws (including natural laws) or of arriving at laws for human beings and animals as psychophysical beings, for their souls, their personal being and activity, as well as for their bodies.[53]

To allude to the *aphrodisia* is still not necessarily to embrace the chthonian, in its bodily and psychological complexity, and it is perhaps in the

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[52] See Husserl, 'The Vienna Lecture', in *The Crisis*, p.290.

[53] Edmund Husserl, 'The Attitude of Natural Science and the Attitude of Humanistic Science. Naturalism, Dualism, and Psychophysical Psychology', Appendix III to *The Crisis*, pp.315-334 (p.316).

work on sexuality that Foucault's antagonism towards Freud is most damaging. To be sure — and clawing back Foucault's notion of discourse as act —, it is necessary to appreciate that Foucault's conceptual and semantic system represents a rejection of the discourse and world of someone like Norman O. Brown (Paglia's mentor), that is, a refusal of depth-symbolism, particularly in its psychoanalytic and Christian guises. Again, a long-standing and understandable suspicion of nature, of the claim to nature, makes itself felt. But this refusal risks deadening our sense of truth. As Norman O. Brown remarks, without an understanding of the seamy side of sexuality there is no understanding of politics.[54]

Perhaps what is really at stake in the question of nature, as Foucault knew only too well, is power and control. If Foucault was alive to the *préjugé de nature*, his exposés of the attempts by culture to pass itself off as nature imagine a related ruse, that of the demiurgic *logos*, for the ruse of 'sexuality' and *dispositifs* is infinitely more comforting than that of daemonic nature. For a parallel, Foucaultian expression of this transference of power onto the social, notice in the following passage from McNay (and Butler) how the deconstruction of the most classical binary opposition remains at the first stage, that of a reversal of the terms:

> Foucault's radical idea of sex as a regulatory construct disrupts binary distinctions between the natural and the cultural contained in the sex/gender distinction. Gender is not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex, but rather gender must also designate the apparatus of production whereby the sexes are themselves established. As Judith Butler puts it, 'gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex"

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[54] *Love's Body*, p.11. He is thinking of the unconscious hostility between the sexes; taboos which prescribe sexual separation; the castration complex.

is produced and established as "prediscursive", prior to culture'. (McNay, pp.29-30)[55]

The two do not articulate a new, scandalous economy; instead gender, as culture, is the name of the machine of production. Gender is that which gives. One does not cut into nature; one cuts, abstracts nature. David M. Halperlin suggests that we compare the debate between Charicles and Callicratidas to that between the vegetarian versus the omnivore. In both debates it is a question of object-choice, not natural predisposition: 'It is a quarrel that springs not from fundamental differences in kind among human beings but from the dissimilar values, ideals, and preferred styles of life[...] which otherwise similar human beings happen (for whatever reason) to have espoused.'[56] To stymie the claim of nature is to build the future oneself. The great Soviet dream. Only this time the legislative and executive constitutionalist powers accrue to the individual. And it perhaps here that constitution joins the semantic hinterland of a modern understanding of 'invention'. Hence the classical opposition between truth as revelation and truth as production in Foucault's musings on Baudelaire's fashioning of the self: 'Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself'.[57] It is perhaps worth bearing in mind that *demiurge* combines what in modern terms we would call the

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[55] She quotes from Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.7.

[56] 'Historicizing the Subject of Desire: Sexual Preferences and Erotic Identities in the Pseudo-Lucianic *Erôtes*', in *Foucault and the Writing of History*, pp.19-34 (p.31).

[57] Foucault, 'What Is Enlightenment?', in *The Foucault Reader*, pp.32-50 (p.42). I am indebted to Christopher Norris' piece '"What Is Enlightenment?": Foucault on Kant', for suggesting the following excerpts from Foucault.

divine and the technical, creationism and production, *dēmiourgos* 'craftsman', 'artisan', from *dēmios* 'public' and *-ergos* 'working': 'In Platonic philosophy, the fashioner of the world. In Gnosticism etc., the being subordinate to the supreme being, who is responsible for the existence of the world' (*NSOED*). As history would have it, the word also bears the trace of a powerful constitutionalist: '1 *Gk Hist.* A magistrate in certain Greek States and in the Achaean League' (*NSOED*). But of course in Baudelaire, as Foucault acknowledges in passing (and in fact in magistrates too: what else does a magistrate do if not wage war on man's baseness?), there is the struggle precisely against '"vulgar, earthy, vile nature"', man's 'indispensable revolt against himself', the '"doctrine of elegance"' which imposes a discipline 'more despotic than the most terrible of religions' (p.41). In Baudelaire, at least, one does not dispense with nature; one fights it. Which is why we should refuse the opposition implicit in Foucault's statement on Sartre apropos of the choice that confronts us all: 'From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art.'[58] I agree with McNay that Foucault's notion of aesthetic choice does not deal well with the involuntary and biological dimensions to sexuality, with certain desires and biological phenomena which 'cannot be overcome or transformed simply through a conscious act of self-stylization' (McNay, p.80).

To suggest that nature is not so easily abstracted is not to advocate a return to an organic communion with nature, to a Wordsworthian lore of

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[58] Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, pp.340-372 (p.351).

Nature:

> Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:-
> We murder to dissect. (Cited in Clark, p.196)

The celebration of nature is always figurated, there is no zero degree. When Kenneth Clark remarks that 'the universe so vividly described in the Book of Revelation is queer enough; but with the help of symbols not beyond description. Whereas our universe cannot even be stated symbolically' (Clark, p.244), he under- and overstates the matter. Is there even one universe which could be stated symbolically? On the other hand, this universe, if there is one, can be stated symbolically; it is just that the symbolizations will be plural and conflicting.

'– Bruno, it hurts here – Johnny said after a while, touching the conventional place of the heart.'[59] Foucault was perhaps right to fight shy of what the narrator in 'El perseguidor' calls *las frases baratas*, the cheap expressions of the discourse of the heart. The difficulty always remains, though, as to what to substitute in its place. If we speak too easily of people as 'having' minds and bodies, 'as thinking, imagining, remembering, feeling pain, loving and hating', is the problem solved by saying that they 'construct' rather than 'imagine'? What, for instance, is at stake when Culler says that a description such as 'he was small, green and demographic' violates first-order *vraisemblance* and requires us to 'construct' a 'very curious world indeed' (Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, p.141)? Why does it not compel us to 'imagine'? In fact, there is a lyrical moment in Foucault's writings where

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[59] Julio Cortázar, 'El perseguidor', in *Ceremonias*, p.253.

nature is not demonized, a moment tellingly bound to imagination. It comes from the anonymous interview 'The Masked Philosopher', as though it could only be spoken incognito. Note that nature, here, fulfills the function of imagination and creation, non-judgemental and presumably similarly devoid of responsibility and guilt. The creative, inventive work of the demiurge, not the constitutionalist labour:

> I can't help thinking of the critic who would not try to judge, but bring into existence a work, a book, a phrase, an idea. He would light the fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, snatch the passing dregs in order to scatter them. He would multiply, not the number of judgments, but the signs of existence; he would call out to them, he would draw them from their sleep. Would he sometimes invent them? So much the better. The sententious critic puts me to sleep. I would prefer a critic of imaginative scintillations. He would not be sovereign, nor dressed in red. He would bear the lightning flashes of possible storms. ('The Masked Philosopher', in *Foucault Live*, p.196)

This is a pale imitation of the sublime, of Byronic not Wordsworthian nature. For here, paradoxically, the 'savage incomprehensible power outside ourselves' (Clark, p.218) is invented by the critic.

What takes Foucault close to the condition of what he himself calls a 'founder of discursivity' is the constructivist, demiurgic, would-be creationist streak in his own writing. Foucault does not rely on that stock of received knowledge the citation of which would assure a text its cultural *vraisemblance* (we recall the tremendous disavowal of the *doxa* in *The Order of Things*); instead he names. A comprehensive study of Foucault's lexicon, which is beyond our remit, would repay attention. It would discover precious constructs like the '"heautocratic" structure of the subject', and stumble across the '*determination of the ethical substance*' (*The Use*, pp.70, 26). The use of quotation marks and italics is telling: they signal the unheard of (you will not

have come across this before, we shall call it X) in respect of a supposedly extant phenomenon (I merely name what is already there). It would reveal rules aplenty: the 'Rule of immanence', the 'Rule of continual variations', the 'Rule of double conditioning', the 'Rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses' (*The History of Sexuality*, pp.98-100); each and every page of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, which is about nothing if not naming regularities, setting to work a whole series of notions belonging to a 'bizarre machinery', a 'strange arsenal'. (If archaeology 'is not in search of inventions' (p.144); it nonetheless has a productive capacity of its own. Does the machine work and what can it produce, he asks. 'And now a suspicion occurs to me. I have behaved as if I were discovering a new domain, as if, in order to chart it, I needed new measurements and guide-lines' [*The Archaeology*, p.136]). In the procedures by which the rituals of confession in the modern Occident come to function within the norms of 'scientific regularity' (at stake is the link between constitution and science, *scientia sexualis* as construct rather than natural attitude), it would find postulates (*'the postulate of a general and diffuse causality'*), principles (*'the principle of a latency intrinsic to sexuality'*) and, above all, the semantic work of nouns denoting verbal action: *'a clinical codification of the inducement to speak'*, *'the medicalization of the effects of confession'* (*The History of Sexuality*, pp.65-67).

So much of this discursive work operates in the aporia between the transitive and the intransitive. The suffix -**ize**: 'Forming trans. and intrans. vbs w. the sense "bring or come into some specified state"' (*NSOED*). Thus: a *'hysterization of women's bodies'*, a *'pedagogization of children's sex'*, a

'*socialization of procreative behavior*', a '*psychiatrization of perverse pleasure*' (*The History of Sexuality*, pp.104-105). Do these 'unities' come into being in the eighteenth century, taking on a 'consistency' and gaining an 'effectiveness in the order of power, as well as a productivity in the order of knowledge', or are they brought into being by the discourse that names them? In *The Care of the Self*, we are presented with 'a "physiologization" of desire and pleasure', with the 'animalization of the *epithumia*', with the '"conjugalization" of sexual relations', with the three fundamental traits of an ethics of conjugal existence, which are 'a "monopolistic" principle', a 'requirement of "dehedonization"', and a 'procreative finalization', and lastly, with the '"juridification" of marital relations and sexual practices'. Foucault's writing evokes the impression of a self-generating, but well ordered, world or system. One finds 'the construction of an autarchic universe which fabricates its own dimensions and limits, and arranges within these its own Time, Space, population, set of objects and myths '.[60] The abstract principles and categories of Kant's philosophical system enter Foucault's writing-machine and emerge, reprocessed, as at one and the same time principles of historiography and principles of the world. The machine's great power – and it must needs use poetic licence – lies in its capacity to process and reveal the nonrandom constituent parts of the natural attitude; the danger (if we can say this of a writing-machine and if it can be singular), in its will to produce the phenomena it hopes to save, and with them the blank, indifferent, virgin domain whence they came:

> The danger, in short, is that instead of providing a basis for what already

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[60] Barthes on Balzac and Michelet, *Writing Degree*, p.35 (trans. mod.).

exists, instead of going over with bold strokes lines that have already been sketched, instead of finding reassurance in this return and final confirmation, instead of completing the blessed circle that announces, after innumerable stratagems [*ruses*] and as many nights, that all is saved [*sauvé*], one is forced to advance beyond familiar territory, far from the certainties to which one is accustomed, towards an as yet uncharted land and unforeseeable conclusion. Is there not a danger that everything that has so far protected the historian in his daily journey and accompanied him until nightfall (the destiny of rationality and the teleology of the sciences, the long, continuous labour of thought from period to period, the awakening and progress of consciousness, its perpetual resumption of itself, the uncompleted, but uninterrupted movement of totalizations, the return of an ever-open source, and finally the historico-transcendental thematic) may disappear, leaving [*dégageant*] for analysis a blank, indifferent space, lacking in both interiority and promise? (*The Archaeology*, pp.38-39)[61]

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[61] In fact many of my criticisms are already articulated by *The Archaeology* itself. See the 'Conclusion' (p.199) where Foucault stages objections to his methodology (without ever really refuting them since he allows himself to be sidetracked exclusively by the question of the subject).

CONCLUSION

In the Introduction he composed for the reprinted seventeenth-century grammar by Arnauld and Lancelot, Foucault asks: why a general and reasoned grammar?[1] He answers: because classical grammarians thought it possible to found a universal grammar by finding in particular instances of language (mostly French and Latin) the reason or necessity at work in grammar as a whole. The more reasoned a grammar, the more it will approximate to a general grammar. The generality sought by the classical grammarians is not that of language in general (the project of modern linguistics); it is that of the reasons at work in any language. In grammar, as in logic, thought owes its very being to the existence of rules. The rule is not a prescription from outside; it is a 'condition of existence' (p.739):

> Grammar could not act like the prescriptions of a legislator finally giving to
> the disorder of words their constitution and their laws; nor could it be
> understood as a set of recommendations offered by a vigilant proof-corrector.
> It is a discipline which enunciates the rules according to which a language
> must necessarily organize itself in order to be able to exist. (p.740)

Neither the law of the legislator nor the ideal or exemplary instance demanded by the proof-corrector; grammar is the form and the 'internal law' which allow a language to be what it is.

Is it legitimate to see in these words, written on the Classical age but

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[1] 'Introduction', in *Dits et écrits*, I, pp. 732-752 (first publ. in Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot, *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* (Paris: Paulet, 1967), pp.iii-xxvii).

written from the age of archaeology, the choreography of a dance, at once classical and modern, performed with radiance and precision throughout Foucault's work? The rule would not be a constitution from outside; regularity would be the ether out of which things 'themselves' (the insane, disciplined subjects) emerge. Even if the rule is precisely unnatural, the fruit of human constitution and power, even if the code were unexpectedly interrupted by the aleatory, involuntary strokes of inspiration of a momentarily distracted scribe (as Foucault says of the nucleus of the cell), there is a persistent sense that between the great epistemological upheavals, those 'immense reorganizations of a culture', a force of regularity and order presides – one belonging in some measure to the *récit récitant*. As Foucault says of the double meaning of the word grammar for the grammarians of Port-Royal: there is a grammar which is 'the immanent order of every word uttered', and a grammar which is 'the description, the analysis and explication – the theory – of this order' (p.740).

It goes without saying that the approach adopted here to Foucault's writings is manifestly not the only way of cutting into, of cutting up his oeuvre. My occasional recourse to literature doubtless testifies, not only to an indulgence quite in keeping with the spirit of Foucault, but to my distance from important institutional and disciplinary positions ('history', 'sociology', 'psychology'). My propensity for choosing to illustrate and/or rebut points by means of Latin American exempla bears witness to an institutional position within the discipline (if one can ever simply be 'within' *a* discipline) of Hispanic and Latin American Studies. It is necessary to state that 'Latin America', which is here neither created nor simply summoned up, functions

also strategically as a place whose writing, culture, politics and economics allow a purchase on certain pervasive assumptions in Foucaultian thought and Critical Theory alike. Most significantly, 'Latin America' exemplifies the push-pull of a writing and a thought inscribed between the particular and the general in a difficult cultural economy.

However, the decision to begin the thesis with the notion of *mente concipere* and end it with a no less powerful ruse of the *logos* does, I think, highlight the fact that the methodological continuity between the work on *epistemes* and the final two published volumes on sexuality is profound, the suggestion that a philosophical Rubicon divides them, aberrant. Further, it underscores a conviction that constitutionalist thinking is accompanied at every step by those things – order, law, nature, science – it might believe to have left behind. I submit that only by rethinking such things, without thinking them non-constitutionally, does one hold out the possibility of understanding powers plural – powers earthly, powers bodily, powers constitutional. And it would not be overstating the case to claim that there is perhaps no greater principle animating Foucault's every ruse of reason than the principle, the ethos, of rethinking.

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