Difference, Discourse, Genealogy:

Critiques of the 'limit' in the writings of Michel Foucault

John Franklin Meredith
B.A., University of Victoria, 1983

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

Political Science

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

[redacted]
R.B.J. Walker, PhD.

[redacted]
Warren Magnusson, PhD.

[redacted]
John M. Michelsen, PhD.

[redacted]
Evelyn M. Cobley, PhD.

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

1987

Supervisor: Professor R.B.J. Walker

ABSTRACT

Since the late nineteen-seventies, Michel Foucault has become an increasingly fashionable figure in Anglo-American social theory, though one whose significance and coherence remain contested. It is argued here that the apparent inconsistency of Foucault's work is attributable to the real consistency of its challenge to the basic intent of conventional social theory.

Following the chronological development of his original work, an interpretation is offered which traces the aims of the early, 'aesthetic' writings through the later and better-known archeological and genealogical periods. The connecting thread is shown to be a mode of enquiry dedicated to probing the limit, rather than establishing the foundations, of social knowledge and practice. In the three central chapters, Foucault's pursuit of this critical project is examined with reference to the methodological concepts of transgression, archeology, and genealogy, respectively, and in each case my interpretation is juxtaposed to various exemplary or well-known positions from the critical literature. The historical reconstruction reveals both the integrity of Foucault's work as a whole and its progressive applicability to practical social criticism. Diverging from many of Foucault's critics, however, I attribute the superior political value of the later work, not to Foucault's development of a theory of power, but rather to the various methodological refinements of the original project of probing our cultural limits.

Examiners: [redacted]

R.B.J. Walker, PhD.

[redacted]

Warren Magnusson, PhD.

[redacted]

John M. Michelsen, PhD.

[redacted]

Evelyn M. Cobley, PhD.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Since 1965, when his work first began to appear in English, Michel Foucault has represented both an enigma and a challenge to Anglo-American social theory. Reasonably enough, the early response to his work was cautious and sectoral. Madness and Civilization, which appeared in 1965, attracted the attention primarily of psychoanalysts and psychologists, while The Order of Things (1970) appealed mainly to historians. To the extent that The Archeology of Knowledge (1972) received serious attention at all in the early years, it seems to have come chiefly from philosophers. The manner in which Foucault's work was introduced probably also helped to confine the commentary upon it within established disciplinary boundaries. The ordinary problems of transplanting a body of work from one historical and intellectual environment to another (particularly environments as mutually disdainful as French and English social theory) were exacerbated by the fact that Foucault's works were not published in the same order in English as they had originally appeared in French.

It is not surprising, then, that when, in the mid-1970s, commentary on Foucault began to flourish in England and North America, it lacked any consensus on his significance or his 'message'. Throughout the late seventies, interest in Foucault grew exponentially, but it is arguable that the enthusiasm was to a considerable extent a spillover from France, where Foucault's popularity was then at its

height. In the early eighties, the first monographs written in English on Foucault emerged, appearing finally to offer English-speaking readers some insight into the background and the importance of this phenomenon. It became possible to appreciate some of Foucault's European intellectual roots, and to measure his potential contribution to issues current in English social theory. His work was explored for influences of Heidegger, Husserl[1], Lacan[2], and many others, and Foucault's success in advancing or modifying the projects of such figures was evaluated. His significance for current debates within Marxism was studied, and questions were raised about his possible relationship with Frankfurt critical theory[3].

Anglo-American interest in Foucault shows no signs of waning. The critical literature has continued to mushroom over the last few years, and in many respects has become increasingly sophisticated (or at least more relevant to Foucault) as more elements of the French intellectual landscape have taken root here[4]. In particular, Foucault's treatment of the relationship of knowledge and power, which became an explicit theme in his later writings, has proved an extremely fertile field of exploration, and numerous positions have been staked out around it, generally in the interest of showing how Foucault exemplifies one side or other of some of the more enduring debates in social theory. Thus, Foucault's works are analysed, at a fairly high level of abstraction, for his 'theories' of knowledge and power, while numerous sub-debates assay the implications of his

---

1 See Dreyfus and Rabinow.

2 See Racevskis.

3 See Smart, 1983; Poster.

4 The primary advance, I believe, has been the encroachment of 'deconstructive' sensibilities into the discourse of social theory. See, e.g., Norris, 1982, esp. Ch. 5; Rajchman; Ryan; and chapter 5 below.

position for the questions of power and subjectivity, revolution and reform, "modernism" and nihilism, the place for Marxist analysis, and so on.

That Foucault has been inducted so noisily into this discourse is in many ways encouraging. The critique of 'disciplinary' apparatuses and the discussion of the 'micro-physics' of power have been especially effective in suggesting new avenues of social criticism, and have served as valuable irritants to certain comfortable theories of social organization and administration[5]. The fervent tones which are so characteristic of the Foucault debate indicate the significance which detractors and enthusiasts alike attach to Foucault's challenge. If Foucault's precise significance remains contested, his work has at least provided the occasion, and perhaps the vocabulary, whereby questions of "modernity" and "post-modernity" can be articulated afresh within Anglo-American social theory.

To appreciate Foucault's specific contributions in this regard, however, requires an interpretive strategy that is both attentive and cautious. Much of the available commentary gives the impression that Foucault's work is essentially disjointed, both historically and thematically. This sense is generated in part by efforts to contextualize Foucault's work within a particular reading of the intellectual tradition, and with reference to particular "influences". While such projects often provide valuable insights, they tend to be inherently reductive. The intellectual context tends to be regarded as a relatively stable backdrop against which anomalies or contradictions can be illuminated. On the basis of a few initial presumptions as to what constitutes the context and what the anomalies, the prospect of interpreting a particular work or an entire opus can be reduced to the

---

5 Discipline and Punish, for example, has had a considerable impact on the analysis and administration of prisons, both in France and in North America (see Gandal).

mechanical search for contradictions.

Historical circumstance has probably also contributed to the impression of Foucault's inconsistency. The growth of an English readership did not simply parallel, after a time lag for translation and familiarization, the original course of Foucault's notoriety in France. The great proliferation of English commentary in the late seventies and early eighties coincided with the release of Discipline and Punish, The History of Sexuality, and the essays collected in Power/Knowledge, all of which were reasonably accessible to a public largely unfamiliar with either the context of modern French philosophy or the previous development of Foucault's career. This sense of immediate relevance opened the way, on the one hand, to some stimulating and worthwhile explorations, but on the other, allowed certain initial biases to be built fairly durably into the critical literature. With few exceptions, English-speaking critics have embraced (or repulsed) Foucault as the theorist of power-knowledge. Even among the fuller treatments of his biography and influences, it is widely held that Foucault is at his best in his later, "genealogical" writings[6]. This supposition then licenses an artificially isolated analysis of the virtues and problems inherent in the theory of power/knowledge, whereby the earlier work is either ignored altogether or discussed primarily in the interest of plotting Foucault's serpentine journey away from its arcaneness and contradictions and toward the work of the genealogical period.

I wish to argue here that, on the contrary, it is precisely the theoretical orientation of the earlier work, and the real continuity of the later work with it, that constitutes Foucault's most useful innovation, and his most significant challenge, to mainstream Anglo-American social theory.

---

6 See, e.g., Lemert and Gillan, Dreyfus and Rabinow, and Chapter Three below.

In his writings of the early sixties, Foucault explicitly addressed a theme which operates at least implicitly throughout the rest of his work. "The Father's 'No'", on Holderlin and the articulation of the experience of madness, and "A Preface to Transgression", which deals with Georges Bataille's conception of the dynamics of erotic literature, both reflect the intellectual fashion of literary formalism or structuralism which prevailed in Paris when they were written. However, as the editor of the two essays notes, the notion of 'structuralism' at issue here was the product of a movement so immediately self-critical that it had hardly emerged before it was transformed by its own immanent critique[7]. The 'structuralist' flavour of these texts is generated by metaphors of space, vision, and relative position. Comprehensible language is likened to light: it illuminates the familiar space of consciousness and clearly articulates or defines the relations among its objects. Beyond the space of articulate meaning, on the 'exterior' of consciousness -- whether it be in the direction of an ineffably mysterious sexuality or an obstinate and unrepresentable madness -- lies darkness. Thus, the structural imagery permits one to specify relations among objects or meanings within the illuminated space, and also to define the space as a whole in relation to the void that bounds it. One cannot, however, on the view of structure which Foucault invokes in dealing with Holderlin and Bataille, appeal to any principle which would fix the contours of the space of meaning. All philosophical efforts to justify or 'ground' the present structure of mutual articulations and exclusions are ruled out. There is only the critical task of probing the limit of that space, either, as Holderlin did, through a poetic expression directed "towards this absence" which lies

---

[7] See LCP, p.16. On the theme of the self-deconstruction of structuralism, see Norris, 1982, Ch.I.

beyond meaning (LCP, p.86), or through a form of language which rejects the prevailing conventions of acceptable meaning and thereby "transgresses" the limit of the familiar. As Foucault had phrased the problem two years earlier, "what is in question is the limits, rather than the identity, of a culture" (MC, p.xi).

The following thesis aims to establish three points in this context. First, it seeks to demonstrate that the critical project of interrogating particular cultural 'limits' is a central and consistent theme of Foucault's work, albeit a theme that develops over the course of time. It is argued, secondly, that this interrogation is, in each of the forms in which Foucault presents it, explicitly critical of certain theoretical and/or practical means we have of reflecting upon or justifying the contours of our social boundaries, and that therefore Foucault's critiques are consistently relevant to social theory. I claim, finally, that many of the more familiar critiques of Foucault within the social theory literature are predicated on precisely the sort of limit-fixing or reductionist impulse which Foucault calls into doubt. As a consequence, while they provide useful counterpoints which help to illuminate Foucault's position, such critiques remain constitutionally deaf to the challenge which Foucault's work represents.

These three points are pursued simultaneously through the three main chapters of the thesis, though not necessarily with equal or consistent emphasis throughout. The order of the chapters reflects both a chronological and a thematic development. Each deals with a different and later body of Foucault's writings, a different formulation of the problem of interrogating the 'limit', and a different group of criticisms, interpretations, or appropriations of the work in question.

---

[8] (this introduction being Chapter One)

The primary sources for the second[8] chapter are The Order of Things, Madness and Civilization, and the two essays mentioned above, all of which were originally published from 1961 to 1966. The chapter opens with a general discussion of the metaphors of identity, difference, and limit, and raises the problems of how structural arrangements can be justified without appeal to extra-structural principles. While Foucault acknowledges that cognitive, linguistic (and presumably also social) order would be impossible without some reasonably consistent patterns of discrimination, his strategy is to raise the question of whether particular discriminatory habits may not be historically contingent. Drawing on The Order of Things, I outline Foucault's account of the geometry of theoretical vision during three postulated historical 'epistemes'. The purpose here is to provide some contrast for Foucault's examination of our own, 'modern' episteme, particularly in relation to the aims and assumptions of the post-nineteenth-century "human sciences". The link between "modernist" aesthetics and Foucault's early historical studies is explored, and it is suggested that Foucault entertains the idea of a "transgressive" form of social criticism which would challenge certain historical configurations of visibility and exclusion, identity and difference. Descending to a more practical level of discussion, the epistemic orders postulated in The Order of Things are related to parallel institutional orders discussed in Madness and Civilization, and it is seen that in the historical partition of reason and madness the ideas of identity, difference, and transgression take on some very real social significance. The chapter ends with a response to various critics who regard Foucault's apparent endorsement of transgression either as a self-defeating, irrationalist argument, or as an "aesthetic" appeal to principles illegitimately insulated from rational criticism.

Chapter Three turns to an exploration of some of the problems involved in applying the metaphors of identity, difference, and limit to the critique of social practice. The central text is The Archeology of Knowledge, while Dreyfus and Rabinow's Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics is employed as a counterpoint. Foucault's efforts to link transgressive literature or art to the critique of specific social institutions seems to require the assumption that the regularity with which social instances of identity and difference are constituted and maintained actually reflects some form of prescriptive authority which could be transgressed. On this assumption, the point of a historical critique would be to expose, beneath the regularity of the practice, the source of this prescription. Foucault responds, first, by rejecting the implicit dualism in this conception of history. It is typical of the historiographic methods of the 'modern' episteme, he claims, to attribute the regularity of empirical events to principles of historical order which, though superficially referring to the empirical, cannot be experienced directly. Suspending all historiographic categories which refer the empirical regularity to some deeper principle — the identity of the author, the progress of scientific reason, and so on — Foucault undertakes his own historical analysis in the spirit of scepticism or, as he has wryly referred to it, "positivism". Suspending the hierarchic dualities of theory and practice, historical forces versus historical contents, Foucault takes 'discourse' or discursive practice as both the object and the explanatory principle of historical analysis. The "archeological" method regards the regular deposition of discursive artefacts or "monuments" not as the sign of underlying historical forces, but simply as the remnants of regular discursive practices. The limits of our social practice, and the exclusions and differen-

tiations constituted within it, are not explained in terms of rational necessity or historical teleology, but in terms of the regularity of specific, empirically discoverable practices.

Questions remain, however, as to what accounts for specific regularities or disruptions during particular historical periods, and also what the aims of the critique of socially constituted limits ought to be. In Chapter Four, Foucault's writings of the 1970s are examined in this context. These popular, "genealogical" writings are frequently taken to represent Foucault's abandonment of the earlier, archeological concerns in preference for a more pointedly political form of analysis. It is widely agreed that the aim of the genealogical writings is to establish a connection between various historical regularities -- particularly the production of certain forms of knowledge -- and power. This perception engenders two kinds of response. One view embraces the power/knowledge or power/discourse nexus quite warmly, seeing in it not only an explanation for certain historical regularities, but also a ready precept for correct political action: resist power. A second view regards the juxtaposition of power and knowledge as primitively reductive, and both morally and epistemologically repugnant. Both interpretations, I claim, are based on mistaken impressions of Foucault's conception of power, his view of historical analysis, and his reading of Nietzsche's genealogical method.

I argue, on the contrary, that the genealogical work continues, with some methodological sophistication, Foucault's 'positivist' examination of specific ways in which identity and difference are practically instantiated in our society. Foucault's introduction of the genealogical method does not signal a significant shift in his intentions or general interests, nor does it represent an inversion of conven-

tional social theory whereby "power" is substituted for reason, truth, authenticity, and so on, as the primary principle of social explanation. Instead, I wish to claim that Foucault's significance for social theory lies in the suspension, not of particular explanatory devices, but of the very intentions of our conventional modes of social enquiry.

The thesis concludes, after a brief restatement of the argument, with some thoughts on Foucault's relationship with the (perhaps misleadingly labelled) question of 'post-modernity'.

Chapter 2

VISIBILITY, LIMIT, TRANSGRESSION.

2.1 Spheres of visibility.

Throughout Foucault's work there is a unifying concern with the idea that the same organizing principles that give systems of thought and social administration their coherence also serve inevitably to exclude or repress particular types of expression and behaviour. At a very general level, and in very non-Foucaultian terms, this idea recalls the 'bootstrap' problem. It has long been recognized that no formal system is capable of internally justifying its own first axiom, just as you cannot lift yourself off the ground by your own bootstraps. Every formal system either justifies its internal organization by explicit appeal to an external principle or meta-system, or pretends fraudulently to be self-sustaining.

If the formal system is conceived spatially, so that its syntax governs the distribution of visible elements in a structure rather than, say, the production of grammatical statements or the logical derivation of conclusions, one gets a more immediate sense of the dynamism of formal systems. The 'syntax' of a circle dictates that for every point on its circumference there will be a fixed relationship -- and for every point within it, a limited range of possible relationships -- with the centre. In other words, the visibility of a circle depends on the relations that its governing syntax establishes between a fixed reference point, points visibly arranged in relation to that point, and an environment which, while not located

within the visible field, is nevertheless structured to the extent of being excluded from it. Whether structure is conceived as a form imposed on an existing but indeterminate mass, or as a constitutive act which, in ordering the elements, creates a place for them to exist, every structure functions by establishing exclusive relationships of ordered and unordered, fixity and 'play', visibility and invisibility, identity and difference.

From this point of view, the bootstrap problem will dictate that the order of inclusion and exclusion, visibility and invisibility, will be unjustifiable by any representation within its own structure. That the syntax of the circle has been correctly followed, that its contents are well-ordered with respect to the centre, is visible at a glance, but the reason for locating the centre there, for including and excluding exactly those elements, cannot be displayed anywhere within it.

As this illustrates, the ability to operate within the circle requires at least a provisional belief in the fixity of the centre, while to recognize the bootstrap problem involves a degree of reflection beyond the level of mere competence. Reflection has certain drawbacks, however. First, by doubting the validity of the principle of order, one risks undermining the competence that was built on accepting it. Secondly, as long as reflection aims at discovering a firm external justification for the internal order, the process will be potentially endless; because the structuring principle cannot be justified from within the structure, the passage from system to meta-system and meta-meta-system quickly takes on the character of a religious pilgrimage which can only end either in blind faith or shattered faith.

Traditionally, Western philosophy (or at least the received "tradition" of Western philosophy) has been concerned with justifying or criticizing the basic principles by which our culture has ordered its experience of the world, and in the course of its history it has also furnished an august series of centres, and replacement centres when those wore out (Derrida 1978, p.279). Philosophy in our time, Foucault claims, and especially the philosophy of social relations, again faces the question of what justifies the prevailing order of exclusion, whether a better justified order might be found, or whether perhaps our historical need to conceive order in terms of structural identity and fixed centres might some day give way to a philosophy of difference and an ability to think in acentric or polycentric terms.

In his writings of the early nineteen-sixties, Foucault concentrated his historical analyses on the period from the late sixteenth century to the present in the belief that this is a period particularly anguished by the discovery of "the fact that order exists" (OT, p.xx). In particular, Foucault locates two, and possible three, disruptions of European society's general order of visibility and exclusion during this time: roughly the end of the sixteenth century marks the inauguration of the Classical period; the end of eighteenth marks the passage from the Classical to the modern, and there are signs, dating from the second half of the nineteenth century and persisting into the present, that a successor to the modern era, not yet clearly defined, may be on the horizon.

Leaving until later some of the historiographic questions involved in postulating these orders, the present chapter gives a skeletal account of the series of dominant epistemological 'centres' during these periods, and a glimpse of their institutional counterparts. I suggest that Foucault's interest in people's attempts

during these periods to articulate, reflect upon, justify, or transgress the 'order' of their own culture is just one encounter with a theme which will characterize his work until the end: the theme of the historical "limits" of human experience. The structure of this chapter is intended to illustrate the mutual dependency of Foucault's historical work, expecially in The Order of Things, and the theoretical issues raised in his earlier, relatively neglected, "aesthetic" writings.

2.2 From Classical to Modern Visibility

On Foucault's account, reflection during the sixteenth century is stabilized at the very surface of observable phenomena. A perfect correspondence between the order of language and the order of the world is guaranteed by their common origin in the word. Language and nature are of the same order: letters, syllables and words are combined according to their natural "virtues", and conversely, nature is a "book", inscribed throughout with signs of its Author's intentions. The natural world is arrayed in an infinite network of subtle similitudes so that, for instance, the visible resemblance of aconite seeds and the eye, or walnuts and the brain, are to be read as purposeful marks of their medicinal value (OT, p.27). Since Babel, the world has lost its immediate legibility, and an endless commentary has proliferated, but the divine arts of interpretation still hold the promise of reconciling the divergences in a final revelation of the "original Text" (OT, p.34-40).

Around the beginning of the seventeenth century a more rigorous reflection on the representation of the natural order begins to occur. The seamless ternary continuum of sign, signified, and unifying Text can no longer be sustained, and is superseded by a binary system not dependent on a divine medium of translation.

"The profound kinship of language with the world was thus dissolved" (OT, p.42-43). At this point, discourse on the natural order acquires a radically new character: since the correspondence of sign and referent is no longer 'underwritten' by a linguistically structured universe, philosophy can no longer be content to contribute to an endless interpretative commentary, but turns to a critique of the accuracy of designation. This shift, Foucault claims, marks the beginning of an "immense reorganisation of culture" whose effects continue to reverberate in our own experience of order (OT, p.43).

On the one hand, the severance of the orders of nature and language provided the Classical age the freedom to experiment with artificial, and perfectly self-consistent grammars. The sixteenth century's infinite mutual reflection of qualitative resemblances would ideally be replaced by a system which arranged objects according to their quantifiable differences in an open-ended mathematical continuum. In the natural sciences of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this took the form of the classificatory table in which the mutual relations of the elements of nature could be visibly displayed. Even where mathematical order was impossible, Classical philosophy from Hobbes to Destutt was tantalized by

> the great utopia of a perfectly transparent language in which things themselves could be named without any penumbra of confusion, either by a totally arbitrary but perfectly thought-out system (artifical language), or by a language so natural that it would translate thought like a face expressing a passion...(OT, p.117)

The cost of a purified grammar was exactly the question of how it was to be guaranteed 'natural'. The Classical theory of language provided part of the answer by confining reference to the sphere of representations. The predicative power of the verb "to be" -- the property of language that gave words the power to "leap

across the system of signs toward the being of that which is signified" -- derives from the fact that in predicating a property of something, even the property of existence, one does not refer to anything which is not itself a representation. The word does not leap as far as it appears:

> The only thing that the verb affirms is the coexistence of two representations: for example those of a tree and greenness, or of a man and existence or death.... Coexistence is not, in fact, an attribute of the thing itself; it is no more than a form of representation (OT, p.95).

Obviously, the tactic of reducing language to the representation of thought merely postpones the question of how a formal language can be guaranteed to designate the world. The project of 'natural history' in the Classical period was to construct a classificatory language that would be both grammatically well-formed and descriptively accurate -- simultaneously a taxonomy and a nomenclature (OT, ch.5). The theory of language had been able to preserve the purity of its grammar by confining reference within the system of signs. "For taxonomy to be possible, on the other hand, nature must be truly continuous, and in all its plenitude" (OT, p.159). In fact, the taxonomy of natural beings reveals that language had relied all along on the continuity of nature, since it is by traversing the great chain of minutely differing natural objects that the memory is able to pass from immediate sensation to the application of a common name (OT, p.159-160). In natural history the orders of nature and language are brought into as perfect an alignment as possible, but in the end the basis of their parallelism is secured by faith in the continuity of nature and the uniformity of human perception.

> The critical question did exist in the eighteenth century, but linked to a form of determinate knowledge. For this reason it could not acquire either autonomy or the value of radical questioning. (OT p.161)

The uniformity of nature and the validity of judgement formed an endless circuit of mutual support, but one which depended on never scrutinizing the foundations of both poles at once.

The representative system of Classical thought also implies a certain distribution of visibility and exclusion. Foucault refers to the general principles of conceptual order governing a specific field of knowledge at a given time as an "historical a priori".

> This a priori is what, in a given period, delimits in the totality of experience a field of knowledge, defines the mode of being of the objects that appear in that field, provides man's everyday perception with theoretical powers, and defines the conditions in which he can sustain a discourse about things that is recognized to be true. (OT, p.158, cf. also AK, p.127)

The historical a priori of empirical research in the Classical era was centred on the assumed continuity of nature, which accounted for the possibility of a continuous, mathematically ordered table of representations, and constituted "a whole domain of empiricity as at the same time describable and orderable (OT, p.158). The challenge of a thorough taxonomy was to represent the entire spectrum of natural objects in a minute progression according to the principle of least difference; adjacent objects would be all but identical, and yet by extending the chain of juxtapositions, the distant affinity of the most disparate objects would become visible. The implication was that nothing in the representable order of nature would be utterly foreign; but also the converse -- that the radically 'other' was unrepresentable in the table of being.

> The whole Classical system of order, the whole of that great taxinomia that makes it possible to know things by means of the system of their identities, is unfolded within the space that is opened up inside representation when representation represents itself, that area where being and the Same reside (OT, p.209).

In The Order of Things, Velazquez's painting, "Las Meninas", symbolizes the rupture, toward the end of the eighteenth century, of the Classical order based in representation, and the inauguration of the Modern era. According to Foucault, Velazquez captures the paradoxical sense of Classical representation by directing the dynamics of the painting to a point outside itself, occupied by both its subject -- the royal couple -- and the viewer. Analogously,

> In Classical thought, the personage for whom the representation exists, and who represents himself within it, recognizing himself therein as an image or reflection, he who ties together all the interlacing threads of the 'representation in the form of a picture or table' -- he is never to be found in that table himself (OT, p.308).

In its perpetual oscillation between the parallel orders of nature and human nature, Classical thought was unable to reflect on the being in which the two converged; it could not accommodate "the strange stature of a being whose nature... is to know nature and itself, in consequence, as a natural being" (OT, p.310).

> The essential consequence is that Classical language, as the common discourse of representation and things, as the place where nature and human nature intersect, absolutely excludes anything that could be called a 'science of man' (OT, p.311).

Put somewhat more provocatively, "Before the end of the eighteenth century, man did not exist" (OT, p.308). It is only with the eclipse of the Classical system that the focal point of the visible order comes to be sought in the direction where Velazquez had pointed -- on the exterior of that order itself -- and "man appears in his ambiguous position as an object of knowledge and as a subject that knows... enslaved sovereign, observed spectator" (OT, p.312).

This eclipse develops on several lines. In the philosophical pantheon, Kant is regarded as the father of the modern system which locates the origin of our conceptual order in unconscious principles innate to the human mind. Hume's purifi-

cation of the philosophy of representation had amounted to its reductio ad absurdem. A response to scepticism was now required, but one which would not be a reversion to pre-Classical transcendentalism. Kant responded by seeking, within the finite realm, the invisible mechanism that must be responsible for the coherence of thought. On Foucault's reading, Kant opened the way — albeit very briefly — for a radical reorientation of philosophy by directing the critical question for the first time towards the limits of reason, and to a measure of the sphere of human finitude (LCP, p.38). In grounding the order and limits of thought in the operation of unconscious categories, Kant raises the unsettling possibility that reason is at once determined and confined by principles that it is beyond its power to represent.

A similar confrontation with the foreign begins to occur about the same time in the empirical sciences. In the post-Classical empirical sciences, observation is reoriented in a way that no longer regards the individual case as a somewhat imperfect manifestation of the prior, abstract order of the classificatory table. The sciences of living things, wealth, and language are reorganized around objects whose independent vitality now seems to overflow the confines of the formal system of order:

> The obscure but stubborn spirit of a people who talk, the violence and the endless effort of life, the hidden energy of needs, were all to escape the mode of being of representation (OT, p.209).

The order of one's representation of things is no longer attributed to the familiar rationality of the table, but seems to originate in a foreign dynamism inherent in the empirical objects themselves. And yet, the contents of experience can arise only to the extent that they correspond to a determinate set of uniquely human

characteristics: the new sciences of biology, political economy, and philology constitute their objects in relation to the human being, since man is the being around whom the natural species are ordered, and the creature who works and exchanges, and who speaks (OT, p.313). But while the new "positivities" point to man as their foundation,

> this imperious designation is ambiguous. In one sense, man is governed by labour, life, and language: his concrete existence finds its determinations in them; it is possible to have access to him only through his words, his organism, the objects he makes -- as though it is they who possess the truth in the first place (OT, p.313).

Man is simultaneously grounded and alienated by the apparent solidity and timelessness of these objects; and against them the limits to his life, development, and sphere of expression are suddenly outlined. "Man's finitude is heralded -- and imperiously so -- in the positivity of knowledge (OT, p.313).

It is this tense and ambiguous relationship between the contents of experience and the grounds of that same experience, Foucault says, which characterize the modern era, the "age of man". Since the beginning of the nineteenth century all learned reflection on the nature of our existence -- whether undertaken by the positivistic human sciences or by philosophy -- has occurred within the intellectual horizons of the "anthropological quadrangle". It is also Foucault's contention, and perhaps even his hope, that the anthropological episteme is on the verge of obsolescence. The infamous theme of the "end of man" therefore deserves some attention at this point.

As Foucault constructs it, the first dimension of the intellectual quadrangle which bounds modern reflection, and perhaps the most general, is the "analytic of finitude" (OT, p.312-18). In both name and in philosophical intent, the parallel

with Kant's Transcendental Analytic is meant to be obvious. At the same time, it is essential to recognize that Foucault's objections to the two 'analytics' are not identical, and furthermore that his critique of Kant goes beyond the commonplace charge that the Kantian anthropology remained flawed by metaphysics.

Kant's aim in the Critique of Pure Reason was to account for the veracity and the regularity of empirical knowledge by demonstrating that the essential forms of human judgement arose through the operation of mental faculties whose operation could be deduced a priori to be rationally necessary. One can regard Kant as, in a sense, standing astride Foucault's division between the Classical and the Modern epistemes. By virtue of its "anthropological" orientation, Kant's attempt to deduce those principles which form and constrain empirical knowledge from within the realm of experience itself was indeed modern in Foucault's sense of the word. However, by clinging to the notion of the noumena, Kant retains the essence of the classical bifurcation between an infinite "nature" and a finite "human nature" (OT, p.310), and hence the "critical" task becomes implicitly the project of reconnecting two incommensurable dimensions of reality. To many modern critics Kant appears to bring the transcendental dimension back in 'through the back door' as a means of underwriting the validity of experience, and thus argues in a circle[9]. Alternatively, he can be seen to break out of this circularity where, for instance in the Critique of Practical Reason it is not through transcendental deduction, but rather by means of an act of self-willing, that the moral agent comes to be aligned with the dictates of pure practical reason[10]. But this tack seems to col-

---

9 See, e.g., Korner, p.91-96.

10 See Korner, p.149; Paton. For an account of Foucault in this context, see Watson, p.81-85.

lapse the bifurcation once more in the direction of idealism, and again leaves us short of an empirically derived set of principles which will account for the 'truth' of our experiences (or, in the latter case, for the morality of our conduct).

The social sciences of the modern period, whose unifying philosophical aim, Foucault says, is an analytic of finitude, are scrupulous in avoiding the taint of metaphysical thought:

> the philosophy of life denounces metaphysics as a veil of illusion, that of labour denounces it as an alienated form of thought and an ideology, that of language as a cultural episode (OT, p.317).

The most abstract theoretical objects to which these disciplines will allow themselves to appeal are the very empirical objects which they study. In Cuvier's biology, explanation will be framed in terms of the functional necessities of the organism itself; Ricardian economics will find its basis in human needs and desires, and the equivalencies acquired for exchange will be referred to these; Bopp's linguistics will seek no transcendental reference to underwrite the accuracy of language, but will attribute the regularity of its findings to a structural principle which is inseparable from the articulation of human thought itself. The very mark of modern thought, Foucault says, is this anti-metaphysical impulse whereby the primal nature of the finite, empirical realm would be perfectly accounted for from within the finite itself:

> our culture crossed the threshold beyond which we recognize our modernity when finitude was conceived in an interminable cross-reference with itself (OT, p.318).

Further, the modern and the anthropological are coeval since the confines of our finitude are not the negative and innumerable shortcomings which limited the Classical view of the infinite, but are in fact the very positivities -- the body,

mind and speech -- which are the objects of the modern human sciences. "Modern culture can conceive of man because it conceives of the finite on the basis of itself (OT, p.318).

The anthropological mode of reflection is not peculiar to the human sciences, but characterizes modern philosophy in general. Confined by its anti-metaphysical scrupulousness to the realm of human finitude, modern thought faces the problem of its own justification, or "grounding". In his account of three remaining dimensions of the "anthropological quadrangle", Foucault portrays modern philosophy as a whole as an endeavour to discover, within different dimensions of our finite existence, the foundations for that existence itself.

The question of the status of "truth" engenders a perpetual oscillation between the orders of the empirical and the transcendental, or "the positive and the fundamental", which are uneasily juxtaposed in the idea of a self-constituted, finite knowledge or existence. In fact, the modern debates over the nature and the basis of truth simply play out the contradiction inherent in the idea of "man". The truth-standard of positivism -- the appeal to empirical contents -- and that of eschatology -- the unfolding of a prophesied intention -- are not mutually exclusive, but in fact are able to come together in the methods of, for example, Comte and Marx, precisely because they address the unity of a being whose empirical world and history are "always-already" conditioned by the processes of its own life (OT, p.320-21). Nor does phenomenology offer a radically alternative standard, for while its conception of what constitutes the positive and the fundamental differs from that of positivism, its own account of the embodied subject is entirely bound up with the problem of their relationship.

As for truth, so too for the problems of identity and history. The final two dimensions of the quadrangle of modern thought arise from two further centres of tension and oscillation inherent in the conception of "man". The confrontation of "the cogito and the unthought" represents the relationship constituted in the modern era between self-conscious identity and its negation. Modern thought, Foucault claims, has a peculiar manner of enquiring into what lies beyond the bounds of its own vision. The pursuit of self-understanding requires, on the one hand, an excavation of those unknown forces (such as the structure of language) by which it is conditioned, but also an encounter, to the extent that this is possible, with the foreign, the "un-thought", the not-known (OT, p.322-8). Like the "positive" and the "fundamental", identity and difference are seen to support and to require one another, to be, in a sense, each other's partner. Reflection on the nature of consciousness will require that it approach the unconsciousness that borders it, but without ever coming so close that it jeopardizes its identity.

> For though this double may be close, it is alien, and the role, the true undertaking, of thought will be to bring it as close to itself as possible; the whole of modern thought is imbued with thinking the unthought" (OT, p.327).

Similarly, the idea of history and origin would appear to offer a means of 'grounding' human existence, were it not that in modern thought conceptions of the origin perpetually oscillate between one that gives priority to those ancient developments of language and production through which our present being has been conditioned, and one which focuses on the present activity of that being which, denied access to a thinkable temporal "origin", creates its own origin and its experience of time in the rhythm of its own speech and work (OT, p.332). The pursuit of origins in the modern period cannot come to rest, as it might have in

the sixteenth century, in the certainty of an act of Creation and a universal time that would connect us with it.

Clearly, Foucault is critical of what he identifies as the anthropological fashion of thought. Some of the reasons are readily apparent. First of all, his account indicates that the search for the fundamental from within the positive is not only endlessly and agonizingly circular -- it is absurd. The philosophical adventures of the 'modern' era are only possible because anthropological thought has not jettisoned the metaphysical dualism of the classical period but has simply conflated its two poles in the figure of "man". As a consequence, and despite its best intentions, modern thought in all of its forms is ultimately driven to metaphysics. Whether one looks to the phenomenological subject, to the "objective historical class", or to the causal structures of positivistic social sciences, the experiences of the realm of human finitude are never, in the end, fully and plainly accounted for from within that realm. The positivities towards which the central human sciences were addressed are thus transformed into the "quasi-transcendentals" of Life, Labour, and Language (OT, p.250). Here, where they stand as deceptively solid emblems of the "fundamental" which had earlier been sought by their means, they also seem to promise that the philosophical problems of "grounding" (in truth, in identity, in history) which are so inseparable from modernism might some day be permanently solved.

Foucault's deeper objection to anthropologism, however, is not that it is inconsistent or covertly metaphysical. The problem does not concern the success or failure of modern thought, but its intent. Regardless of whether one accepts that the "positive" and the "fundamental" are separated by an ontological differ-

ence, it is assumed within modern thought that they are divided by a gap of knowledge or experience; at each turn of the analytic of finitude, the fundamental remains, by hypothesis, that which has yet to be known. Therefore, while the fundamental is always regarded as that which lies beyond the horizons of the positive, and forms its limits, nevertheless, the aim of modern thought is to display the fundamental in all its complexity within the bounds of an already constituted knowledge. In each dimension of the modern "quadrangle", the reflection which sets out to refer our experience to its unrepresentable basis or boundary seems incapable of addressing that boundary except by seeking to draw the foreign into the light of a circumscribed body of discourse or sphere of visibility. The "analytic of finitude" carried out by the human sciences seeks to draw those forces of life, desire, and language, whose inception had at first suggested a radical alterity at the heart of human existence, fully onto the ground of the familiar. The modern reflection on identity does not merely acknowledge the unthought as an inevitable and irreducible counterpart of the cogito; it sets out to "think the unthought" in the familiar space of the identical. In reflection on the "origin", it is ultimately "man's time... which... [makes] manifest...the time of things" (OT, p.333). A non-anthropological objection to the "quasi-transcendentals" would reveal not simply that they are illegitimately metaphysical, but that they reify our derived conception of the "fundamental" and leave the impression that the "vast but narrow space" of our finitude is the only possible configuration of experience (OT, p.315).

In the Classical order, the table of resemblances had spanned the spectrum of the representable, relegating the most disparate objects to its extremities, and

simply denying the existence of what lay beyond them: "It was a matter of a genesis of Difference starting from the secretly varied monotony of the Like" (OT, p.339). In the nineteenth century, the role of the analytic of finitude is to draw into the light those unrepresented conditions that make all representation possible:

> in short, it is always concerned with showing how the Other, the Distant, is also the Near and the Same. Thus we have moved from a reflection upon the order of Differences... to a thought of the Same, still to be conquered in its contradiction (OT, p.339).

The awakening of the Modern era, which had begun in the recognition of the limits of rationality and a glimpse of the otherness which lay beyond them, quickly re-establishes an order of visibility and exclusion oriented towards a fixed, familiar, and metaphysically justified centre.

> And so we find philosophy falling asleep once more...; this time not the sleep of Dogmatism, but that of Anthropology (OT, p.341).

2.3 The Human Sciences and the limits of visibility.

According to Foucault, it is on the basis of the historical a priori centred on man that the modern 'human sciences' arise. All of the human sciences, as specific investigations within the analytic of finitude, address themselves to the hidden forces that determine man's existence and self-understanding. However, the character of the investigation differs depending on which guiding concepts predominate. The positive human sciences derive their theoretical objects from the new 'quasi-transcendentals', but in a way that orients them toward empirical observation. Positive sociology, economics, and linguistics, for instance, theorize the order in their fields on the basis of supposedly observable (or at least empirically

derivable) "functions", "conflicts", and "signs" which are the basis of economic need, social action, and communication (OT, p.355-64). Thus armed, they proceed to recapture those unconscious processes that had been invisible to Classical representation, and, without submitting them to the abstract rationality of the table, to bring them fully to the light of conscious experience.

> We shall say, therefore, that a 'human science' exists, not wherever man is in question, but wherever there is analysis... of norms, rules, and signifying totalities which unveil to consciousness the conditions of its forms and contents (OT, p.364).

Alongside the positive human sciences, and arising on the basis of the same historical a priori, are the 'counter sciences'. These, rather than seeking to summon the unconscious into the sphere of the visible, direct themselves toward 'otherness' in order to gauge the volume of that sphere itself. Unlike the positive human sciences such as sociology or economics, which always refer to the observable, counter sciences, like psychoanalysis and ethnology, construct their explanations in terms of hidden structures and seek to demonstrate how the empirical phenomena themselves are constituted by an essential, unconsciously productive limit or constraint. The positive human sciences move toward the unconscious but, as it were, with their back toward it and their gaze always fixed on the visible;

> following the same path... but with its gaze turned the other way, psychoanalysis moves towards the moment... at which the contents of consciousness articulate themselves, or rather stand gaping, upon man's finitude (OT, p.374).

The psychoanalytic dialogue is indeed addressed to the unconscious or "unthought", but not in a way that would colonize it. The aim of the encounter is not to render the "closed text" of the pathology plainly intelligible; rather, in the counter-scientific confrontation with madness,

> the finitude upon the basis of which we are, and think, and know, is suddenly there before us: an existence at once real and impossible, thought we cannot think, an object for our knowledge that always eludes it (OT, p.375).

Still the counter sciences bear an ambiguous relation to the modern episteme and its anthropological metaphysics. On the one hand, by directing themselves toward the constraining structures of thought and cultural expression, they make it possible once again to reflect on our experience of order in terms of the limit and to resist the geocentric impulse that would arrange the entire universe with respect to a single, parochial conceptual structure. In fact, the possibility of purified structuralist versions of psychoanalysis and ethnology would even seem to undermine the anthropological metaphysics of the modern era by rendering its central concept superfluous[11]. Foucault's apocalyptic-sounding and much misunderstood speculations on the imminent "end of Man" refer simply to the prospect that the modern reflection on order may, like its predecessor, self-destruct by disallowing itself the comfort of a mythical ground of reference (or at least the comfort of a present one). In their perpetual excavation of structures which underlie the empirical objects of the positive human sciences, the counter sciences threaten to unearth a basis of our experience which simply makes no reference to the modern anthropological icons of Labour, Life, and Language. More profoundly, they might undermine the self-sufficient sphere of anthropological thought by relating the emergence and function of its own central concepts to determining forces which are simply unrepresentable within it (OT, p.373-5). In this sense, "one may say of both [counter sciences] what Levi-Strauss said of ethnology: that they dissolve man" (OT, p.379).

---

11 See Watson, p.84-96.

On the other hand, it would be hasty to see in these two counter sciences the vanguard of an impending philosophical revolution. As they are constituted at present, at any rate, psychoanalysis and ethnology remain species of the human sciences in general; while they are perpetually critical of the concept of man, they are also permanently "unable to pass through it, for they always address themselves to that which constitutes his outer limits" (OT, p.379). And supposing a pure structuralism did manage to rid itself of the humanist metaphysics of the nineteenth century, would this mark a radical change in the intent of philosophy, or simply one more round in the ancient search for solid ground under the flux?

At the end of The Order of Things, the answer to this remains unclear, although Foucault does hint broadly in the direction where radical change is most likely to originate. Of the counter sciences, it is a third -- structural linguistics -- that poses the greatest threat to the humanist metaphysics, and its development will be a pre-condition for the radicalization of psychoanalysis and ethnology. The reason is that, unlike the other human sciences which interpret their observations through concepts borrowed from fields that are themselves constituted within the "anthropological" sphere of visibility (e.g., "function" and "norm" from biology, etc.), linguistic structure is "the principle of a primary decipherment":

> to a gaze forearmed by linguistics, things attain to existence only in so far as they are able to form elements of a signifying system. Linguistic analysis is more a perception than an explanation: that is, it is constitutive of its very object (OT, p.381-2).

In other words, structural linguistics addresses itself to a level of determination which, because it structures the very contents of consciousness, is unfathomable by the concepts of the sciences of man[12].

---

12 Foucault's discussion of the "end of man" and of the role to be played in it by psychoanalysis, ethnology, and structural linguistics is exceptionally dense,

2.4 Transgression.

A preoccupation with the 'being of language' gives the arch-formalism of structural linguistics an unlikely affinity with what is, philosophically, a more profound development "at the other extremity of our culture" (OT, p.383). Incongruously it seems, this 'extremity' repeatedly finds its way into what should be the most crucial points of Foucault's work during this period. In the last few pages of The Order of Things[13], as in the final pages of Foucault's work on madness and medical practice, the exposition shifts unexpectedly from a detailed historical narrative to a discussion of such figures of "modernist" aesthetics as Raymond Roussel and Antonin Artaud[14]. Given that such names tend to crop up at what one would expect to be the most crucial points of these arguments, and also that

---

even by Foucaultian standards, and is fraught with implicit references to the philosophical tradition and context. I make no pretense to any definitive exegesis of it, although I think one point has to be accepted: to the extent that Foucault is optimistic about the radical potential of these discourses (and it is not clear that he is very optimistic at all), it cannot be because they promise the ultimate and yet knowable ground of experience which is so typically the aim of "modern" thought as he defines it. It is hard to believe that after making such an effort to characterize modern thought in terms of the "analytic of finitude" Foucault would himself consider a super-positivism to be any sort of innovation. This point will be discussed later in the context of critics who judge both the aim and the success of Foucault's work by the standards of anthropological thought.

One of the few critics not to regard Foucault's comments on psychoanalysis as evidence of ulterior, positivistic motives is John Rajchman, who claims that Foucault's reading of Freud is to be understood in the context of Lacan, and therefore of nineteenth-century literature rather than biology. Thus the "counter-scientific" appeal of psychoanalysis would lie not in its similarity with structuralism, but rather with transgressive literature. It is the "theory of the modernist sublime", the "language without discourse", which Foucault considers central to modernist writing (Rajchman, p.20).

13 See p. 382 ff.

14 OT, p.382 ff; MC, p.xi-xii, 279-89; BC, p.195, 197-8.

they occupy Foucault exclusively throughout several other essays of this period [15], it would be unreasonable to write them off as gratuitous asides. If on the other hand Foucault is advancing some form of evasive "aesthetic" argument[16], it is necessary to specify what that involves. I shall argue that Foucault's employment of these figures represents a critical strategy which is not only pertinent to the arguments of the period in which they appear, but which informs much of his later writing as well.

According to Foucault, the current fascination with linguistics indicates that academic philosophy has come, belatedly and by a different route, to much the same point where "Nietzsche the philologist" was when he became "the first to connect the philosophical task with a radical reflection on language" (OT, p.305).

This comment points to two intertwined features of modernist thought: the transference of the question of <u>being</u> to the sphere of language (the interrogation of what can <u>be</u> through the interrogation of what can be meant), and the radical autonomy of language in the absence of a transcendental basis for reference. In modern literature, the critique of transcendentalism and the reorientation of ontology toward language are combined in a way that precludes the sort of backsliding to which, for instance, Kant and the human sciences fell prey. Whereas philosophy had sought hitherto to validate judgements about phenomena by reference to an extra-phenomenal origin — unconscious categories, historical progress, teleological 'function', and so on — modern literature rejects the dualist notion of an external basis of meaning and confines all reference to the realm of signs. In this case, nothing can be signified which is not itself a signifier, or to use Derri-

---

15 See, e.g., LCP, pp.29-86.

16 See, e.g., Carroll, Wolin.

da's words, "There is nothing outside the text" (Norris, 1982, p.41).

As the vehicle of ontological enquiry, modern literature is cast in a tragic, Sisyphean role. Autonomous, and severed from the certainty of dialectical progress, language is condemned to an endless proliferation. This consequence of a lack of a fixed reference is best illustrated in contrast with the Classical theory of discourse. Foucault claims that the ideal of an exhaustive classificatory table relied on the theory of the name. A transparent critical language would make possible a perfect taxonomy in which every natural object and every relationship was named without the defect of a single repetition or omission. Since reference was tied to a determinate and continuous universe, one could conceive of a language that would not only be accurate, but would also encompass the totality of natural facts in a finite number of expressions. Because, in the Classical period, it is tied to the transcendental, "the name is the end of discourse" (OT, p.118). Conversely, one can see that in the absence of a fixed basis of reference one barrier to the proliferation of language will be lifted.

However, Foucault makes a stronger claim than this. Today, he says, "language is fated to be infinite because it can no longer support itself on the speech of infinity" (LCP, p.62)[17]. Endless proliferation is not only possible, but inevitable, where philosophy is both directed toward the limits of possible speech and relentlessly critical of all transcendentalism. The severance of signs from any extra-linguistic reference opens the way for a 'deconstruction' of every professedly correct interpretation. Language breaks out of its role as the univocal servant of dialectics or 'reason', and emerges as the complex habitat of a multitude of

---

[17] Derrida makes the same point: "The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification endlessly" (Derrida 1978, p.182).

overlapping meanings, intentions, projects, and interpretations. Its awareness that every 'authoritative' interpretation, every attempt to stabilize the play of meaning, appeals to the myth of a fixed basis of reference drives modern literature to an infinite garrulity. As Maurice Blanchot says,

> What makes language possible is that it strives for the impossible.... No sooner is something said than something else needs to be said to correct the tendency of all that is said to become final, to insinuate itself into the imperturbable realm of objects. There is no end, neither at the level of simple sentences nor at that of complete works (Blanchot, p.38).

Nor would silence be a solution, for "silence is a form of expression whose dishonesty forces us into speech" (Blanchot, p.38).

In an ontology purged of transcendentals, and where 'being' is exhausted by the 'being of language', existence itself depends on the proliferation of speech. Language -- at least critical, philosophical, or in this case literary language -- perpetually directs itself toward non-language, toward that which has yet to be said, and hence has yet to exist. Critical language finds itself in perpetual confrontation with non-being. But, as Blanchot says, it would be pointless to speculate in words on what this non-language is; its significance to us can only be that it marks the limit of what can be said. In giving itself the task of approaching the unsaid, modern literature operates a perpetual transgression of that limit. At the same time, if the silence of every conclusion is a tyranny that deserves to be broken, then there can never be a 'last word', and even the critique will have to be erased. Consequently, modern literature is threatened on every side with its own annihilation. On the one hand, where language is cut off from the 'millenarian' certainty of dialectics[18], and bent on denying itself the comfort of conventionalized mean-

---

[18] According to Foucault, "dialectics does not liberate differences; it guarantees on the contrary that they can always be recaptured. The dialectical sov-

ing, it becomes apparent that "even the philosopher does not inhabit the whole of his language like a secret and perfectly fluent god" (LCP, p.41-42). The possibility is raised of incommensurable or untranslatable discourses, of a foreignness within language that is irreducible by conventional philosophical means, as well as the converse danger that, having spoken them, one loses custody of one's utterances and sees them pressed into service under a foreign meaning. On the other hand, in transgressing the limit of established meaning, breaking through the confines of "identity", and exposing oneself to (what is by definition) the non-sense of the foreign, the speaking subject in fact transgresses itself.

The plight of the mad philosopher, or more generally, of the artist irrecoverably self-alienated by the course of his own work, is one of the most powerful and recurrent themes of modernist aesthetics. One example of particular importance to Foucault is the case of Antonin Artaud. In the first place, Artaud encapsulates the anxiety of a form of expression driven to transgress its own coherence, to deconstruct itself as it operates, and in so doing to invite the incomprehensible into itself. As with Holderlin and Nietzsche, Artaud's own psychological collapse is a central theme of his literary production. Painfully, he recounts how the encounter with the 'other', the inexpressible, has become so predominant in his experience that he no longer "owns" himself; his mind "leaks", words "rot", the experience of utter self-alienation is irretrievable in ordinary language (Artaud, p.xx)[19].

---

ereignty of similarity consists in permitting differences to exist, but always under the rule of the negative, as an instance of non-being" (LCP, p.184-5).

19 For a quick impression of Artaud's self-alienation, see "18 seconds: a screenplay", in Artaud, p.115-8.

Secondly, Artaud provides a direct response to the incommensurability of artistic language and alien experience. Clearly, the utterly foreign is unrepresentable in the language of ordinary life; the experience of madness to which Artaud is drawn is, in principle, permanently beyond the limit of 'rational' discourse. If this foreignness can be represented at all, it will have to be in a way that breaks through the limits of conventional language, and does more than translate this experience into familiar form.

Clearly, the theme of purposeful transgression is neither unique nor original to Artaud. In literature, Foucault regards the Marquis de Sade as the pioneer of an art form explicitly intended to violate established standards of morality and reason. But, revolutionary as Sade's project was, its dependency on the language of representation detracts from its transgressive bite, and condemns it in the end to a rather tame repetitiveness (LCP, p.60-66; MC, p.284). The disruptive effect tends to be more permanent in those forms of ars nova that work through "non-discursive" language. The new music of, for example, Schoenberg, is calculatedly free from central motifs and the comforting resolution of tensions; like modern language, a form of music which denies itself both the repetition of the familiar and the belief in linear development is condemned to a

> perpetual variation that varies nothing, the pursuit of a non-repetition that can only be achieved through a statement infinitely reiterated in difference (Blanchot, p.189-90).

The goal of this "painful pursuit" is a form of expression which, by ceaselessly violating its standards, reveals the limits of established culture (Blanchot, p.189-90). Perhaps what Artaud provides is an exceptionally vigorous example of transgressive art. The supposition of his "theatre of cruelty" is that the fullness

of the world can be, if not translated into, then at least held up against the poverty of language in theatrical performance provided that "the spectacle is sufficiently -- that is, excessively -- violent" (Artaud, p.xxxiv).

2.5 Visibility and social order.

What makes this rather unlikely line of discussion relevant to 'concrete' social criticism is Foucault's insistence that patterns of social behaviour are inextricably bound up with very basic, yet historically specific, habits of conceptual organization. Leaving aside for the moment the question of a causal direction, we are clearly expected to recognize a connection in all of Foucault's institutional studies between the prevalent order of visibility and exclusion and the social administration of "otherness". For instance, it has been noted that "The 'case of Artaud'... is implicit throughout the argument" of Foucault's Histoire de la Folie (Artaud, p.591). The connection can be illustrated by returning very briefly to the comparison of the Renaissance, Classical, and Modern epistemes, this time with a view to the administrative response to madness in each period.

Madmen during the Renaissance, Foucault claims, "led an easy wandering existence" (MC, p.8). At a time when the world was regarded as a minutely inscribed plenum, madness amounted to a sort of inability to read. To be mad is to habitually misinterpret the signs imprinted in the world. And yet, the ubiquity of this handicap puts the madman in an ambiguous position. The point is frequently illustrated in literature and the arts, where the madman is celebrated as an unwitting custodian of the truth. Whereas the signs inscribed in things normally require erudite interpretation, the madmen, through an involuntary complicity

with nature, utters veiled truths spontaneously, and in so doing mocks the madness of reason. The practice of turning the mad over to a sort of liberal exile by entrusting them to travelling merchants or embarking them on 'ships of fools' signifies an environment "strangely hospitable to madness", in which otherness is squarely recognized as an inescapable aspect of the human condition.

The advent of the Classical order of visibility based on the representative table is accompanied by a drastic institutional reorganization. The middle of the seventeenth century marks both a radical severance of reason and unreason, and the beginning of the "Great confinement" of the insane (MC, p.38). It is not that European society suddenly confronts an offensive and visible part of itself, but more that an administrative parallel is devised for the conceptual order which denies the existence of that which is not representable by means of resemblance.

> [Confinement sought] to suppress madness, to eliminate from the social order a figure which did not find its place within it; the essence of confinement was not the exorcism of a danger. Confinement merely manifested what madness, in its essence, was: a manifestation of non-being; ... Confinement is the practice which corresponds most exactly to madness experienced as unreason, that is, as the empty negativity of reason; by confinement, madness is acknowledged to be nothing (MC, p.115-6).

Like Foucault's other institutional studies, Madness and Civilization reveals that, despite their image of liberality and reformism, modern mechanisms for the administration of difference are both more insidious and more complete than those of either the Classical or Renaissance periods. Naturally, the conceptual basis of these institutions parallels that of the positive human sciences. The classificatory gaze which, in the Classical period, had been simply blind to foreignness, now sets out to represent it within the sphere of positive knowledge. The 'other' is now visible in the light of -- but also visibly deviant from -- the 'normal'.

The administrative parallel of this essentially moralistic vision is an increasingly sophisticated array of strategies for the normalization of a (suddenly epidemic) social deviance. According to Foucault, Pinel's 'reforms' of the asylum encapsulate the modern conception of the foreign as a failed approximation of the familiar (MC, p.260-70). Whereas the confinement, dungeons, prisons, even tortures of the Classical period had "engaged in a mute dialogue between reason and unreason -- the dialogue of struggle" (MC, p.262), the modern practice reduced madness to a peculiarly pointed silence. Instead of being indulged with a concrete recognition of his difference, the madman was now forced to reflect in silence on the gulf that his deviance set between him and normal society. Thus, the treatment acted as a special sort of mirror in which the patient's own reflection always appeared as an intrusion, eccentrically superimposed on the image of normalcy. "Awareness was now linked to the shame of being identical with that other, of being compromised in him, and of already despising oneself before being able to recognize or to know oneself" (MC, p.265). A crucial reference point for the degeneracy of the patient was enshrined by what Foucault calls the "apotheosis of the medical personage" -- the establishment of the physician as the symbol of authority, normalcy, and virtue (MC, p.274-5). In fact, even Freud, who exposed the baseless moralism of positivistic psychiatry, and oriented the clinical gaze for the first time toward the reality of madness, was unable to discard this remnant of conceptual imperialism. Whatever radical promise psychoanalysis might have offered was permanently lost when Freud constructed the clinical encounter in a way that required the patient's self-alienation in the physician.

> It is perhaps because it did not repress this ultimate structure, and because it referred all others to it, that psychoanalysis has not been able, will not be able, to hear the voices of unreason, nor to decipher in themselves the signs of the madman (MC, p.278).

If the established human sciences are conceptually incapable of recognizing, much less resisting, the totalitarian consequences of the practices they inform, the theoretical basis of resistance will have to be sought elsewhere. The strategic relevance of modernist aesthetics begins to emerge:

> Since the end of the eighteenth century, the life of unreason no longer manifests itself except in the lightning flash of works such as those of Holderlin, of Nerval, of Nietzsche, or of Artaud -- forever irreducible to those alienations that can be cured, resisting by their own strength that gigantic moral imprisonment which we are in the habit of calling, doubtless by antiphrasis, the liberation of the insane by Pinel and Tuke (MC, p.278).

Art and madness being mutually exclusive, the work of Artaud or Nerval could never simply convey the madness of its author into the sphere of rational representation. Madness is made reasonable when rendered in art, and art is impossible beyond the brink of madness. Instead, this art conveys, in what is necessarily received as a transgression, the experience of the dissolution of thought, the approach of the abyss beyond which art will be impossible. The power of transgression to challenge the limits of the established order of representation and to reveal their arbitrariness is the only instrument left that can offer a critique of the institutional suppression of otherness:

> ... by the madness which interrupts it, a work of art opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without answer, provokes a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself (MC, p.288).

> Transgression... forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes (perhaps, to be more exact, to recognize itself for the first time)... (LCP, p.34).

2.6 Transgression: critique and critics.

It is important to avoid two possible and typically "modern" misunderstandings of the transgressive critique of the prevailing conceptual order. The first opens with the familiar charge that to cast the legitimacy of every conceptual 'centre' into suspicion is to expose oneself to the 'spectre of relativism'. Frequently, the charge is accompanied by the good-hearted offer of a new principle of reference, more firmly anchored than than the one that has just been undermined, which will permit an untenable principle to be discarded while minimizing the slippage toward utter irrationalism. Thus, utilitarianism responds to the erosion of deontological ethics by appealing to the self-evident desirability of pleasure; more formally, we respond to Russell's paradox by grounding an apparent self-contradiction at one language level upon the stability of a meta-language. The pragmatic value of such solutions is quite obvious, as the madness of Artaud illustrates, and it is quite openly acknowledged even by such inveterate deconstructionists as Derrida. A system of reference bereft of all stability whatsoever would indeed be impossible to operate with. But the critique of the "transcendental signified" is not intended to deny the operational necessity of a centre in general, but only the claim of any particular centre to more than a situational validity. Where the elements of a structure are located by their numerous relations of mutual difference, the idea of a centre has to be conceived of "not as a fixed locus, but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions come into play" (Derrida 1978, p.280). Very frequently, the anti-relativist's offer of a meta-solution comes, not as one of a multitude of potential and equally (un)privileged operating principles, but as part of a general admonition against the evils of cog-

nitive heterodoxy[20]. To repeat, the transgressive critique is not a nihilistic rejection of meaning and purpose, but an affirmation of possibilities excluded by the present limits of vision. As Foucault says,

> Nothing is more alien to this experience than the demonic character who, true to his nature, "denies everything". Transgression opens onto a scintillating and constantly affirmed world, a world without shadow or twilight, without that serpentine "no" that bites into fruits and lodges their contradictions at the core. It is the solar inversion of satanic denial (LCP, p.37).

This rejoinder suggests a second, perhaps more dangerous, misunderstanding of Foucault's purpose. Foucault was not alone, in the sixties, in sensing that the "tyranny of unity" was a problem with relevance beyond the aesthetic sphere. A critique of "identity" emerged, for example in Adorno's Negative Dialectics, as part of a more general backlash against phenomenology's deification of the constitutive subject (Dallmayr 1981, p.133-6). At what appears on the surface to be the other end of the spectrum, French post-structuralism delighted in convicting structuralist thought of "logocentrism" and a reliance on the "metaphysics of presence" (Norris, 1982, ch.2). The difficulty with launching this sort of argument within the liberal-humanist tradition is that, where it is not accused of scandalously fraternizing with relativism, it tends to be co-opted into a more or less touching, more or less ridiculous advocacy of the Oppressed. Madness and Civilization, for instance, would thus be an "anti-psychiatric" pamphlet, intended to champion the right of a self-subsistent community of the insane. But at this point, the problem of relativism really does creep in to shatter the basis of the critique. For if the transgressive critique exposes the arbitrariness of all centres of rationality, does it not also undermine the right of the oppressed to be heard?

---

20 For a charming example of this, see Seung, p.xii.

From what meta-platform would that critique have to speak in order not to undermine itself?

This difficulty is quite frequently explored in the critical literature on Foucault. According to David Carroll, for instance, transgressive literature derives its critical force by grounding itself outside the conceptual sphere of the rationalist tyranny it opposes, where its texts "link up with... the eternal, transhistorical present of Unreason" (Carroll, p.182). By basing all of his works on this 'disruptive' conduit to the transcendental, Foucault is able to claim that his critique is uniquely insulated from the historical forces which erode all of the other conceptual systems he studies. In effect, Foucault shirks the responsibility of "carrying his own critical weight" by providing himself an "aesthetic solution" to the pernicious relativism that his own critique unleashes (Carroll, p.197)[21]. The instructive aspect of this rather grotesque misreading is its blind dependency on 'identity': since Foucault criticizes the validity of a particular form of rationality, he must be advocating the right of a determinate opponent of it, and he must be claiming to base that right in a principle at least as firm as the justifying principle of the system under attack. But Foucault could hardly be more emphatic in rejecting this form of logic. The "right" of the mental patient can no more be grounded in the "transhistorical present of Unreason" than the right of the physician can be in the transhistorical present of its opposite. If the works of disruptive discourse illuminate the presence of an "unreason" that appears more durable than the "rationality" that it bounds, it is not because they have privileged access to the transcendental. Unreason is not an independent entity[22],but a recurrent human

---

21 For a similar reading of Foucault's "aestheticism", see Wolin.

22 Although Foucault acknowledges having left this impression in MC, and later

experience, linked with the fact that in every historical period there are, on the one hand, limits to the scope of communicable or rational discourse, and on the other, individuals whose experience cannot be encompassed or formulated within them. The liberal-humanist utopia of a cognitive pluralism that would guarantee a hearing for every possible cause can only appear naive or hypocritical, for, in granting the dignity of self-subsistence to every possible "other", it neglects the fact that coherent thought inevitably requires a dominant centre and an order of visibility and exclusion:

> As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm, thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action — a perilous act (OT, p.328).

What was disparagingly written off as an 'aesthetic' evasion is in fact a quite straightforward (and, for what it's worth, a respectably cognitive) argument. Because the transgressive critique does not seek to establish the validity of any one position, but rather exposes the contingency of each, it permits one to challenge the order imposed by this 'perilous act' without invoking a transcendental or naturalized authority. But it also implies that a genuinely critical theory of order (whether cognitive or institutional) can have nothing whatsoever to do with the concept of "morality". If the appeal to the 'meta' level of moral absolutes is a means of terminating the play of thought and masking the contingency of its principles, then the transgressive critique is a concussion that "makes it possible once more to think" (OT, p.342; also LCP, p.196).

---

distances himself from it (AK, p.47n), his retrospective comment is consistent with my claim that the essential thrust of the transgressive critique is not its defence of unreason, but its exposure of the limit of reason.

But one has to ask whether thinking is enough. While in the nineteen- sixties, Foucault may have had reason to be optimistic about the critical power of disruptive discourse and the possibility of a philosophy that, to use Nietzsche's phrase, could "kick itself free" of a dependency on fixity or 'presence', a great deal of elaboration will be required before it can serve as the backbone of a political strategy. As a first step, we will turn next to an account of Foucault's efforts to tie the idea of the limit more closely to concrete social practices, and hence to bolster its force as an instrument of social criticism.

Chapter 3

AUTONOMOUS DISCOURSE

On what view of society could Artaud's Theatre of cruelty or Sade's One Hundred and Twenty Days be regarded as effective critiques of concrete social institutions? The transgressive artist may have believed his work to be rolling back some significant frontier, but only by identifying, in a way that is implausible to us, the current limits of literary or dramatic expression with a fundamental structure of constraint. This seems a dubious assumption. First, the term "transgressive" only seems appropriate where the thing transgressed is more than a long-standing pattern or empirical regularity. To transgress is more than just to innovate; it is to violate a prescriptive rule. To call this work transgressive, therefore, is to go beyond the banal observation that it departs from the work of the past, and to construe that departure as the violation of a rule. Secondly, to credit Artaud's critique with any political relevance, one would have to believe that the prescriptive structures of dramatic convention and social administration are congruent enough that the boundaries of both could be endangered simultaneously by what occurs on the stage.

It might appear that by the end of the nineteen sixties Foucault was ready to drop the transgressive or disruptive thread that he had woven for over a decade. The Archeology of Knowledge, Foucault's abstract treatise on discourse and historiographic method, which appeared in 1969, seems at first to be a departure from

an already perplexing combination of institutional histories and literary deconstruction. My purpose in this chapter will be to show how, on the contrary, the Archeology is premised on and serves in several ways to develop the themes of "difference" and the "limit" which I take to be the core of Foucault's work.

With its focus on methodological principle, the Archeology clearly operates at a different level from the concrete histories that preceded it. But its sense of foreignness is due, at least in part, to its real continuity with those works, and to Foucault's reliance on the reader's familiarity with them in his choice of illustrations for theoretical points[23]. More importantly, the Archeology is an attempt to work out, at a formal level, the idea of the limit as it applies to social theory. From this point of view, two things are necessary. The primary goal is to substantiate the idea of a prescriptive social syntax which governs the production of statements and forms of knowledge. A prerequisite for this will be a descriptive historiographic method that can describe that syntax and yet escape its invalidating effect, either by being grounded in some privileged stratum beyond its reach, or somehow remaining effective despite its influence. In the Archeology the basis of prescription is accounted for by the concept of "discourse", and the empirical fact that prescription occurs is demonstrated by means of a set of self-consciously artificial descriptive categories. If the archeological method succeeds, it advances the idea of transgression theoretically by demonstrating that there is indeed a violable structure of constraint to be transgressed. At the same time, it constitutes a method of practical critique in its own right by making it possible to deconstruct the prevailing certainties of historical fact and progress,

---

23 A more substantial obstacle to understanding the Archeology is the poor quality of A.M. Sheridan Smith's translation. I am indebted to Mike Chase for his numerous and substantial corrections to the Smith translation

moral right, and epistemological soundness which are the basis of institutional authority.

Dreyfus and Rabinow's Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics will be put to use here as a counterpoint to my reading of Foucault's archeological method. As one of the few full-length commentaries so far to present a sophisticated, analytical, and yet readable account of Foucault's work, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics[24] is destined to remain the North American 'textbook' on Foucault interpretation for some time to come. Taken too far, however, the intention to clarify devolves into a tendency to co-opt. By interpreting Foucault's archeological method through the familiar categories of structuralism and phenomenology, Dreyfus and Rabinow confine their discussion within parameters which Foucault has explicitly and painstakingly rejected. Having no theoretical room for the deconstructive concepts of limit, difference, and transgression, these critics fail to appreciate the coherence of Foucault's project and convict him of failing — after a tortuous series of false starts, major theoretical reversals, and "convoluted impasses" — in an adventure that he had never intended to undertake. Meanwhile, since the force of the criticism is directed largely at a position he doesn't occupy, the real difficulties of Foucault's argument, and the reasons for his later modification of it, remain unexamined. By setting forth the outlines of what I take to be Foucault's position in the light of Dreyfus and Rabinow's commentary on it, I hope to illustrate both Foucault's conception of the value, and later recognition of the shortcomings, of the notion of the limit for social theory.

---

24 Cited hereafter as BSH.

3.1 Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics.

According to Dreyfus and Rabinow, the Archeology crowns a period of tumult and indecision in Foucault's work. The first major theoretical shift comes between Madness and Civilization and The Birth of the Clinic. Whereas, at the time of Madness and Civilization Foucault's project had been a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' which sought the liberation of an oppressed Other, he is subsequently afflicted by the "structuralist enthusiasm sweeping Paris" (BSH, p.16) and lurches "from a kind of hermeneutics to a sort of structuralism" (BSH, p.15) expressed most extremely in The Birth of the Clinic. Foucault's radical rejection of his previous hermeneutics during this period is typified by the persistent attempts, notably in The Order of Things, "to divorce discourse as far as possible from its social setting and to discover the rules of its self-regulation" in terms of purely abstract structures (BSH, p.17). The Archeology was an attempt to formalize this structural account, and to work out the implications of the idea of an "autonomous" discourse. Instead, Dreyfus and Rabinow argue, the concentration of attention on archeological theory precipitated out the basic contradictions in this period of Foucault's work, and provoked the final and most important reorientation: from an archeology of discourse to a genealogy of power.

The difficulty that Dreyfus and Rabinow will fix on is a tension in Foucault's archeological method between a prescriptive and a descriptive reading of the "rules of discursive formation". Foucault had presented archeology as a purely descriptive historiographic method, strictly concerned with the external, empirically observable contours of present or past expressions of a variety of types. The intention had been to avoid the error of conventional historiographic methods

which tend, by the very nature of their descriptive categories, to read an artificial coherence into the documentary data they study. The term "archeology" itself would signify a willingness to regard discursive artifacts not as "documents" expressing an anterior intention or chronicling the orderly unfolding of a linear history, but rather as "monuments" which possess their own irreducible solidity as the outward marks of past events. The events may be causally or symbolically related to others in numerous ways, but there is no a priori justification for assuming that any one line of association is preferable to another as the "proper"dimension of historical interpretation (AK, p.25). In other words, archeology begins with the supposition that every method for retrospectively reading order into historical data (including its own) is post hoc, artificial and, therefore, purely descriptive.

At the same time, this methodological scepticism has to be reconciled with the claim that the findings of archeology are not only valid but critically potent. The point of suspending faith in the conventional historiographic unities was not to legitimize a whimsical rearrangement of historical data; rather, it was to enable the archeologist "to describe other unities, but this time by means of a group of controlled decisions", and so constitute "discursive groups that are not arbitrary, and yet remain invisible" (AK, p.29). Foucault clearly implies, both in his methodological comments and in his concrete "archeological" studies, that archeological critique operates by exposing an element of determination or constraint in the production of discourse. There is a sense in which existing discursive formations 'require' utterances of a particular type, or 'exclude' others from occurring or being accepted; also, the network of rules evidently reaches beyond speech, so

that one can conceive of a systematic constraint on the production of concepts, and even a "syntax of medical perception".

At this point, the archeological project takes on a suspicious resemblance to so many other versions of "ideology critique" which appeal to the relativity of knowledge in order to expose the objectivistic pretensions of the dominant ideology, and then brake the slide towards "pernicious relativism" by invoking a more profound objectivism of their own. On Dreyfus and Rabinow's reading, Foucault's first step in this direction is his decision to "bracket" both the naive objectivist conception of truth and the phenomenological perspective of the constitutive subject. This radically sceptical "double bracketing" makes archeology a sort of "phenomenology to end all phenomenologies" (BSH, p.44). Predictably, however, the first step requires the second, and Foucault must now produce the standard which gives archeology its unique critical power. This means both locating the ultimate source of constraint over discursive production, and accounting for the claim that only archeological description could have revealed it. Since, in his reconstitution of the unities and rules of discourse, Foucault explicitly avoids referring to either subjective intention or objective cause, Dreyfus and Rabinow reason, "the only strategy which remains... is some modified version of structuralist theory" (BSH, p.82). But the question remains: what accounts for the structure of discursive regularities? Apparently, "Foucault is not satisfied to accept social practices as a level of explanation" (BSH, p.82), and yet the thesis of the historical variability of discursive rules precludes any appeal to the sort of physiological or cultural universals which are the refuge of linguistic and anthropological structuralism (BSH, p.82-3).

Foucault's insistence that archeology should provide, on the one hand, a pure description of discursive events that avoids the reductivist pursuit of hidden origins, referents and causes, and on the other, a critique of the prescriptive rules of discourse, leads to the ultimately contradictory thesis of the "autonomy of discourse". The described regularities cannot be accounted for in terms of anything beyond discourse itself, and yet if there is to be a critique, some explanation for them must be given. On this reading, Foucault is driven by his own purism into a version of the "formalist fallacy" which naively regards the purely descriptive rules by which a particular empirical strategy arranges its data as "laws" which actually governed the phenomena in the first place: "in his account of the causal power of the rules of discursive formations, Foucault illegitimately hypostatized the observed formal regularities which describe discursive formations into conditions of these formations' existence" (BSH, p.83). Having read a false prescriptive force into the discursive rules, Foucault then scrambles to locate its source within the sphere of discourse, and in the end produces the lamely mystical sounding device of the "uniform anonymity" of discursive determinism (AK, p.63). "The result is the strange notion of regularities which regulate themselves" (BSH, p.84).

In the position attributed to him here -- what we might call "discourse reductionism" -- Foucault has not reconciled, but only conflated the two requirements of descriptive detachment and critical explanation. The radical bracketing of truth and meaning has failed to resolve the dilemma between scepticism and objectivism. On the one hand, even if one consciously adopts an artificial set of descriptive categories, "Must we not be able to ask: Are these descriptions accurate or distorted? But doesn't this reintroduce truth?" (BSH, p.85). On the other,

if the notions of truth and meaning are inapplicable to discursive analysis, what is the status of the archeologist's own claims? "In taking the view that meaning is... epiphenomenal the archeologist stands outside all discursive formations" (BSH, p.87). Just as Hume recognized that scepticism was intellectually necessary but practically impossible, the consistent archeologist is driven to a professional nihilism that only ends 'after work' when, as a "private, everyday person", he can relapse into the epistemological naivete that is required for any sort of committed action (BSH, p.95). Far from providing an effective critical strategy, archeology turns out to imply a stifling quietism: "there is no place in archeology for a discourse with social significance, no reason anyone should listen, and, in spite of Foucault's playful posturing, no reason anyone should write" (BSH, p.89).

Still, Foucault insists on having it both ways -- the patent artificiality of its categories is supposed to guarantee archeology's purity from transcendentalism; and yet its uniquely detached perspective on the sphere of "discourse" also gives it access to a level of determination that is invisible to other forms of analysis. The infamous "double", the antinomy between description and explanation or the positive and the fundamental which was the dynamo of the human sciences has come back to haunt archeology itelf. Ironically, Dreyfus and Rabinow conclude, Foucault "turns out to be caught in just the sort of convoluted impasses he taught us to recognize" (BSH, p.18).

3.2 Autonomous discourse.

On the other hand, perhaps the very absurdity of Foucault's predicament should have led Dreyfus and Rabinow to reconsider their interpretation. Several textual points should also have sharpened that suspicion. One which would seem to vex their plotting of Foucault's intellectual biography is the recurrent mention, throughout Foucault's work of the sixties, of the figures of "disruptive discourse". I have argued in Chapter One against the reading of Madness and Civilization as a "hermeneutics of suspicion" dedicated to the liberation of "an absolute Otherness which founds and eludes history" (BSH, p.11). Yet even assuming that reading to be accurate, one would hardly expect to find laudatory references to Nietzsche, Holderlin and Sade in The Birth of the Clinic (the text which "represents Foucault's extreme swing towards structuralism" (BSH, p.15)), or the sustained discussions of Artaud, Sade, Nietzsche, Bataille and others in the most crucial passages of The Order of Things, and throughout the essays collected in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. The consistency of Foucault's discussion of the "anthropological" assimilation of difference from the Birth of the Clinic to The Order of Things also suggests greater coherence than Dreyfus and Rabinow would seem to accept (See e.g. BC, p.197-98). Surely the presence of these themes indicates their continued relevance to Foucault's thinking during this period, and suggests that the works they appear in may not be as disconnected as they seem[25].

Furthermore, by linking archeology to both structuralism and phenomenology, Dreyfus and Rabinow unjustifiably override Foucault's emphatic efforts to disassociate himself from both[26]. Even if Foucault's comments on his relationship with

---

25 See chronology of Foucault's writings at Appendix I.

26 See, e.g., AK, p.15; SPS, p.197-201.

structuralism do leave room for some interpretation, Dreyfus and Rabinow are clearly taking liberties by recasting the archeological project as an attempted super-phenomenology. Of Foucault's relatively few references to specific philosophical 'schools', by far the most numerous and consistent are those denouncing phenomenology and identifying his own project as a sustained offensive against it (e.g., AK, p.12, pp.199-211; OT, p.xiv).

On Dreyfus and Rabinow's reading, the two irreconcilable moments of archeology -- the phenomenological and the structural -- converge in the contradictory notion of the "autonomy of discourse". A crude rectification of names may help to illustrate how Foucault can subscribe to the concept of an autonomous discourse while denying archeology's affinity with either structuralism or phenomenology.

Structural analysis is concerned with the ordering of phenomena. A structuralist account seeks either to generate or (more often) to describe and regularize a pattern or sequence in which certain elements (percepts, phonemes, gustemes, coloured rocks, or whatever) tend to occur[27]. In its sceptical form, structural analysis refrains from referring the observed regularities to anything beyond the field of elements and the ordering process, instead identifying and describing them only in terms of mutual differences and similarities as defined within that process. Objectivistic structuralism regards the regularities as the effect of a 'structure' which not only desribes, but determines the relations among the elements[28]. The

---

27 For some introductory discussions, see, e.g., Seung, Norris 1982, Macksey, Descombes.

28 Strictly speaking, to refer to this as a version of structuralism is a misnomer, though one that is widely practiced. As one writer puts it, "To halt [the potentially infinite play of "centerings" and "re-centerings" within a structure] by invoking some ultimate claim to truth is a tactic foreign to the deepest

divergence between the two underlies one of the classical schisms in the philosophy of science. Objectivistic structuralists claim predictive and explanatory powers on the assumption that the objects they study belong to a real structure of causal relationships; sceptics, on the other hand, insist that empirical science confine itself to post hoc descriptions, and that causal and inductive reasoning are fallacious. The two positions entail radically different views of scientific "law". For the sceptic, a law of science simply describes a historical regularity which is itself (at least for the alert sceptic) the product of a particular classificatory convention. To the objectivist, the "law" represents a fact of determinism, and hence combines the functions of description and explanation. The regularity that was described as a matter of fact could also have been deduced as a matter of necessity.

In equally broad strokes, phenomenology springs from the same impulse as the Cartesian dubito: an inclination to distrust the naive or natural view of the world, and "bracket" the validity of beliefs and perceptions until they are authenticated by clear and undistorted introspection. In its philosophical naivete, subjective experience is the site of error and delusion. Appropriately winnowed and purified, however, it ultimately serves as its final court of appeal.

Foucault clearly takes the distinguishing feature of phenomenology to be, not the attitude of systematic doubt, but the centrality of the constitutive subject. By that standard, archeology is anything but a form of phenomenology. In fact Foucault's undoing, as Dreyfus and Rabinow recount it, does not stem from anything particularly phenomenological, but rather from what they perceive to be an "impasse" between what I have called the sceptical and the objectivistic forms of

---

implications of structuralist thought" (Norris, 1982, p.9; cf. Rajchman, p. 5.).

structuralism.

This dilemma is not inherent in the assumptions of archeology, but is imported by Dreyfus and Rabinow's interpretation. Ironically, it is precisely Foucault's rejection of both objectivistic structuralism and phenomenology which leads Dreyfus and Rabinow to the view that archeology is caught between them. As Foucault laboriously maintains, archeology was established in response to the need for a historiographic method which could comprehend the empirical reality of past discourse without subordinating its concreteness to the unities, processes, or intentions of metaphysics, and could dispense in particular with the phenomenological or 'anthropological' subject, but equally with the sorts of a priori devices which would "impose on history, despite itself, the forms of structural analysis" (AK, p.15).

Dreyfus and Rabinow severely overreact to Foucault's methodological conservatism, and interpret these particular suspensions as a "bracketing" of meaning and truth per se. But since archeology, unlike Heidegger's phenomenological reduction, is taken to bracket claims of both truth and subjective meaning, the critique of the naive view never comes to rest in an experience of authenticity (BSH, p.49-51). Thus, whereas Foucault has ruled out only a very specific range of interpretive strategies, he is forced by Dreyfus and Rabinow into an absurdly thoroughgoing scepticism. The archeologist's decision to approach the facts of discursive history from the direction of a particular set of empirical characteristics is taken as a blanket rejection of the idea that the historical emergence or the coherence of a discourse could be related either to its truth or to its meaningfulness to its participants (e.g., BSH, p.79).

Having fabricated one half of the dilemma, Dreyfus and Rabinow strive to complete it by importing a further premise: the aim of archeology must be to account for the historical contours of this empty, meaningless, and asocial discourse in causal terms, which is to say in terms of an underlying structure of determinism. Since the appeal to mundane causal structures is clearly ruled out by the bracketing of all truth claims, archeology must privilege itself with a view of some extra-mundane mechanics, namely the forces of an "autonomous discourse". For Dreyfus and Rabinow, Foucault is driven by the consequences of his phenomenology (that is, by his supposed double bracketing of truth and meaning) to an objectivistic structuralism of autonomous (that is, self-subsistent, abstract, and causally effective) discourse.

3.3 Beyond Dreyfus and Rabinow.

Perhaps their readiness to believe that such a strategy is even a plausible error demonstrates Dreyfus and Rabinow's own entrapment within a mode of thought that Foucault has left behind. On Foucault's thinking, the structuralism and the phenomenology which Dreyfus and Rabinow present as polar opposites (and as Foucault's only possible philosophical resources) are not opposites at all, but simply two ways of articulating the dualism which Foucault takes to be constitutive of modern thought. To reintroduce the language of The Order of Things, phenomenology and structural positivism are premised upon the mind/world dualisms of Descartes and Kant, and occupy themselves with the task of representing the "fundamental" within the "positive", revealing the "objective" grounds of experience within experience itself. Hence, what Dreyfus and Rabinow take to be Fou-

cault's cavalier abandonment of "meaning" does not indicate a radical "double bracketing" or the effort to launch a super-phenomenology, but simply Foucault's disdain for this original duality. Meaning is for phenomenology what structure is for objectivistic structuralism: it is the term that designates the "fundamental". Nothing could be more natural to modern thought, or more superfluous to a critic of it, than to seek to radicalize itself by appealing to the obscure profundity of the final "meta".

In its founding insight, archeology rejects the meaning/practice dichotomy and hence rules out the possibility that the "autonomy" of discourse could be construed as its ethereal self-subsistence or its isolation from the practical work of speaking, writing, ordering, authorizing, and so on. "Meaning" is not of a different ontological order than "practice", but rather a form of practice. The task of archeology is to establish a system of categories for the historical study, not of the relationship between two separate orders of words and things, or "things meant" and "things done", but of the entire spectrum of significant practices. Discourse is not "a mere intersection of things and words" (AK, p.48). Nor is it a question of reducing a range of parallel historical strata to the most profound level (and reviving the pointless debate over whether that is ideal or material), but of writing a "general history" which recognizes the ontological equivalency of all forms of human behaviour. Foucault is not forced, as his critics suggest, to retreat behind a metaphysical ruse after abandoning the conventional certainties of interpretation. On the contrary, these conventions are suspended as a consequence of archeology's founding (and quite conservative) assumption of the autonomy -- that is, the concrete, practical irreducibility -- of discourse. Archeology,

Foucault insists, is concerned "not to neutralize discourse, to make it the sign of something else, and to pierce through its density in order to reach what remains silently anterior to it, but on the contrary to maintain it in its consistency, to make it emerge in its own complexity" (AK, p.47).

In his effort to characterize the autonomy and complexity of discourse in the Archeology, Foucault makes use of two separate expository strategies, one positive and the other negative. The essence of what Foucault himself refers to as his "positivism" consists of consciously regarding the artefacts of discursive history in their "exteriority". The categories of archeological method are designed to generate purely empirical descriptions of discursive phenomena, and to prohibit the attribution of whatever may be discovered to causes or principles 'outside' or 'beneath' the empiricity of discourse itself. Archeological inquiry is directed single-mindedly at the level of "l'enonce", the level of things said. One set of categories for archeological description here will be the four "enunciative modalities" which refer to the position of the speaking subject, the formation of discursive objects, the formation of concepts, and the formation of "strategic choices" concerning the composition of a discourse and the facts of its historical existence and deployment (for example, the details of its preservation, reinterpretation, erasure, and so on) (AK, p.40-76).

Without going into further detail on the methodological categories of archeology it is worthwhile to note that Foucault's positivism differs in intention from other positivistic analyses of language in this century. The logical postivists of the nineteen-thirties set out to disqualify what they saw as the inordinate amount of "nonsense" uttered in philosophy by spelling out a strict set of criteria for

meaningfulness. Propositions which were neither analytic nor empirically verifiable -- hence all propositions of metaphysics -- were by this definition meaningless and therefore disqualified from philosophical discourse[29]. Later writers found these criteria too constricting and turned their efforts to outlining the prerequisites of a "communicative pragmatics"; the issue would not be the logical or referential validity of propositions, but the practical effectiveness or 'felicity' of speech acts[30].

Archeology differs significantly from both of these. Between archeology and logical positivism there is an evident difference of focus: for logical positivism, what is 'positive' is the standard of verification; for archeology, it is the discursive artifact itself. Such a distinction cannot be made between archeology and speech act theory since, as Foucault admits, the basic archeological unit, the statement (l'enonce), is in fact the same empirical object as Searle's speech act. However, even in conceding this, he insists that archeology views its object "under a different angle" (quoted in BSH, p.46n). Common to both logical positivism and speech act analysis is the endeavour to specify the formal or pragmatic requirements that a statement must meet in order to be acceptable within a given community of speakers. Without denying the potential value of such analysis, archeology avoids the question of what would or would not have been possible within a given discursive formation, and confines itself to identifying "conditions of coexistence" in which various statements with various enunciative properties actually emerged at a given time: "the discursive formation is characterized not by a principle of construction, but by a dispersion of fact" (AK, p.116).

---

29 See A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic.

30 See J. L. Austin, How to do Things with Words.

Foucault's "positive" accounts of archeology may appear to be overshadowed, and even vitiated by a predominantly negative style of presentation. Foucault makes such heavy use of a "neither this nor that" form of exposition in presenting the aims and methods of archeology, and in defining the pivotal concept of "discourse", that at least one commentator has concluded that the Archeology is not a treatise on method at all, but rather a parody of method [31]. One reason for Foucault's apparent evasiveness may be simply a wish to avoid having archeology confused with any particular, established form of analysis. Indeed, as he says,

> I am trying to show how a domain can be organized without flaw, without contradiction, without internal arbitrariness, in which statements, their principle of grouping, the great historical unities that they may form, and the methods that make it possible to describe them are all brought into question (AK, p.114).

It appears that this typically negative self-characterization is intended to set archeology apart not only from other specific schools or analyses, but from some more general or widespread habits of interpretation. For instance, in rejecting these forms of historical reconstruction organized around the notions of tradition, influence, evolution, or spirit, to mention just one type of unity, Foucault is clearly taking issue with a wide range of historiographic traditions (AK, p.21-22). In

---

31 See Megill, p.227-32. While Megill's parallel between the Archeology and Descartes' Discourse on Method is thought provoking, I think it should not be overstressed. The claim that the Archeology performs an essentially aesthetic function is less sustainable than Foucault's own 'affected' claim to be exploring methodological problems. Secondly, Megill's thesis depends on a degree of discontinuity and self-contradictoriness in Foucault's work that I attempt to minimize throughout this thesis. His failure to make the connection in Foucault's work between the concreteness and effectiveness of discourse and the ubiquity of power is instructive in this regard. For instance, Foucault is seen to justify a political role for intellectuals on the grounds that "discourse is a matter, finally, of words, and words are the peculiar concern of intellectuals" (Megill, p.240). I remain one of those readers who display a "peculiar unimaginativeness" in accepting Foucault's sustained methodological arguments at more or less face value (Megill, p.229). For a similar denial of the methodological value of AK, see Lemert and Gillan, p.ix, 48-56.

each case, it could be argued that the historical unity or mechanism in question is vaguely articulated by its users, and on closer scrutiny can be seen to account for the historical data only through some "magical" or metaphysical artifice (AK, p.21). Doubtless, Foucault does consider the metaphysical appeal to be both damning and widespread in historical writing, and it is a fault which his own "positivistic" unities are designed to be free of. But the basis of his objection is not just that such histories appeal to the metaphysical; it is that they appeal to mechanisms -- metaphysical or otherwise -- which are assumed to be on the "outside" of discourse.

This will be clearer if, by contrast, we pause to consider in outline the course of a typical archeological enquiry. In accounting for the historical emergence of a particular discursive object -- e.g., the hysterical woman, the delinquent, or the precocious child -- the appeal to conventional historical method will obviously be impossible. Indeed, one of Foucault's reasons for directing his archeologies at the objects of the human sciences is that these present a "low epistemological profile" (PK, p.109), and hence make it possible to suspend one more possible principle of coherence and to establish an analysis in other terms. It becomes apparent that the emergence of such objects cannot be related either to the epistemological coherence of the discourses in which they appear, nor to any cogent historical principle. Foucault takes the emergence of such objects as an indication of the "rarity" of discourse. Whereas one would expect that the loose formal and epistemological confines of, for example, psychology, criminology, or sexual orthopaedics would licence the production of an indefinitely large number of statements, it is obvious that "all the alternatives are not in fact realized" (AK, p.66).

Here, archeology seeks "to determine the principle according to which only the [statements] that were enunciated could appear. It sets out to establish a law of rarity" (AK, p.118).

At this step, archeology runs afoul of two principles of conventional method. First, it seems to conflate the causal and the descriptive senses of "law" or "rule". The discursive law seems to have the explanatory power to indicate what "could appear" or "what must be related in a particular discursive practice" (AK, p.74, my emphasis). At the same time, we are told that to appeal to such a rule is simply "to characterize a discourse or a group of statements by the regularity of a practice" (AK, p.74). Secondly, the explanatory value of the discursive rules appears to depend on a tautology, since Foucault is generally reluctant to account for the regularity of discourse by appealing to extra-discursive factors. Moreover, his vagueness in specifying what does or does not count as discourse seems designed to evade this criticism.

Both charges, however, point to the specificity of the archeological project, and its divergence in principle from conventional method. First, it is essential to recognize that archeological "positivism" is purely descriptive. The rules of discursive formation do not appeal to an explanatory system which would give them the predictive or post-dictive powers claimed by those bodies of thought referred to as positivistic sciences. Foucault has not inferred from the observation of discursive regularities the existence of a determining structure which, if its principles were known, would permit one to deduce explanations or predictions of discursive events. Unlike structural linguistics, which would ask, "according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what

rules could other similar statements be made?", archeology "poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statment appeared rather than another?" (AK, p.27). The question does not express the desire for a causal law, but simply remarks on the peculiarity of this particular, apparently contingent event.

At the same time, the "mere" description of discursive regularities does not necessarily produce banal[32] or socially insignificant results. The "enunciative modalities" are designed to permit, not the deduction, but (to at least a limited extent) the empirical description of the practical causes which contributed to the emergence of a particular discursive formation. It is neither banal nor contradictory to claim, on the one hand, that archeology is confined to describing patterns of discursive behaviour and, on the other, that the very regularities it describes are forms of social practice with their own dynamics of constraint, persuasion, authority, violence and so on. The role of such forces is not inferred negatively from the absence of certain supposedly latent possibilities, but from the positive existence of discourses that are suppressed, forgotten, prohibited, disqualified; specialized discourses to which access is limited; discourses which depend on unequal relationships between speaker and hearer (for instance in medicine, or the confessional); discourses where the mention of particular objects and concepts is, through tacit or express understanding and through a variety of means of enforcement, forbidden or required.

The confinement of archeological explanation to reasons within the field of discourse is not tautological. If archeology suspends the sorts of analysis that would relate discourse to something deeper,

---

32 See Dews, 1979, p.146.

> it is not in order to guarantee the sovereign, sole independence of discourse; it is in order to discover the domain of existence and functioning of a discursive practice. In other words, the archeological description of discourses is deployed in the dimension of a general history; it seeks to discover that whole domain of institutions, economic processes, and social relations on which a discursive formation can be articulated; it tries to show how the autonomy of discourse and its specificity nevertheless do not give it the status of pure ideality and total historical independence... (AK, p.164-5).

If the ultimate explanation for discursive regularities is simply a range of social practices, then why is Foucault so insistent that discourse be considered a field of practice in its own right, and yet so cagey in delineating that field? Why such a sweeping suspension of other modes of explanation and yet such diffidence regarding the promise of their substitute?

Part of the answer lies in the radicalism of Foucault's version of "positivism". The rejected historiographic methods, as "modern" forms of reflection, are caught up in the project of resolving a presupposed dualism:

> Usually, the historical description of things said is shot through with the oppositions of interior and exterior; and wholly directed by a desire to move from the exterior... towards the essential nucleus of interiority" (AK, p.120-21).

Typically, Foucault says, the appeal to the "interior" of manifest discursive facts involves a re-investment of "the historico-transcendental theme" (AK, p.121). We may suppose that in choosing to keep the exteriority of discourse theoretically removed from a perhaps equally "exterior" concept such as "social practice", Foucault is guarding against another possible transcendentalization of explanation.

If so, then consistency requires that the methods and findings of archeology itself be regarded with similar circumspection. In the first place, the statements of archeology are themselves part of a historically specific discourse. Of necessity, discursive rules can only be described in retrospect, and their regularity cannot

even be projected into the present, much less be considered atemporally valid. We can never describe our own discourse, Foucault says, nor identify all the rules of its order

> since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say — and to itself, the object of our discourse — its modes of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity, and disappearance (AK, p.130).

The archeologist, more than anyone, is aware of the hypocrisy in the ideal of a 'neutral' critique which somehow escapes its own perspective by stepping outside itself.

Taking a radically different approach, archeology takes the fact of discursive 'bias' not as an obstacle to be overcome but as an object to be explored, and thereby awakens us to the limits of our own discourse. In studying the boundaries of its own enunciative field, it probes

> a privileged region: at once close to us and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us (AK, p.130).

It is in this sense, and not because it reveals an objective constraint that was hitherto invisible, that archeological description "is valid for our diagnosis" (AK, p.131).

In concluding that "Archeology simply is an ahistorical discipline with an ahistorical technical language which is able to survey and order history precisely because it is not in history" (BSH, p.97), Dreyfus and Rabinow demonstrate Foucault's distance from the aims of conventional, deductive positivism, and their own distance from understanding Foucault. In fact, had it not preceded their critique by a dozen years, one might almost suspect that Foucault's imaginary dia-

logue at the conclusion of the Archeology was directed at these critics. Archeology, the interlocutor charges, faces a double bind: either it remains a naive and uncritical empiricism or it claims a privileged viewpoint for itself and re-enters the game of objectivistic one-upmanship that it strove to leave behind. "Either it does not reach us or we claim it" (AK, p.205). But Foucault has already exposed the assumptions behind this false dilemma. Whether it is read as an impotent empiricism or as a deductive structuralism (successful or not), archeology is made to appear equally innocuous since in either case one preserves the assumption that effective historical analysis involves relating the empirical data to an ontologically prior stratum. The real threat to the critic's viewpoint would not come from an attempt to impose a structure on history, but, quite the contrary, from a willingness to regard events in their singularity, removed from the gaze of a unifying consciousness, historical purpose, or causal structure. The critical power of archeology, Foucault repeats, lies precisely in its descriptiveness, "for if you recognize the right of a piece of empirical research, some fragment of history, to challenge the transcendental dimension, then you have ceded the main point" (AK, p.203).

Clearly, the force of Foucault's critique is directed at more than just a particular transcendental unity. But it also goes beyond the general injunction against overt transcendentalism which is so characteristic of "modern" thought. What is at issue is an entire constellation of intellectual and methodological habits by which the distinctions of same/other, identity/difference, fact/explanation, and so on are construed as ontological differences. By resisting the temptation to attribute the regularity and rarity of discourse to any "interior" cause, Foucault drives

home the ontological equivalency of all discursive phenomena. The empirical contours of a discourse cannot be attributed to its coherence around an ontologically privileged nucleus -- reason, history, ideology, et cetera. Instead, by self-consciously referring the regularity of our discourse to the actual, empirical fact of its production -- to a dispersion of concrete, temporal practices -- archeology creates a sense of our own strangeness:

> It establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. That difference, far from being the forgotten and recovered origin, is the dispersion that we are and make (AK, p.131).

In the end, Foucault's objections to the ontological duality of modern thought have to do with its consequences for our understanding of "difference". Only within the ceaseless oscillations of the analytic of finitude is difference the "forgotten and recovered origin" (see Chapter Two above, and OT, p.328-35). Where reflection presupposes a metaphysical distinction, the explanatory principle -- the "fundamental", the "interior" -- is something which needs to be articulated, but which necessarily recedes with each advance of knowledge. The frontiers of our self-knowledge may shift as elements of the unknown are assimilated into the familiar, but the overall geometry never changes. The "different" is always either assimilable or essentially unknowable (because transcendent).

The archeological viewpoint rejects that geometry. Archeology does not guarantee its viewpoint transcendentally, nor imply a fixed identity from which all differences diverge.

> It is trying to deploy a dispersion that can never be reduced to a single system of differences, a scattering that is not related to absolute axes of reference; it is trying to operate a decentring that leaves no privilege to any centre (AK, p.205).

3.4 Beyond transgression.

Clearly, in its concern with the limit of our discursive practice, the Archeology pursues a theme already familiar from Madness and Civilization, The Birth of the Clinic, and The Order of Things. And yet, between this radical affirmation of difference on the one hand, and the strict attention to the empirical and the concrete on the other, one senses a profound tension and perhaps even a repudiation of the assumptions of disruptive discourse.

The aesthetic experience which Artaud expresses so haltingly, and which Blanchot attributes to Kafka and Schoenberg, as well as the strategy of literary deconstruction now associated with Jacques Derrida, all derive their impetus from the collapse of the correspondence theory of meaning. With the loss of fixed reference, the origin of meaning is attributed to the infinite play of differences among signifiers. This is taken to suggest that every interpretation is provisional, and that all claims to have stabilized the play of differences in a definitive meaning are bogus. The creative process becomes an experience of anguish in which one is caught between the need to shatter the oppressive order of established meanings and the knowledge that one's own statement will itself impose an illegitimate and exclusive fixity. In a desperate struggle against the tyranny of all "last words" the critic or artist is driven to an endless and neurotic series of reinterpretations and self-erasures, figurative in Derrida's case[33], but literal in Kafka's and Artaud's.

Although, as we have seen, Foucault remains deeply sensitive to the idea of "difference", he is careful to avoid too liberal an importation of literary assumptions into the analysis of broader discursive practices.

---

33 Derrida frequently expresses the tentativeness of his own words, and his unwillingness to have them taken univocally, by drawing a slash through them to indicate that they are written "under erasure".

While the strategies of literary deconstruction and disruptive discourse appear on the surface to affirm plurality and difference, they can be seen, at least in some forms [34], to depend on a negative form of universalism. The compulsion to proliferate "commentary", for instance, is prompted not by a positive respect for the plurality of meanings which are generated, but rather by a blanket injunction against discrimination, since the basis on which competing interpretations could be judged has been removed by the loss of fixed reference. In this archetypally nihilistic form of deconstruction, the critique of false objectivism has led, not to a positive regard for plurality, but rather to a perversely negative form of egalitarianism in which the affirmation of positive differences is actually prohibited in the name of an abstract "difference". The archeological thesis of "rarity", by contrast, implies neither the hermeneutic task of reconstructing discursive monuments so as to reflect the "authentic" identity whose meaning has somehow been excluded by subsequent interpretations, nor the deconstructive task of valorizing an infinite and abstract population of possible meanings. The aim of archeology is not

> to give voice to the silence that surrounds [statements], nor to rediscover all that, in them and beside them had been reduced to silence. Nor is it to study the obstacles that have prevented a particular discovery, held back a particular formation, repressed a particular form of enunciation [etc.]; but to define a limited system of presences (AK, p.119).

Where "discourse" is understood in the practical sense, the motive for analysing its historical distribution -- its objects, the distribution of positions for speaking and listening subjects and the relations established among them, the documentary materials in use and their mode of circulation, and so on -- is not to fulfill, in an

---

[34] See, for example, Blanchot's account of Kafka in the Siren's Song.

undiscriminating way, the possibilities that it leaves unsaid, but to describe an array of social relationships which a group of real, identifiable human beings maintain among themselves through the use of language. While commentary and exegesis focus on the problem of meaning, archeology studies the practice of discourse:

> To interpret is a way of reacting to enunciative poverty, and to compensate for it by a multiplication of meaning; a way of speaking on the basis of that poverty, and yet despite it. But to analyse a discursive formation is to seek the law of that poverty, it is to weigh it up, and to determine its specific form. In one sense, therefore, it is to weigh the 'value' of statements. A value that is not defined by their truth, that is not gauged by the presence of a secret content; but which characterizes their place, their capacity for circulation and exchange, their possibility of transformation, not only in the economy of discourse, but, more generally, in the administration of scarce resources. In this sense, discourse ceases to be what it was for the exegetic attitude: an inexhaustible treasure from which one can always draw new, and always unpredictable riches; a providence that has always spoken in advance, and which enables one to hear, when one knows how to listen, retrospective oracles; it appears as an asset — finite, limited, desirable, useful — that has its own rules of appropriation and operation; an asset that consequently, from the moment of its existence..., poses the question of power; an asset that is, by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle (AK, p.120).

The archeological method gives content to the idea of the limit by making it possible to observe and describe, through a self-consciously designed set of empirical categories, certain concrete mechanisms by which the materiality of discourse is distributed, exercised, and suppressed. Archeological description is critical in that it illuminates that limit. It is socially relevant in that the discursive features it investigates are matters of organized social practice. By carrying out its descriptions from within the limit of its own "archive", archeology allows itself to use the instruments and standards of an established discursive formation, and hence provides us with something more intelligible (if less 'pure') than the inarti-

culate violence of transgression. By concerning itself with specific, empirically identifiable ways in which power is exercised through discourse, archeology draws our attention to the suppression of particular, concrete "differences", and to the genuine plurality of the discourses which surround us.

This is, no doubt, a valuable analytic refinement. Where transgression can perhaps awaken us to the existence of difference and limit, archeology shows how they might be described. However, there is nothing in mere description that suggests a direction for critique. Whereas, in the act of transgression, identity was both discovered and violated in the same instant, archeological description leaves identities and limits intact. In passing from the binary and figurative opposition of Identity and Difference to a plurality of identities and differences constituted through practice, archeology seems to abandon the original motivation for critique. The following chapter examines the question of how social criticism is to be justified and directed in a world of multiple identities and differences.

Chapter 4

FRAGMENTED LIMITS.

The political implications of Foucault's work are, at least to judge by its critical reception, highly ambiguous. The explosive proliferation of English language commentary on Foucault since the late 1970s attests to his importance for "political and social theory". Yet the response is deeply fractured and uneven. Simultaneously, Foucault has been courted by Maoists[35], championed by anti-Marxists who read his analysis of certain administrative and theoretical discourses as a direct assault on the Soviet 'gulag-state'[36], reviled by some Marxists who detect in the same analytic approach an abandonment of the post-Enlightenment heritage of normative and epistemological standards[37], and praised by still others for advancing a materialist theory of the power-knowledge relationship in modern 'disciplinary' society[38]

Many factors probably contributed to Foucault's relatively spectacular induction into the discourse of academic political and social theory, but one of them seems to be the perception of a basic change of theme. The florescence of "political" commentary coincides with the celebrated shift from an early archeological,

---

35 See P/K, ch. 1

36 See, e.g., Dews 1979.

37 See, e.g., Dews 1984; Poulantzas.

38 See, e.g., Smart 1983.

to a later genealogical period in Foucault's work. Foucault becomes politically relevant to the extent that he redirects his focus from the themes of discourse and difference to those of bio-power and discipline. The sheer volume of commentary on the later work and the relative neglect of the earlier seems to reflect an informal consensus, occasionally stated expressly, to the effect that after the Archeology, "discourse recedes into the background", clearing the way for a genuinely political sort of analysis (Lemert and Gillan, p.62; BSH, p.xxv, p.104).

I have no intention either to deny that Foucault's work has evolved (sometimes quite dramatically) over time, or to insist that its evolution and coherence be viewed from a single perspective. Some light can be shed, however, not only on the overall development of that work, but also on the critical response it has provoked, by continuing to approach it with the question of "difference" in mind. Specifically I shall suggest in this chapter that a significant reason for Foucault's sudden relevance to the discourse of political theory is that the notion of power which he introduces at this point readily lends itself, in a way that such earlier concepts as discourse, dispersion, and limit did not, to the sorts of explanatory strategies that are the mainstay of what he refers to as "modern" thought.

Also, in continuing to pursue the theme of the "limit", I shall argue that Foucault's increasingly pointed efforts to work out the relationship between discourse and power ultimately led to a break with the binary logic of inclusion and exclusion, and to a more pluralistic, positive, and politically creative regard for difference.

4.1 Genealogy.

Foucault's substitution of "genealogy" for "archeology" as a description of his work does occur between two major and quite different writings (the Archeology and Discipline and Punish), and it is tempting to regard these terms as marking a distinction between separate subject areas. But to assume that archeology is concerned primarily with discourse and genealogy primarily with power is inadequate. Power, as Foucault insists, had been, if not an explicit, then a crucially implicit theme from the time of Madness and Civilization (PK, p.115), and discourse continues to be of central importance throughout Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality (cf. e.g., HS, p.11).

The two terms -- "archeology" and "genealogy" -- are tensely juxtaposed in Foucault's 1970 essay, "The Discourse on Language", which marks an important turning point both in his vocabulary and in the general nature of his work. The major theme of this work is the project, familiar from the Archeology, of isolating and describing various mechanisms by which discursive practice is constrained, restricted, suppressed, or rarefied. In perhaps a more concise presentation than in the Archeology, Foucault advances a series of hypotheses on the means by which the "ponderous, awesome materiality" of discourse is regulated within societies, and he offers some methodological precepts for studying discourse and the constraints upon it. Foucault apparently considers it necessary at this point to modify the method of analysis in order to deal separately with two aspects of discourse which had both been studied within archeology. While he continues to couch the relationship between discourse and power in mainly negative terms, there is now a more explicit recognition that the mechanisms which serve to exclude, constrain,

and delimit some discursive events are also instrumental in the positive formation of others. The materiality of discourse is no longer regarded as just an obstacle to, but is now seen as a vehicle for, the formation of particular meanings. Archeology, which had tended to overlook the positive and productive effects of power, would be supplemented now by two separate forms of discursive analysis -- the "critical" and the "genealogical" -- one of which would be concerned with constraint or exclusion and the other with the positive formation of discursive events:

> The critical side of the analysis deals with the systems enveloping discourse; attempting to mark out the principles of ordering, exclusion and rarity in discourse.... The genealogical side of discourse, by way of contrast, deals with series of effective formation of discourse; it attempts to grasp it in its power of affirmation,... the power of constituting domains of objects, in relation to which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions. (DL, p.234; cf. also PK, p.85)

Adding a positive sense to the archeological project, the revised analysis of discourse "brings to light the action of imposed rarity, with a fundamental power of affirmation" (DL, p.234, my emphasis).

The following year, in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", Foucault revisited the Nietzschean roots of genealogical method, and developed a fuller account of the productive relationship between power and discourse. Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals[39] had been both a specific critique of the transcendental claims of Judaeo-Christian morality and an episode in Nietzsche's longstanding exploration of the historicity of meaning and historiographic method. The Genealogy was a pioneering effort to supplant the historiography of moral values with one of moral discourse.

---

39 Cited hereafter as GM.

The relativity of meaning on Nietzsche's account is established not only negatively, by the absence of fixed ideal reference, but also by the positive link between interpretation and the necessities of organic life. Meaning-giving arises from a fundamental human "drive towards the formation of metaphors" (Nietzsche, 1871, p.88), which is responsible for meaning at the discursive level, but also for the significance of every other interpretive act down to the level of physical perception itself. The historicity of interpretation is linked directly to an ontology of struggles, wills, and life-forces:

> whatever exists ... is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming master, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpetation... (GM, p.77)

In the case of moral values, the ability to designate a widely accepted meaning may reflect a simple vitality in those who control the language, as when the Goths establish themselves as literally "god-like". More importantly, it is an invaluable strategic resource. In On the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche illustrates the point by way of an allegory of human evolution or maturation. The 'blond beast' represents human animal at its most primitive but most robust, where it leads a 'pre-historic' existence of simple, unreflective appetite and instinctive predation, interpreting the world only according to immediate need. Like all animals, "their work is an instinctive creation and imposition of forms; they are the most involuntary, unconscious artists there are" (GM, p.86).

The discovery by the weak that they are capable of reinterpreting certain values or practices and turning their psychological force against their natural superiors marks a critical and ambiguous development: man simultaneously becomes

interesting and evil (GM, p.33). With this 'slave revolt in morality', instinctive and 'innocent' violence is quelled with conscious deception. But the sword cuts both ways: as the force of the old, autocratic morality (the "morality of mores") melts away, so does the solidity of every other 'objective' truth. The price of historicity is a loss of the comfort which the naive view of the world provided. Reading this development not as an affirmation of their own freedom but as a severance from the absolute source of meaning, the 'reactive type' succumb to a profound nausea at themselves and at life. The nauseous find, if not a remedy, then at least a palliative in the forms of the ascetic priest and the cult of nihilism. By elevating the new interpretations of the reactive type to the status of absolute moral values, and obscuring their figurative and strategic character, the ascetic priest is able both to preserve the ascendancy of his own interpretive regime and to soothe his flock's bruised sense of security. There is no reconciliation with historicity at this stage, but only a viciously guarded transcendentalism which justifies a renewed denial of it, and at the same time disguises its own mundane purpose; the will behind the ascetic ideal

> interprets epochs, nations and men inexorably with a view to this one goal; it permits no other interpretation, no other goal; it rejects, denies, affirms, and sanctions solely from the point of view of its interpretation (GM, p.146).

Only the "sovereign individual", the summit of Nietzsche's hypothetical evolution, develops a genuinely creative response to the historicity of meaning. The fact that, as Nietzsche puts it, "there is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective 'knowing'" (GM, p.119) implies not that "objectivity" is denied us, but that it must be conceived of apart from a timeless metaphysics. Henceforth objectivity is to be understood...

> not as "contemplation without interest" (which is a nonsensical absurdity) but as the ability to control one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge. ...the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity" be (GM. p.119).

Where it no longer signifies a clear and distinct view of the unitary truth but rather a variety of perspectives on a plural and unstable field of interpretations and power relationships, "objectivity" amounts to both philosophical maturity and tactical astuteness. The ability to reflect on, adjust, and select one's interpretations and intentions voluntarily, and to advance beyond both the instinctive blindness of the natural attitude and the monocular tyranny of the 'reactive type', "this is a piece of supreme mastery on earth" (GM, p.74), a mark of "mankind come to completion" (GM, p.59).

As Foucault points out in his essay, this notion of perspectival autonomy is central to Nietzsche's idea of the "historical sense", and is the driving insight behind the genealogical method. The essence of genealogy is simply to drive a wedge between the historical succession of practices, struggles, and chance events and the superficial crust of interpretations through which they have come to be understood.

In the paradigm case, an etymological analysis reveals the relative durability of a moral term such as "good", and correlates the shifts in its interpretation (revealed in its etymological history) with historical events affecting control over the language. It should be noted that since all practice involves interpretation, the technique need not be confined solely to language, as Nietzsche demonstrates by pointing to over a dozen interpretations applied over time to the practice of corporal punishment. Whether the practice is discursive or not, however,

> one must distinguish two aspects: on the one hand, that in it which is relatively enduring, the custom, the act, the "drama", a certain strict sequence of procedures; on the other, that in it which is fluid, the meaning, the purpose, the expectation associated with the performance of such procedures (GM, p.79).

While this discernment is the crux of genealogical method generally, both Nietzsche's and Foucault's, it is not part of a reductionistic strategy in either case. To claim that discourse and power are necessarily related is not to suggest either that the relationship is uni-directional or that the power involved is monolithic and tyrannical.

In his essay on Nietzsche, Foucault illuminates some of Nietzsche's ontological assumptions by analysing three distinct terms which Nietzsche uses in specifying the sort of "origin" that the genealogical method aims to uncover. Evidently, Nietzsche uses the term Ursprung to refer to the sort of origin sought by Paul Ree, the "English genealogist". This particular conception of the origin led Ree to a double error: first, by inverting the priority of sign and interpretation, and assuming that the original meaning of a moral value was the same as its present meaning, and also by assuming that the practical circumstances which gave the practice its utility had also remained constant. As we have seen, Nietzsche flatly rejects the first assumption, but he also rejects the latter. Even the Ursprung which Nietzsche does recognize -- a moral value's pudenda origo, its "shameful" emergence from struggle, deceit, or accident -- is no indication of its present value, since the power which has shaped it neither was unitary at the time of its birth nor has remained stable since then. A historical method based on the search for Ursprung overlooks not only the variability of interpretations, but also the plurality of possible "utilities", the "difference" of powers. Even the pudenda origo was

not an unequivocal domination, but a conflict of multiple forces. As Foucault says, "what is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity" (LCP, p.142).

An adequate methodology will have to recognize the plurality of power relationships affecting interpretations, both synchronically and over the course of time. Foucault observes that where Nietzsche is "truly a genealogist" (LCP, p.142) he challenges the pursuit of the Ursprung and instead uses two other terms to characterize the historically relevant "origin" of a present value: Herkunft refers to the "descent" of a practice or meaning through its "numberless beginnings" -- the chance events and contingencies that have been synthesized into an identity which only later comes to appear unitary and self-sufficient (LCP, p.145-8). Entstehung signifies the "emergence, the moment of arising" (LCP, p.148) of a meaning out of a particular constellation of forces. Both terms serve as constant reminders that the present interpretive order is ephemeral and open to challenge -- not only because the meanings in currency here lack fixed reference, but because they are the product of a historically specific relationship of forces.

By relating interpretation to specific instances of the exercise of power, genealogy reveals the swarming diversity that the dominant interpretation had obscured:

> it corresponds to the acuity of a glance that distinguishes, separates, and disperses, that is capable of liberating divergence and marginal elements — the kind of dissociating view that is capable of decomposing itself, capable of shattering the unity of man's being through which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of his past (LCP, p.153).

Necessarily, the genealogical perspective is itself historically unstable and fragmented. Rather than impassively chronicling the course of the "identical", genealogy seizes upon differences, discontinuities, and unforseen eruptions. And just as archeology was unable to produce an account of its own archive, genealogy cannot presume to write the "law" of such events, since "it gives equal weight to its own sight and to its objects" (LCP, p.157).

To acknowledge that its own interpretations are, like all others, perspectival, is not to lapse into an immobilizing relativism. Only the nihilist would assume that, in rejecting all absolute grounds for interpretation, the genealogist has lost the right to judge. On the contrary, the plural ontology of power, wills and organic necessities is, on Nietzsche's account, precisely the "ground" for epistemological, strategic, and valuative judgements. The rare freedom and "justice" of the sovereign individual do not imply a viewpoint abstracted beyond power and perspective, but an ability to choose as autonomously as possible the practical considerations that will go into any particular decision. Only from an absolutist viewpoint is there a paradox in the idea that "objectivity" is based on practical circumstances and contingent interests. The peculiarity of the genealogical perspective is its lack of hypocrisy: it "is explicit in its perspective and acknowledges its system of injustice" (LCP, p.157). By linking the production and interpretation of meaning to a field of concrete difference and powers, Nietzsche provides positive grounds for judgement which nonetheless cannot be elevated to the status of deductive principles or immutable Truth.

4.2 Theory versus Power

Foucault's major works subsequent to "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" are undoubtedly "genealogical" in several respects. Clearly, the analysis of the nineteenth century discourses on penology and sexuality in Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality are concerned with the emergence and descent of a particular range of discourses and administrative practices, and with their utility as vehicles of domination. But this in itself is hardly an innovation in Foucault's thought. What is far more important is the elaboration of the idea, not fully developed even by Nietzsche, of the granular and productive character of power. At the same time, Foucault, like Nietzsche, struggles with the tension between the affirmation of plurality and difference and the need for positive political action. Where Nietzsche envisaged a resolution of this tension in the "sovereign individual", Foucault will eventually find his exemplar of political maturity in the (perhaps more modest) form of the "specific intellectual".

Applying the notions of relativity and "difference" to the analysis of power relationships may appear in retrospect a fairly straightforward extension of Foucault's thought, given his previous work on discourse and knowledge and his interest in Nietzsche. In fact, though, a workable interconnection of power and difference was some years in the making.

In a discussion in 1972 (LCP, p.205-17), Foucault seemed to agree with Gilles Deleuze's observations that the longstanding concern to unite "theory and practice" in politics was based on a false dichotomy akin to the binary conception of object and representation. The idea that the political intellectual somehow gave a cognitive "representation" of struggles which others fought at a more concrete

level was rejected as idealistic and politically suspect. The ontological hierarchy had to be broken down, and the intellectual's role as an agent of a system of power acknowledged. Henceforth, the strategic character of theory would have to be recognized and in fact exploited as an instrument of resistance against power. Intellectuals would no longer speak for others, but rather create conditions which would enable others to speak for themselves.

However, even this pluralistic vision seemed to imply a great dichotomy: a line was drawn between a monolithic and oppressive power and a diverse multitude who resisted its effects. Foucault raised no objection to Deleuze's claim that

> A theory does not totalize; it is an instrument for multiplication and it also multiplies itself. It is in the nature of power to totalize and... theory is by nature opposed to power (LCP, p.208).

A particular strategic consequence of this was that struggles directed at particular objects -- such as the proletariat's struggle against economic exploitation -- would tend naturally to remain isolated, whereas "if the fight is directed against power" in a general sense, the localized resistances would tend to coalesce into a unified revolutionary struggle (LCP, p.216). Foucault had never held to the transcendental unity of the Other, but this was a distinctly metaphysical-sounding conception of the Same.

This tension between a fundamentally unitary power and a fragmented resistance persists, with some important modifications, through Foucault's account of the 'disciplinary' society in Discipline and Punish. The metaphor of Bentham's panopticon symbolizes the anonymity, diffuseness, and relative subtlety of power mechanisms in the modern state. Power, symbolized by the one-way gaze from the prison's central watch tower, is quietly but infinitely invasive. Its vehicle is

not primarily violence, but knowledge: the knowledge that others have of one, and which is recorded in the dossiers of innumerable minor authorities, and justifies their further interventions; but also the knowledge one has of oneself, the internalization of a particular form of subjectivity. Since its primary effect is to create, through a vast array of orthopaedic techniques, a 'normalized' individual, disciplinary power is above all productive. In the modern era, Foucault says,

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (DP, p.194).

In typically genealogical fashion, the production of discourses, knowledge, and even subjective identity are related to the ubiquitous operation of power, but the dynamics are, at least at present, particularly one-sided. Admittedly, no diabolical agent presides over all of the mechanisms of normalization -- the beauty of the panopticon is that it works equally well whether the central tower is occupied or not -- but the nature of the power that it serves is nevertheless strangely monolithic and seamless.

In a way, this is reminiscent of Nietzsche's account of the perspectival monism that was imposed after the 'slave revolt' in morality, but Foucault seems less willing at this point than Nietzsche was either to find fractures within the present tyranny or to credit its subjects with much independent initiative. After all, Nietzsche says, even the nihilism of the 'reactive type' is an expression (however feeble or misdirected) of their own will to power; and the covert activity of the sovereign individual suggests that the hegemony of the present regime is incomplete (GM, III:13). Foucault's account of the pervasiveness and interrelatedness of

the modern techniques of 'normalization' is undoubtedly impressive as an empirical description. However, as theoretical propositions on the nature of power in general, metaphors such as "panoptic society" and "carceral pyramid" (DP, p.302) seem to depart from the radical pluralism that was supposed by Nietzsche in On the Genealogy of Morals, and to conjure up the image of an all-powerful tyranny standing over a relatively pacified body of subjects.

4.3 Three questions on sex and power.

This evidently troubled Foucault as well, for in the following year he explicitly addressed the question of power -- both as phenomenon and as discursive object -- from a perspective which was far more consistent with his own prior account of genealogy. In the early pages of The History of Sexuality, Foucault raised three questions about the relationship between sexuality and power since the Victorian era, and about the discourse through which that relationship had been examined. First, a "properly historical question": "Is sexual repression truly an established historical fact?"; second, a "historico-theoretical question": Is power essentially repressive?; and third, a "historico-political question": Does the discourse which characterizes power as repression serve to resist the effects of power, "or is it not part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtless misrepresents) by calling it 'repression'?" (HS, p.10).

Popular and mainstream academic commentary on Foucault's work on sexuality and power generally seems to find more of interest in the first two of these questions than in the third. It is arguable that the order of critical priority they have received is the inverse not only of the order in which they are posed, but also

of their importance for understanding Foucault's aims in The History of Sexuality. I shall examine them in turn below, dwelling especially on some of the criticisms provoked by Foucault's response to the second one. First, the question of sexual repression.

With the "grey, meticulous erudition" characteristic of genealogy, Foucault gives historical evidence of how, far from being silenced or repressed, sex in the modern period has become the object of an infinitely prolific discourse. As in the analysis of the prison, it is discovered that the modern vocabulary of sexuality emerged coincidentally with a vast array of "normalizing" apparatuses which operate primarily through the cultivation of a particular form of subjectivity. Long before Freud, Foucault says, a dialogue was thought to be necessary between reason and a sexual nature that was at once innate and "unnatural", ubiquitous yet secretive, vital and yet dangerously prone to disease and degeneracy. The importance and the inscrutability of sex demanded that special measures be taken to know it, to expose its malignant forms, and to control it both as a matter of public morality and hygiene and as an essential dimension of self-knowledge. The emergence of sexuality as an autonomous entity was linked to the deployment of an entire network of medical, psychiatric, pedagogical, legal, moral, demographic, and familial mechanisms which functioned to define and preserve the boundaries of sexual normality, to expose and treat instances of deviance, and to establish wholesome relationships betwen individuals and their sexual truth. Sexuality, as a field of discourse and as a particular structure of subjective experience, therefore, is coeval with this range of coercive mechanisms, and in fact sex itself is a relatively recent construct, which arose when the findings of reproductive biology

were interpreted through the categories of this historically specific constellation of discourses and administrative practices (HS, p.154-5): "We have had sexuality since the eighteenth century, and sex since the nineteenth. What we had before that was no doubt the flesh" (PK, p.211).

Foucault's answer to the first question, then, is this: sexual repression is not a matter of irreducible "fact"; it is rather a matter of discursive necessity for us. The irony is that the mysterious, primal, and repressed entity that is called "sexuality" exists only within our own century-old discourse, and exists there necessarily as an object of repression. We simply cannot contemplate the truth of our sexuality without invoking a duality of primal force and historical repression. Such a thought is not ruled out by any intellectual a priori, but rather by a discursive one; oppression and primal force are precisely what "sexuality" refers to.

Foucault's remarks on "disciplinary power" and on the effects of normalizing institutions on the formation of the modern subject have already indicated the direction of his reply to the second question on power. The products of disciplinary power indicate, at a minimum, that power is not just repressive. A conservative reading of Foucault's critique of the "repressive hypothesis" (sustained throughout The History of Sexuality) would grant that it does illustrate the potential productivity of power, if nothing more.

For centuries, Foucault says, our understanding of power has been based on the metaphor of law; the "juridico-discursive" model portrays the relationship between power and its object as binary, negative, and discursive. Power has been understood, like the monarch, as a central authority which emanates prohibition, censorship, and denial (HS, p.83-5; PK, p.92-108, etc.). And yet, for all its

appearance of omnipotence, the power that such a model brings to mind is surprisingly impoverished: "it is a power to say no; in no condition to produce, capable only of posting limits, it is basically anti-energy" (HS, p.85). An effect of the repressive model, therefore, is to obscure the actual productivity of power, and the multiplicity of its relations and forms.

To this extent, Foucault's critique of the juridico-discursive model seems a worthwhile enterprise. However, the thrust and the justification of Foucault's alternative propositions on power are obscure:

> power is not acquired, seized or shared, but only exercised;
>
> power relations are not external to other relations (e.g., relations of knowledge, economics, or sex), nor superstructural effects, but are immanent within those relations;
>
> power does not emanate outward or downward from a central point of sovereignty, but "comes from below";
>
> power relations are not explained in terms of grand strategies or conspiracies, but neither are they without calculation -- they are "both intentional and non-subjective; and
>
> power never exists apart from resistance; where the resistance is utterly overwhelmed no power relationship exists (HS, p.94-5).

It is tempting to wonder whether some of these propositions are motivated less by their empirical relevance than by a desire on Foucault's part to merge the theoretical analysis of power with the voguish categories of literary deconstruction. The parallels between Derrida's conception of meaning and Foucault's account of power are quite striking. Meaning and power depend on relations of mutual contrast and difference among ontologically similar elements in a field. Neither meaning nor power, therefore, are substantial things, nor originate from a fixed source, but are purely relational entities which exist only in the elusiveness

of 'events' -- the momentary confrontation/realization of differences. The 'moment' of power is thus infinitely deferred since every product of this process is necessarily self-divided and susceptible to immediate deconstruction.

A natural application of this logic to the political critique of domination might run parallel to the critique of 'presence' in literary deconstruction. Such a strategy would aim, on the one hand, to expose the fragility and internal dividedness of every hegemonic power, thereby undermining its pretense to completeness and sufficiency, and on the other, to liberate the multitude of potential alternative arrangements of power which are stifled by the present formation. In other words, the problem with politics, on this view, is the tendency towards stasis in the field of power relationships, and the task of critique is a relentless decentring or displacement of all hegemonies and the liberation of the free play of differences. As one advocate of an explicitly deconstructive politics puts it,

> the political equivalent of [textual 'closure', or the illusion of univocal meaning] is the absolute state (be it dictatorial or liberal).... The political equivalent of displacement... is continuous and plural revolutions, the openness of material forces which exceeds the imposition of power (Ryan, p.8).

4.4 Post-Structuralist Challenges

Numerous aspects of Foucault's life and work demonstrate his sympathy for the project of a political application of "post-structuralist" or "post-humanist" themes. As I have tried to show, a concern with the geometry of identity and difference has been a consistent feature of his work, whether it concerned the 'moment of partition' between reason and madness or the attempt to trace the boundary between authorized and excluded discourse. Foucault would also agree, no

doubt, that the problem of disciplinary normalization can be schematized nicely by the model of the colonization of differences[40].

This being said, however, some cautions are in order. While certain very general concerns seem to be common to them -- namely an impatience with normative 'essentialisms', a suspicion of grand theoretical projects, and a tendency to examine the world though multiple rather than binary categories -- the growing number of politico-theoretical terms prefixed with "post-" (e.g., post-structuralism, -humanism, -modernism, -Marxism, -feminism, etc.) tend to be rather casually defined except within very specialized discussions. Consequently, little is conveyed by claiming, for instance, that Foucault's interest in the question of 'otherness' or his disapproval of totalitarianism puts him in the camp of the "post-" theorists. The confusion is exacerbated by the fact that these terms tend to carry strong honorific or pejorative overtones, both because of their air of having transcended some long-standing orthodoxy and through their association with specific political projects. It is too easy to allow Foucault's affinity for certain "post-structuralist" themes to become the platform for a general co-optation or rejection of his work, and especially to obscure the specificity of its "genealogical" element.

An example is the case of Foucault's guilt-by-association with the so-called nouveau philosophes. This small group of young intellectuals, all ex-Marxists and veterans of the 'events of May', 1968, were introduced en bloc into the French philosophical arena in 1976 (shortly after the publication of Discipline and Punish), and were soon lionized by the popular media (Dews, 1979, p.127-8). According to their critics, at least, the source of their public acclaim was (apart from personal

---

40 See p.34-38, Ch.2 above.

affiliations with the publishing industry) their presentation of a simplistic but radical-sounding humanism premised on the idea that the rationalization of the state -- be it capitalist or socialist -- inevitably implied totalitarianism[41]. The line of argument lent itself to several forms of protest at once: on the one hand, it permitted a respectably leftist critique of Western social administration, electoral politics, and institutional and cultural 'normalization'; but the real pay-off was a blanket indictment of Marxist social theory on the grounds that its necessary fruit was the Soviet gulag.

Of particular interest to the present argument is the parallel in the nouveau philosophes' position between identity/difference and power/resistance. If the categories of Marxist analysis are to be rejected because of the latent totalitarian tendencies of all social planning, then the notion of a binary class struggle conducted in the interests of the proletariat is also obsolete. The scientistic and static notion of a proletarian class, identifiable by its concrete mode of existence and its place in the relations of production, gives way to a more fluid conception of the oppressed. Political action is now undertaken in the interests, not of a positively definable group, but of the 'pleb' -- the mass of individuals who are the objects of all forms of totalizing power, including the power of the exclusive categories of Marxist political analysis (Dews, 1979, p.134). Obviously, the attraction of such a strategy is that it prevents specific instances of resistance -- e.g., the struggles of prisoners, homosexuals, or mental patients -- both from being coopted by other movements and from establishing their own global and dogmatic programs and inaugurating new cycles of exclusion and repression. The activist refuses to allow political criticism to become attached to any one issue or set of

---

41 See Dews, 1979, 1980; Smart, 1983, p.67-72; Poulantzas.

interests, and instead upholds the right of the maximum political 'difference' against the encroachment of 'identity'.

Despite some superficial resemblances, such a position is clearly at odds both with Foucault's conception of power (particularly after 1975) and with the political value that a deconstructionist such as Derrida would place on the notion of difference. The two poles of the nouveau politics -- at one end an unspecified and necessarily downtrodden 'pleb', and at the other an equally empty but omnipresent Power, clearly contribute nothing to political analysis or to the strategy of resistance, but are purely valuative or moral terms. Emptied of all content, these terms simply express an abstract moral principle: power is that which colonizes differences and hence violates their rights. Resistance is a matter of abstract justice -- the defence of the right of the pleb against the non-right of power.

As a political extension of post-structuralist literary principles, this has more in common with the strategies of infinite proliferation and disruption explored in the early part of the century than with modern deconstruction. For Derrida, the critique of textual 'closure' does not aim to liberate the maximum number of individual differences[42] but to demonstrate that an indefinite number of alternative arrangements of differences would be arguably valid. A critique on such positive and strategic lines is closed to the nouveau philosophes by their inherently moralistic definitions of power and pleb. As one critic sarcastically expresses the dilemma: "Resist [say the nouveau philosophes] if you find it amusing -- but without a strategy or you will no longer be plebes but power" (Castoriadis, p.104).

---

42 Derrida would find the very idea of a romantic defence of difference contradictory, since differences do not exist as individuals but only through mutual contrast: "The same is the same only in being affected by the other" (quoted in Descombes, p.147).

Ironically, the nouveau philosophes' conception of political struggle is based, despite its putative affirmation of plurality, on precisely the binary logic of Foucault's 'juridico-discursive' model of power. Although in this case neither the source nor the object of power are fixed, the essentials of the relationship are a uni-directional force of negation and prohibition and a sort of primal and innocent energy which is forever striving to blossom in violation of the law. The image of this repressed essence provides a moral justification for resistance, but like the original juridico-discursive model, conjures up an extremely limited vision of the dynamics of power and resistance. Power is reprehensible because it restrains a primal energy, or places a limit on the satisfaction of desire:

> "Power is what says no. And the challenging of power as thus conceived can only appear as transgression" (PK, p.139-40).

While Foucault's use of the term 'pleb' has been cited as evidence of his philosophical and political complicity with the nouveau philosophes (Dews, 1979, p.14), it actually provides an excellent view of the gulf between his position and theirs. The peculiarity of Foucault's position derives both from the methodological assumptions of genealogy, and from his efforts to apply a strictly mundane vision of identity and difference to the analysis of power relationships.

Where, for the nouveau philosophes, the 'pleb' is both a concrete instantiation of the metaphysical opposition between power and right, and the rallying point for a neo-populist politics, Foucault uses the term in a strictly nominalistic sense. "The plebs no doubt is not a real sociological entity.... There is certainly no such thing as 'the' plebs" (PK, p.137-8). Instead, the term is used as a consciously fabricated instrument in a "positivistic" analysis of power. The 'pleb' is, on the one hand, a purely relational term that signifies the "underside", the "limit", the

"counterstroke" of power (PK, p.138). This does not mean that the pleb is the adjunct of a prior and independent power, but that the two elements are mutually necessary aspects of a single phenomenon. If the pleb is not a real thing, but a name used to draw attention to one side of an observable relationship, then its counterpart is equally artificial: to undertake a nominalistic analysis using these terms, "to begin the analysis with a 'how' is to suggest that power as such does not exist" (SP, p.217).

Foucault makes two arguments of this sort which must be kept separate. The more general, which the above claim represents, is the contention that the phenomena which we are used to regarding as the operations of power have to be examined in "positive" or nominalistic terms, and not invested with the inscrutable explanatory powers of the "fundamental". In rejecting the notion of "power", Foucault is simply rejecting the sort of explanation which would attribute social relationships and actions to an extra-mundane force. The term may still be useful, but it must be evacuated of its metaphysical connotations: power is "a way in which certain actions modify others.... A set of actions upon other actions" (SP, p.219-20). Foucault's account of power and resistance will not mirror the naturalized ontological hierarchy of "the positive and the fundamental", but will be alert to the play of equally real differences on a level field of human actions.

A more specific context in which Foucault says that "power does not exist" seems to strain the deconstructive metaphors of difference and play.

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when a man is in chains (SP, p.221).

It appears as if the language of "difference" is unable to accommodate cases where one side simply overwhelms the other. Foucault appears compelled by his own choice of metaphor to admit that where the "partners" in a power relationship do not retain some degree of mutual autonomy, no power relationship exists. Foucault's critique of the concept of power, it has been argued, commits him to silence on cases of despotism and brute force (Poulantzas, p.77-80, 146-53.).

The above quote can be salvaged, however, if it is understood to be prefaced with "As far as genealogy is concerned". Genealogical method presupposes that the historical instability of meaning arises from historical struggles over the means of interpretation. Instances of univocal determination are not ruled out by Foucault's ontology any more than by Nietzsche's, but they are not, in principle, susceptible of genealogical analysis since genealogy is confined methodologically to the study of power relations that are historically unstable. Power, in the limited sense in which it is of interest to genealogy, suggests the possibility of resistance: to demonstrate that a power relationship exists is to demonstrate that an action was conditioned by the contingent occurrence of another action, or in other words to demonstrate that a different outcome was possible.

The 'pleb' is, for Foucault, an indicator that this is the case. Just as, in Nietzsche's genealogy, an etymological shift signaled the Enstehung of a new meaning and revealed that even the present one was merely the latest of a chain of interpretations, Foucault regards the emergence of particular forms of resistance as the first indication that a discourse, a form of knowledge, or a type of experience has been conditioned in a specific and contingent way. The reclamation of vocabularies, the revalorization of discredited dimensions of experience,

attempts to resurrect "lost" literature -- in short, the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (PK, p.81) -- all serve to reveal that the normal sensibilities which they affront are products of an uneasy history.

This is not a defence of irrationalism or a lyrical call to arms in support of every possible object of power. The 'pleb' is not a rallying point for resistance; rather, certain kinds of visible resistance have a "plebian quality" (PK, p.138), which is to say that they reveal the historical contingency of particular interpretations or forms of systematic behaviour. To conceive of the 'pleb' as an instrument of genealogical analysis, Foucault says, is not something that "can be confused in any way with a neo-populism that substantializes the plebs as an entity, or a neo-liberalism that sanctifies its basic rights" (PK, p.138).

Not all who recognized the emergence of an increasingly explicit logic of identity and difference in Foucault's later propositions on power were enthusiastic. The same account of power and subjectivity around which the nouveau philosophes acted out their celebration of the "pleb" was received by more conventional critics as a dangerous assault on the basis of political and moral judgement. While acknowledging that Foucault's position is more sophisticated than that of the nouveau philosophes, and that he avoids their simplistic reifications, Peter Dews claims that Foucault's genealogy of the modern subject is vitiated by "the post-structuralist dilemma" (Dews, 1984, p.94). First, to claim that personal identity is a product of history and power is to rule out any standard of normative guidance:

> There can be no doubt that the central intention of this form of genealogy, as it is developed in Foucault's work from Madness and Civilization to The History of Sexuality is to dissolve the philosophi-

> cal link -- inherited by the Marxist tradition from German Idealism -- between consciousness, self-reflection, and freedom, and to deny that there remains any political potential in the ideal of the autonomous subject (Dews, 1984, p.87).

In fact, Dews reasons that Foucault's lack of respect for the subject allows him to gravitate "towards a position in which the very aim of political action appears to be abrogation of reflection and the cancellation of self-consciousness" (Dews, 1984, p.90), while the link between identity and power commits Foucault to the absurd proposition that "liberation is a form of servitude" (Dews, 1984, p.92).

As Dews envisions the dilemma, the only recourse for those who would historicize the Enlightenment notion of subjectivity and the universal moral force that it represents is to seek a new basis for value judgements and political action in an ahistorical "naturalism". Thus, Foucault's proposition that an effective critique of sexuality should begin with "a positive economy of the body and of pleasure" (Dews, 1984, p.94; PK, p.190) is seized upon as evidence that he now appeals to a Nietzschean "pure theory of forces" for the normative guidance that the ideal of autonomous subjectivity used to provide. The assumption, of course, is that the ideal of the 'free subject' was cast into suspicion in the first place because it was found to be "intrinsically heteronomous, constituted by power" (Dews, 1984, p.87); when the genealogist is then forced to seek 'authenticity' at a more profound level, there is nowhere to turn but to the solidity of power itself. But with this grounding in "Nietzschean naturalism", liberation is not equated with autonomous choice and reflection, but with blind desire[43] and the escape from identity. The

---

43 While the theme of desire, which coloured the French intellectual environment in the early to mid-seventies is undoubtedly important for understanding much of Foucault's work and the discussion that surrounds it, it is a theme that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice to say that Foucault emphatically denies that his kinship with Deleuze extends as far as the notion of desire (SPS, p.204).

question of whose liberation or whose desire is at stake is still impossible to answer, and something, Dews would have us believe, that Foucault must contrive not to ask.

A less extreme critic than Dews might claim that genealogy does in fact retain a normative basis for the critique of modern subjectivity, but only by slipping its own primal subject in through the back door. Even if Foucault is not defending the right of pure difference -- an identity-less force or desire -- his critique still seems to presuppose the idea of a material subject which is violated by the modern apparatuses of normalization. Genealogy simply invests its moral values in its own version of the "body subject". Indeed, some of Foucault's programmatic statements leave him open to this sort of interpretation. For instance, in the final pages of The History of Sexuality he says that:

> It is the agency 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 deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures (HS, p.157).

However, this "rallying" has to be understood in the context of the other assumptions of genealogy. Foucault has shown that the efforts of such people as Freud, Reich, and Lawrence to make sex the rallying point of our liberation have served, not as obstacles, but precisely as instruments in the deployment of sexuality and the constitution of our peculiar habits of self-understanding and normalization. To propose that we fabricate another complex of moral values and conceptions of authenticity on the basis of "bodies and pleasures" would really be inept. Rather, the significance of these things for genealogy is that they repre-

sent the "relatively enduring" substratum which Nietzsche distinguished from the patina of interpretation that had formed upon it. The artificial unities of sex and sexuality represent one possible way of theorizing certain fairly low-level or 'ahistorical' facts of human nature in a way that reflects and helps to reproduce a particular array of social relationships. To distinguish between the two levels is essential, but Foucault hardly suggests that we rally on behalf of the ahistorical stratum of "bodies, organs, somatic localizations, functions, anatomo-physiological systems, sensations, and pleasures" (HS, p.152-3)[44].

The very idea that this distinction is possible illustrates Foucault's distance from the assumptions behind the "post-structuralist dilemma". Epistemologically, the genealogist recognizes that all knowledge is the product of interpretations, and yet reserves the right to appeal to matters of fact; the 'enduring substratum' consists of beliefs or experiences which are interpreted through categories so universal or pragmatically necessary that it would be pointless to doubt them (e.g., that there are bodies, or that human beings interpret things). Other forms of knowledge (e.g., that a body is sexually aberrant, or that a crime has occurred) can only be had through a more parochial or historically specific interpretive framework. As far as the genealogy of the modern subject is concerned, one need not doubt the existence of conscious experience to recognize that the terms in which people came to understand themselves and to distinguish themselves from others within a given society are at once profoundly 'authentic' and historically

---

44 Allan Megill claims in this context that "Foucault is articulating an antinaturalism. He is trying, for all his references to 'the body', to demolish any connection between sex (or sexuality) and a presumed natural substratum" (Megill, p.253). I agree in part, but I would sharpen Megill's point. It is not the fact of a natural substratum that Foucault demolishes, but the idea that it could, in itself, provide moral or political direction.

contingent. The point is, though, that to the extent to which the experience of self is timeless or universal, it is genealogically uninteresting.

This distinction also helps to settle the question of the normative motivation behind the genealogical critique. Where rationalism has always tied moral goodness to objective knowledge, the genealogist recognizes that the determinate facts of the world are morally indifferent. As Hume found, the critique of rationalist epistemology implies a severance of moral and factual knowledge; facts become morally significant only by having values interpreted into them. The upshot is that the mere fact of subjectivity carries no a priori moral connotations whatsoever; qua ahistorical substratum, the subject has no moral value; and qua interpretation, its rights (for example the modern subject's right to be 'true' to its sexuality) are historically contingent, not eternal. The 'rallying point' for the genealogical critique could never have been a moral defence of the victims of modern subjectivity -- not (as its critics claim) because the critique is morally contradictory, but because genealogy historically deconstructs the very idea of inherent moral right.

4.5 Beyond Social Theory

This chapter opened with the suggestion that the clamour with which Foucault was inducted into the discourse of political theory might shed more light on that discourse itself than on Foucault's work. The genealogical turn in Foucault's work has been widely perceived, by supporters and detractors alike, as an inversion of the traditional terms of political theory. Whereas the conventional role of political theory has been the venerable one of "speaking truth to power", Foucault is

seen to reveal how truth, and such repositories of our truth as the subject, and sexuality, are in fact forged and shaped by unseen mechanisms of power. Foucault is worth celebrating (or villifying) because he re-orients our theoretical vision. The aim is no longer to justify or condemn political reality by means of a theory of right, but to undermine the discursive practices and values which inform political reality, and to expose their internal workings by means of a theory of power.

As a casual synopsis of the genealogical project, this is fair enough; genealogy is indeed concerned with the effects of power on the production of truth(s). However, an account in such broad strokes is in danger not only of obscuring the detail, but of misconstruing the sense of the project entirely. The significance and force of Foucault's later writings is not that they invert the priority of the key terms of political theory, but that they deconstruct those terms, and thereby problematize the discourse which has constructed itself upon them. Given the number of published attempts to plumb Foucault's work for a theory of power or subjectivity, it is worth repeating that the later writings are no more concerned with establishing a theory of sex, subjectivity, or power than Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals was concerned with establishing a moral theory[45].

With the critique of the "juridico-discursive" vision of power, Foucault seems to harmonize three very strong themes in his work: the post-structuralist notion of the ontological equivalence and inseparability of identity and difference; the archeological theme of the irreducible practicality of discourse; and an approach to the critique of historically-constituted meanings which derives from Nietzsche's genealogical method. The first two of these establish a vision of the world within which a Foucaultian politics would seek to operate; the third pro-

---

[45] See, for example, Fine, p.91-4; Smart, 1982, p.123-30; Sheridan, p.221-2.

vides an appreciation of the historical finitude which will both motivate the political critique and moderate its aspirations.

A literary deconstruction would aim to show how conventional texts of political theory typically depend on figurative rather than representative terminology, on rhetorical and suasive rather than purely logical devices of argument, and on a "logocentric" vision of meaning which would tether the play of all differences to a nucleus of self-sufficient identity. Foucault's critique takes this up, but with a practical re-reading. A deconstruction of discursive practice insists on the inseparability of meaning from social practice in general. The dynamism and relativity it reveals suggest that there is an irreducibly rhetorical aspect, not only to language, but to social being itself. On such a reading, the "power", "subjectivity" and "truth" which conventional political theory regards as atomic, stable, and abstract are seen to overlay a world of fragmented and historical practices.

The fragmentation of the subject, for instance, is a consequence of Hume's critique of rationalism which escaped neither Nietzsche nor Foucault[46]. To recognize the historicity of interpretation is to see that personal identity does not have the unity and constancy of the cogito, but is as variable and inconsistent as our perceptions. Foucault notes that the "systematic dissociation of identity" is an essential consequence of the genealogical viewpoint, and approvingly quotes Nietzsche's claim that "The study of history makes one 'happy, unlike the metaphysicians, to possess in oneself not an immortal soul but many mortal ones'" (LCP, p.161).

---

46 See Hume, p.251-63.

This insight opens up the strategic possibility that, although they are historically constituted, subjects might nonetheless undertake to criticize or reject some aspects of their constitution. The way one understands oneself and relates to others may be importantly influenced by, for example, the categories of psychiatry, but no one's identity is exhausted by any one line of interpretation or power relationship. Subjects are constituted "across a number of power relationships that are exerted over [them]" through various discourses and social apparatuses (SPS, p.207-8). Foucault's references to "sub-individuals" and "groupuscules" reflect the recognition that the lines of political struggle against these forms of identity will also be drawn in overlapping and unstable patterns.

Foucault's question of "How?" rather than "What?" forcibly substitutes a vision of historical process for the philosophical attitude of static contemplation. The sort of analysis which seeks to fix the relationship of Identity and Difference gives way to a historical investigation of how particular identities and differences have come to be constituted. Referring to the case of madness, Foucault puts the point very concretely:

> It was... through a certain mode of domination exercised by certain people upon certain other people, that the subject could undertake to tell the truth about its madness, presented in the form of the other (SPS, p.207).

The historical basis of the analysis rules out any attempt to recuperate this "other" on philosophical grounds. Resistance against the imposition of various forms of identity cannot be justified by theoretical abstractions, whether in the form of a normative appeal (for instance to a negative right of pure "difference") or a "scientific" claim generated within a historically unstable discourse. The "historical sense" which informs the genealogical critique instills, on the one hand,

a suspicion of the ulterior strategies which underlie such claims, and on the other, a diffidence about the historicity of one's own perspective. The genealogist allows of no theoretical formula which could determine in the abstract which struggles are worth articulating or which side of them one ought to be on. To the extent that the analysis strives for the "truth", it can only be the sort of mult-perspectivalism that Nietzsche called "objectivity". In the end, the motivation for particular struggles will come down to the question of local, historically specifiable costs. For the various critiques of subjectivity, Foucault says, the question will be

> at what price can subjects speak the truth about themselves... [for example] 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 (SPS, p.202).

In 1977, Foucault observed optimistically that the role of the "political intellectual" was increasingly being usurped by politically conscious technical experts from various fields (an exemplary case being Oppenheimer). Whereas the traditional, "universal intellectual" is styled as a serene custodian of enduring political truths, "the bearer of values and significations in which all can recognize themselves", the "specific intellectual" intervenes in "political struggles in the name of a 'local' scientific truth" (PK, p.128-9). Perhaps in this respect the specific intellectual contributes to a form of genealogical critique by providing the sorts of information which would permit one to distinguish, particularly in fields of highly specialized or privileged knowledge, between suspect interpretations and relatively uncontroversial ones, and by indicating what the consequence of a particular interpretation might be and how it might be resisted.

As encouraging as it may be in countering the pretensions of political "theory", the promise of the specific intellectual is limited. Historical examples of local or "conjunctural struggles" -- for instance, the French penal reform movement -- illustrate the dangers of co-optation, naivete, and political isolation which beset unorganized forms of protest. Foucault claims that even at this early stage, the function of the specific intellectual needs to be reconsidered or at least supplemented with a view to developing a greater coherence among various local struggles (PK, p.130-1). It remains to be seen how Foucault can aspire to this greater strategic coherence while sustaining his genealogical assault on the unities of political theory.

Foucault's third question on sexuality and power concerned the extent to which the established, "repressive" theory of power was implicated in "the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtless misrepresents) by calling it 'repression'" (HS, p.10; and p.81 above). The "historical network" in question is the constellation of theoretical, institutional, economic and other practices by which we, as members of the "modern" or "anthropological" episteme establish our identity, our truth, and our difference from what we are not. Clearly, Foucault's reply is that the modern conception of "power", and the conceptions of truth and free (i.e., power-less) subjectivity to which it is counterposed form the space within which our vision of identity and difference is confined. Power, which is understood to be illegitimate, deeply productive, inherently covert, and hence all the more to be exposed to knowledge is counterposed, in political theory no less than in psychiatry, to a subjective contemplation of truth which is purest and most undivided where power is absent. That is to say, our subjectivity, our truth,

our present mode of reflecting on our own identity require that we define our greatest (and never quite attainable) authenticity and maturity as a state in which struggle and the noisy welling-up of the foreign or the unassimilable are quelled.

The two poles can easily be reversed without altering the logic of the relationship: one could oppose the authenticity of the "different" to the illegitimacy of the "identical", or the true being of Power or "naturalism" to the non-being of subjectivity, as Foucault's critics have doggedly shown. The real threat to the theory that is based on this duality, however, would come from the recognition that our "others", the non-people -- the mad, the poor, the "inarticulate" -- are products of the real and mundane struggles through which we carry out this particular form of reflection on our identity. It would come from a recognition of the historical contingency not only of the particular theoretical concepts through which we conduct that reflection, but of the very manner of the reflection itself -- the demarcation of a field of "authentic" experience which depends both symbolically and practically on real people and practices which remain, nonetheless, marginal to that field of experience.

It is the critique of this mode of reflection, Foucault claims, that would organize the various sectoral struggles against the modern forms of normalization. Protests against specific forms of subjectification, the specialized work of "specific intellectuals", and the genealogical critique of the discourses of social theory can all be regarded as elements in a "battle around truth", where "truth" is understood not as

> 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and various effects of power attached to the true'.... The essential political problem for the intellectual is... that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of

truth. The problem is not changing peoples' consciousness -- or what's in their heads -- but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth (PK, p.132-3).

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Having traced the thread of the "limit" through Foucault's writings, perhaps it is possible to locate his work and the commentary surrounding it in a larger context. Explicit in some, and implicit in much of the critical literature, is the question of Foucault's relationship with the 'project of the Enlightenment' or with 'modernity'. The question can be made sense of, I believe, without any pretense of pinning down the exact meaning of these capacious abbreviations. Though Foucault's exploration of the 'modern episteme' in The Order of Things is purposely limited, it accords with the widely held understanding of the last century or so as a period in which the Classical bases of epistemological and moral certainty have been, after centuries of gradual recession, finally superseded by a philosophy self-consciously grounded in the world of human experience, needs, and self-creativity.

The inaugural questions of the period are, perhaps Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" or, in the language of 'anthropology', "What is man?"[47] It might be argued that the philosophical context in which they are asked gives these questions two dimensions, and suggests two different types of response. On the one hand, they are provoked by the crisis of Classical reason, the slow 'death of God' at the hands of Copernicus, Newton, Hume, and so many others. Insofar as they represent the erosion of the old order, they lead onto a world fraught with uncertainty and dan-

---

47 See Foucault, SPS, p.200.

ger. On the other hand, they suggest a solution to the crisis -- the possibility of rediscovering within 'human being' the bases for meaning, knowledge, and goodness that had once been grounded in Being. The first sense of the 'modern' carries an attitude of tentativeness and a suspicion of claims to permanence or esoteric knowledge. The second holds out the promise of building on firm, though mundane, foundations.

Like those examined in the three main chapters above, the majority of serious, Anglo-American critiques of Foucault indicate a dedication to this second, more 'positive' reading of the project of modernity. Typically, Foucault is criticized for having abandoned the hard-won epistemological and normative standards established by the positive efforts of Kant, Marx, and the various refiners of phenomenology and positivism. Foucault's erratic introduction of 'aesthetic', 'deconstructive', and 'nihilistic' elements into the serious questions of epistemology and political morality have led, at the extreme, to his being condemned for irrationality and irresponsibility, and, from more indulgent critics, to apologies for his preoccupation with 'style'[48].

Ironically, however, the charge that Foucault represents post or anti-modernism overlooks the critical dimension that is inseparable from modern thought and that animates, for instance, Kant's critique of transcendental knowledge and Marx's deconstruction of the reified language of bourgeois economics. Foucault's challenges to specific forms of modern theory and practice which claim authority from the positive legacy of such figures do not indicate his repudiation of 'modern' thought, but if anything his advancement of it. Like Nietzsche's, but no less like Kant's and Marx's, Foucault's critique of our prevailing standards of

---

[48] See, e.g., Dews, 1984; Habermas; Wolin.

judgement is directed obliquely. Rather than entering the discourse in question on its own terms -- examining, for instance, the scientificity of modern medicine, or the subjective authenticity of psychoanalytic dialogue -- Foucault questions whether the established discourse can claim to be sufficient. To the question "What is man?", the modern discourses of medicine, psychoanalysis, and criminology -- but more profoundly, the discourses of power and truth -- seek to answer in the present indicative: "Man is ...." In a move that is very different, but no less modern, Foucault makes those positive responses the objects of new questions -- questions which cannot be encompassed within these established discourses.

As I have tried to show, Foucault's tactic redefines the purpose of critical enquiry from the search for enduring truths to an interrogation of the ways in which particular instances of positive knowledge entail and justify the historical limits of knowledge, theory, and social practice. My analysis has focused on two philosophical assumptions underpinning Foucault's project: the assumption of the mutual constitutiveness of identity and difference; and the claim that all of the human practices through which identity and difference come to be socially significant are equally real. The first assumption introduces a spatial metaphor into the analysis of consciousness and practice, which seems suddenly to invite questions as to how particular identities and differences come to be defined, partitioned, and maintained. The second serves, on the one hand, to cast doubts on the justificatory force of certain implicit hierarchies -- 'truth' over 'falsity', normality over deviance, theory over ideology, science over unscientific experience, and so on -- and on the other, to reveal how both the practices which effect these distinctions, and the identities and differences which they divide, are undeniably tangible and concrete.

Three devices of Foucault's methodology have been related to the project of interrogating the limit. The early writings considered the potential of transgressive art and literature for awakening us to the fact that "order exists". Later, as the archeological thesis of the practicality of discourse was developed, the prospect emerged of a more systematic description of the limits of specific 'discursive formations'. Finally, it was seen how, in applying some insights from Nietzsche's genealogical method, Foucault came to regard certain signs of struggle and reinterpretation -- the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" -- as evidence of the degree of force invested in a particular body of discourse, and also, perhaps, of the political stakes involved in preserving or challenging it. In approaching Foucault's work from this angle, I neither claim to have achieved the most 'authentic' perspective on its author's intentions, nor seek to iron out every appearance of inconsistency. To the extent that the coherence of Foucault's project has been of concern here, the motivation has not been a sense that logical consistency is the highest philosophical virtue, but rather that Foucault's purported incoherence has so often licensed mis-directed critiques and cavalier reconstructions. The advantage to my interpretation, I believe, is that it reads an underlying critical purpose in all of Foucault's work, and, at the same time, provides an sense of why that purpose strikes so many of Foucault's critics as either incoherent or scandalous.

With sensitivity and clarity that are rarely combined in Foucault commentary, John Rajchman gives an account of how the critical sensibilities of Foucault's early writings on art and literature continue to resonate throughout a career dedicated to the (modern) interrogation of modern thought. While, like many other critics, Rajchman detects an important reversal in Foucault's progress from problems

of a self-enclosed literature or 'writing'[49] to problems of the genealogy of social apparatuses, he neither reads this shift as a reversal of Foucault's position on 'modernity', nor considers Foucault's early 'aesthetic' writings as evidence of 'anti-modern' or 'anti-Enlightenment' intentions. On the one hand, the aesthetic writings had in fact been concerned with the deepest critical questions of modernity. Literature's self-conscious pursuit of the grounds and limits of its own being, Rajchman observes, poses the archetypally modern question: "from Flaubert to Robbe-Grillet, modernist writing is constantly asking itself the Oedipal question, 'Who am I'" (Rachman, p.13). When, on the other hand, Foucault later moves from the narrow ontological confines of 'writing' to the broader world of social practice and 'discourse', and the epistemic and normative "questions of the Enlightenment... return" (Rajchman, p.20), he is able to greet them without abandoning his suspicion of 'last words' and claims to final representation. The two elements of the modern problematic -- the elements of critique and commitment -- come together in Foucault's work in what Rajchman characterizes as an attitude of scepticism, and a particular view of freedom. Neither term represents an absolute virtue; the point of critique is neither to deny the validity of all experience, value, self-reflection, and so on, nor to establish one form permanently. It is to create the recognition and the real possibility that "we may choose otherwise" (Rajchman, p.38). This critical sensibility is the consistent basis of Foucault's thought. As Rajchman puts it: "[It] becomes Foucault's own ethic as a writer and an intellectual.... It is his way of continuing the modernist challenge to the constitution of the subject" (Rajchman, p.38).

---

[49] See Chapter One, p.29-34 above.

To regard this subject as just the individual, however, would be to construe Foucault's challenge too narrowly. All of Foucault's specific historical studies indicate that subjectivity is constituted not only through a multiplicity of apparatuses, but also over a variety of social units. Organized discursive and institutional practices serve not only to 'individualize' particular people as schizophrenics, sexual deviants, medical authorities, and so on, but also to constitute the identities of larger, perhaps more amorphous, identities: the medical profession, the academy, the 'normal' population, the 'Third World', the 'Free World'. Where the question of identity and difference is given practical social content, it ceases to be a matter of idle theory. The increasing militarization of the life and culture of most of the world's people, the global monopolization and homogenization of communication, and the growing economic marginalization of vast populations -- whether on the 'periphery' of the industrialized world or at the cores of its cities -- represent forms of partition which, while effected through various economic and technical mechanisms, are understood, naturalized, justified, and obscured through discursive ones.

There is a growing recognition of the value that critical strategies such as Foucault's might have in helping to articulate the modern politics of identity and difference. Increasingly, critical theorists representing a wide variety of interests are attending to the role of historically-specific discursive practices in the formation of objects and bifurcations which are commonly accepted as 'natural'. Analyses from quarters as diverse as feminism[50], cultural anthropology[51], and international relations theory[52] continue to ask the question, "Who are we?", but trade in

---

50 See, e.g., Abel.

51 See, e.g., Geertz, Said.

the expectation of a positivistic or definitive answer for the more modest aim of discovering through what practices and in what forms our selves and our others have come to be as they are. As Foucault says of the work of the intellectual:

> it is fruitful in a certain way to describe that-which-is by making it appear as something that might not be as it is.... What reason perceives as its necessity, or rather, what different forms of rationality offer as their necessary being, can perfectly well be shown to have a history; and the network of contingencies from which it emerges can be traced. Which is not to say, however, that these forms of rationality were irrational. It means that they reside on a base of human practice and human history; and that since these things have been made, they can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they were made (SPS, p.206).

---

52 See, e.g., Ashley, Klein, Walker.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Abel, Elizabeth, ed. Writing and Sexual Difference. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

2. Artaud, Antonin. Selected Writings, ed. Susan Sontag, trans. Helen Weaver. New York: Farrar, 1976.

3. Asher, Kenneth. "Deconstruction's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche," Telos 62 (Winter 1984/85), 169-78.

4. Ashley, Richard K. "Some Maxims for the Post-Structuralist Analysis of Politics," unpublished ms., Arizona State University, March 1987.

5. _____. "Effecting Global Purpose: Notes on a Problematic of International Organization," unpublished ms., Arizona State University, August 1987.

6. Austin, J.L. How To Do Things With Words. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.

7. Ayer, A.J. Language, Truth and Logic. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.

8. Barthes, Roland. "Taking Sides," in Critical Essays, ed. Roland Barthes. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972.

9. Batailles, Georges. Literature and Evil, trans. Alastair Hamilton. London: Calder and Boyars, 1973.

10. Blanchot, Maurice. The Siren's Song: Selected Essays by Maurice Blanchot, ed. Gabriel Josipovici, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch. Brighton: Harvester, 1982.

11. Blasius, Mark. "The Discourse of World Order," Culture, Ideology, and World Order, ed. R.B.J. Walker. Boulder: Westview, 1984.

12. Carroll, David. "Disruptive Discourse and Critical Power: The Conditions of Archeology and Genealogy," Humanities in Society V:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1982).

13. Chua, Beng Huat. "Genealogy as Sociology: An Introduction to Michel Foucault," Catalyst XIV (1981).

14. Clark, Michael. Michel Foucault: An Annotated Bibliography: Toolkit for a New Age. New York: Garland, 1983.

15. Comay, Rebbeca. "Excavating the Repressive Hypothesis: Aporias of Liberation in Foucault," Telos 67 (Spring 1986) 111-119.

16. Connolly, William E. Politics and Ambiguity. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.

17. Cooper, Barry. Michel Foucault: An Introduction to the Study of his Thought. Vol. II of Studies in Religion and Society. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981.

18. Cousins, Mark and Hussein, Athar. Michel Foucault: Theoretical Traditions in the Social Sciences. London: Macmillan, 1984.

19. Coward, Rosalind and Ellis, John. Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject. London: Routledge, 1977.

20. Dallmayr, Fred R. Twilight of Subjectivity: Contributions to a Post-Individualist Theory of Politics. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981.

21. _____. Polis and Praxis: Exercises in Contemporary Political Theory. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984.

22. D'Amico, Robert. "What is Discourse?" Humanities in Society V:3/4 (Summer/Fall, 1982).

23. Daudi, Philippe. "The Discourse of Power and the Power of Discourse," Alternatives IX (Fall 1983), 275-83.

24. De Certeau, Michel. "Micro-Techniques and Panoptic Discourse: A Quid Pro Quo," Humanities in Society V:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1982).

25. Derrida, Jacques. Of Grammatology, trans. G. Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974.

26. _____. Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, 1978.

27. Descombes, Vincent. Modern French Philosophy, trans. Scott Fox and J.M. Harding. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

28. Dews, Peter. "The New Philosophers and the End of Leftism," Radical Philosophy XXIV (Spring 1980).

29. _____. "Nouvelle Philosophy and Foucault," Economy and Society VIII:2 (1979), 127-71.

30. _____. "Power and Subjectivity in Foucault," New Left Review 144 (March/April 1984).

31. Donnelly, Michael. "Foucault's Genealogy of the Human Sciences," Economy and Society XI:4 (November 1982).

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

33. Farganis, James. Review of Discipline and Punish, by Michel Foucault, in Theory and Society X:5 (September 1981).

34. Fine, Bob. "Struggles Against Discipline: The Theory and Politics of Michel Foucault," Capital and Class IX (1979).

35. Foley, Barbara. "The Politics of Deconstruction", in Rhetoric and Form: Deconstruction at Yale,eds. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer. Norman, Oklahoma: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1985.

36. Foucault, Michel. The Archeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. London: Tavistock, 1972.

37. _____. The Birth of the Clinic, trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Tavistock, 1973.

38. _____. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1977.

39. _____. "The Discourse on Language," appendix to The Archeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Harper Colophon, 1976.

40. _____. "Governmentality," Ideology and Consciousness VI (Fall 1979).

41. _____. The History of Sexuality, trans. Robert Hurley. 3 vols. Volume I: An Introduction. New York: Pantheon, 1978. Volume II: The Use of Pleasure. New York: Pantheon, 1985. Volume III: The Care of the Self. New York: Pantheon, 1986.

42. _____. Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Interviews and Essays, ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Oxford: Blackwell, 1977.

43. _____. Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vintage, 1965.

44. _____. "Monstrosities in Criticism," Diacritics (Fall 1971), 57-60.

45. _____. The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences. New York: Vintage, 1970.

46. _____. "Politics and the Study of Discourse," trans. Colin Gordon. Ideology and Consciousness III (1978).

47. _____. "The Politics of Crime," Partisan Review XLIII:3 (1980).

48. _____. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77, ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

49. _____. "Questions of Method: An Interview with Michel Foucault," Ideology and Consciousness VIII (1981).

50. _____. "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault," trans. Jeremy Harding. Telos 55 (Spring 1983).

51. _____. "The Subject and Power," Afterword to Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, Dreyfus and Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

52. Gandal, Keith. "Michel Foucault: Intellectual Work and Politics," Telos 67 (Spring 1986) 121-134.

53. Giddens, Anthony. Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis. London: Macmillan, 1979.

54. Geertz, Clifford. Negara: The theatre state in nineteenth- century Bali. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980.

55. Gordon, Colin. "Afterword," in Power and Knowledge, ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

56. _____. "The Birth of the Subject," Radical Philosophy XVII (Summer 1977).

57. _____. "Nasty Tales," Radical Philosophy XVII (Summer 1977).

58. _____. "Other Inquisitions," Ideology and Consciousness VI (1979). (Reprinted as the Afterword in Power/Knowledge.)

59. Gunnell, John G. Between Philosophy and Politics: The Alienation of Political Theory. Amherst, Mass.: Univ. of Massachussetts Press, 1986.

60. Habermas, Jurgen. "Modernity versus Postmodernity," New German Critique 22, (Winter 1981) 3-14.

61. _____. The Theory of Communicative Action, v.1., trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon, 1984.

62. Hacking, Ian. "Five Parables," Philosophy in History, ed. Richard Rorty et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

63. Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon, 1951.

64. Kennedy, Devereaux. "The Archeology and Sociology of Knowledge," Theory and Society VIII:2 (1979), 269-90.

65. Klein, Bradley S. "Strategic Discourse and its Alternatives," unpublished ms., St. Lawrence University, Canton, N.Y., April 1987.

66. Korner, S. Kant. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.

67. Kurtzweil, Edith. "Michel Foucault: Ending the Era of Man," Theory and Society IV:3 (Fall 1977), 395-420.

68. Lash, Scott. "Postmodernity and Desire," Theory and Society XIV:1 (January 1985).

69. Lemert, Charles C. and Gillan, Garth. Michel Foucault: Social Theory and Transgression. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

70. Major-Poetzl, Pamela. Michel Foucault's Archeology of Western Culture: Toward a New Science of History. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

71. Megill, Allan. Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

72. Miller, Joan M. French Structuralism: A Multi-disciplinary Bibliography. New York: Garland, 1981.

73. Minson, Jeff. "Strategies for Socialists? Foucault's Conception of Power," Economy and Society IX:1 (February 1980).

74. Morris, Meaghan and Patton, Paul, eds. Power, Truth, Strategy. Melbourne, Australia: Feral Books, 1979.

75. Nietzsche, Friedrich. On the Genealogy of Morals, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage, 1969.

76. _____. "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in Untimely Meditations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

77. _____. "On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense," in Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's, Trans. Daniel Breazeale. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979.

78. Norris, Christopher, Deconstruction: Theory and Practice. New York: Methuen, 1982.

79. _____. The Deconstructive Turn: Essays in the Rhetoric of Philosophy. London: Methuen, 1983.

80. _____. The Contest of Faculties: Philsophy and Theory after Deconstruction. London: Methuen, 1985.

81. Paden, Roger. Review of Michel Foucault, by Mark Cousins and Althar Hussein, and of Michel Foucault and the Subversion of Intellect, by Karlis Racevskis, in Telos 64 (Summer 1985), 188-196.

82. Paton, Herbert James. The Moral Law: Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, trans. H.J.Paton. London: Hutchinson, 1969.

83. Perlin, Terry M. Contemporary Anarchism. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1979.

84. Peterson, Richard, T. "Foucault and the Politics of Social Production," Humanities in Society V:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1982).

85. Poster, Mark. Foucault, Marxism, and History: Mode of Production versus Mode of Information. New York: Blackwell, 1984.

86. _____. Review of Michel Foucault: Social Theory as Transgression by Charles Lemert and Garth Gillan, in Telos 56 (Summer 1983), 206-210.

87. _____. Review of Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics by Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, in Telos 60 (Summer 1984), 224-226.

88. Poulantzas, Nicos. State, Power, Socialism. trans. Patrick Camiller. London: New Left Books, 1978.

89. Racevskis, Karlis. Michel Foucault and the Subversion of Intellect. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983.

90. Rajchman, John. The Freedom of Philosophy. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

91. Rorty, Richard. Consequences of Pragmatism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

92. _____. "Derrida on Language, Being and Abnormal Philosophy," Journal of Philosophy XXIV (1977), 673-81.

93. _____. "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres," in Philosophy in History, eds. Richard Rorty et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

94. _____. Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

95. _____. "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing: An Essay on Derrida," New Literature History X:1 (1978).

96. Ryan, Michael. Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation. Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1982.

97. Said, Edward W. Beginnings: Methods and Intentions. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

98. _____. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

99. _____. "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions," Critical Enquiry IV (Spring 1978), 673-714.

100. Seung, T.K. Structuralism and Hermeneutics. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

101. Sheridan, Alan. Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth. London: Tavistock, 1980.

102. Smart, Barry. Foucault, Marxism and Critique. London: Routledge, 1983.

103. _____. "Foucault, Sociology and the Problem of Human Agency," Theory and Society XI:2 (1982).

104. Walker, R.B.J. "Contemporary Militarism and the Discourse of Dissent," in Culture, Ideology, and World Order, ed. R.B.J. Walker. Boulder: Westview, 1984.

105. _____. "Genealogy, Geopolitics and Political Community: Richard K. Ashley and the Critical Social Theory of International Politics," unpublished ms., University of Victoria, August 1987.

106. Walzer, Michael. "The Politics of Michel Foucault," Dissent (Fall 1985).

107. Warren, Mark. "Nietzsche's Theory of Ideology," Theory and Society XIII:4 (June 1984).

108. Watson, St. "Kant and Foucault: On the Ends of Man," Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie, XLVII:1 (March 1985), 71-102.

109. Weeks, Jeffrey. "Foucault for Historians," History Workshop XIV (Fall, 1982).

110. White, Hayden V. "Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground," History and Theory XII:1 (1973).

111. Wolin, Richard. "Foucault's Aesthetic Decisionism," Telos 67 (Spring 1986) 71-86.

112. Woodcock, George, ed. The Anarchist Reader. London: Fontana, 1977.

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PRIMARY SOURCES, WITH ABBREVIATIONS

Dates of publication in English appear in parentheses.

Abbreviation	Title	
MC	Madness and Civilization	1961 (1965)
	"The Father's 'No'"*	1962 (1977)
	"A Preface to Transgression"*	1963 (1977)
BC	The Birth of the Clinic	1963 (1973)
	"Language to Infinity"*	1963 (1977)
OT	The Order of Things	1966 (1970)
	"Fantasia of the Library"*	1967 (1977)
	"Politics and the Study of Discourse"	1968 (1978)
	"What is an Author?"*	1969 (1977)
AK	The Archeology of Knowledge	1969 (1972)
	"Theatrum Philosophicum"*	1970 (1977)
	"History of Systems of Thought"*	1970-71 (1977)
	"The Discourse on Language"	1970 (1972)
	"Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"*	1971 (1977)

	"On Popular Justice..."**	1972 (1980)
	"Intellectuals and Power"*	1972 (1977)
DP	Discipline and Punish	1975 (1977)
	"Body/Power"**	1975 (1980)
	"Two Lectures"**	1976 (1980)
	"Politics of Health in the 18th Century"**	1976 (1980)
HS	The History of Sexuality vol.1	1976 (1978)
	"Questions of Geography"**	1976 (1980)
	"The History of Sexuality"**	1977 (1980)
	"Prison Talk"**	1977 (1980)
	"Powers and Strategies"**	1977 (1980)
	"The Eye of Power"**	1977 (1980)
	"Confessions of the Flesh"**	1977 (1980)
	"Truth and Power"**	1977 (1980)
LCP	Language, Countermemory, Practice	1977
	"Governmentality"	1978 (1979)
P/K	Power/Knowledge	1980
	"Why Study Power?..."***	1982
	"How is Power Exercised?"***	1982
SPS	"Structuralism and Post-structuralism"	1983

* Published in Language, Countermemory, Practice

** Published in Power/Knowledge

*** Published in Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Sructuralism and Hermeneutics

VITA

Surname: Meredith Given Names: John Franklin

Place of Birth: Winnipeg, Manitoba. Date of Birth: 21 Sept. 1957.

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

Fraser Valley College, Abbotsford, 1979-1980
University of Victoria 1980-1987

Degrees, Diplomas, etc. Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

Bachelor of Arts (Honours), 1984, University of Victoria

Honours and Awards:

University of Victoria President's Scholarship, 1981
University of Victoria President's Scholarship, 1982
David Kaplan Book Prize in Honours Philosophy, 1984
University of Victoria Graduate Fellowship, 1983
University of Victoria Graduate Fellowship, 1984

Publications: _____.

Partial Copyright Licence

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis (the title of which is shown below) to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

Difference, Discourse, Genealogy: Critiques of the 'limit' in the Writings of Michel Foucault

Author: [redacted]

JOHN F. MEREDITH

7 December, 1987