The Cambridge Companion to FOUCAULT

SECOND EDITION

EDITED BY

GARY GUTTING

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO

FOUCAULT

Second Edition

Each volume of this series of companions to major philosophers contains specially commissioned essays by an international team of scholars together with a substantial bibliography. One aim of the series is to make the work of a difficult and challenging thinker accessible to students and nonspecialists.

For Michel Foucault, philosophy was a way of questioning the allegedly necessary truths that underpin the practices and institutions of modern society. Unlike Kant, who tried to determine the a priori boundaries of human knowledge, Foucault aimed at revealing the historical contingency of ideas that present themselves as necessary, unsurpassable truths. He carried out this project in a series of deeply original and strikingly controversial studies on the origins of modern medical and social scientific disciplines. These studies have raised fundamental philosophical questions about the nature of human knowledge and its relation to power structures, and have become major topics of discussion throughout the humanities and social sciences.

The essays in this volume provide a systematic and comprehensive overview of Foucault's major themes and texts, from his early work on madness through his history of sexuality. Special attention is also paid to thinkers and movements, from Kant through current feminist theory, that are particularly important for understanding his work and its impact. This revised edition contains five new essays and revisions of many others. The extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources has been updated.

Gary Gutting holds the Notre Dame Chair in Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author, most recently, of *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction* and *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, and is founder and editor of *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*.

CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS TO PHILOSOPHY

VOLUMES IN THE SERIES OF CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS:

ABELARD *Edited by* JEFFREY E. BROWER *and* KEVIN GUILFOY
ADORNO *Edited by* TOM HUNN
AQUINAS *Edited by* NORMAN KRETZMANN *and* ELEONORE STUMP
HANNAH ARENDT *Edited by* DANA VILLA
ARISTOTLE *Edited by* JONATHAN BARNES
AUGUSTINE *Edited by* ELEONORE STUMP *and* NORMAN KRETZMANN
BACON *Edited by* MARKKU PELTONEN
SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR *Edited by* CLAUDIA CARD
DARWIN *Edited by* JONATHAN HODGE *and* GREGORY RADICK
DESCARTES *Edited by* JOHN COTTINGHAM
DUNS SCOTUS *Edited by* THOMAS WILLIAMS
EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY *Edited by* A. A. LONG
FEMINISM IN PHILOSOPHY *Edited by* MIRANDA FRICKER *and* JENNIFER HORNSBY
FREUD *Edited by* JEROME NEU
GADAMER *Edited by* ROBERT J. DOSTAL
GALILEO *Edited by* PETER MACHAMER
GERMAN IDEALISM *Edited by* KARL AMERIKS
GREEK AND ROMAN PHILOSOPHY *Edited by* DAVID SEDLEY
HABERMAS *Edited by* STEPHEN K. WHITE
HEGEL *Edited by* FREDERICK BEISER
HEIDEGGER *Edited by* CHARLES GUIGNON
HOBBES *Edited by* TOM SORELL
HUME *Edited by* DAVID FATE NORTON
HUSSERL *Edited by* BARRY SMITH *and* DAVID WOODRUFF SMITH
WILLIAM JAMES *Edited by* RUTH ANNA PUTNAM
KANT *Edited by* PAUL GUYER
KIERKEGAARD *Edited by* ALASTAIR HANNAY *and* GORDON MARINO
LEIBNIZ *Edited by* NICHOLAS JOLLEY

LEVINAS *Edited by* SIMON CRITCHLEY *and* ROBERT BERNASCONI
LOCKE *Edited by* VERE CHAPPELL
MALEBRANCHE *Edited by* STEVEN NADLER
MARX *Edited by* TERRELL CARVER
MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHY *Edited by* DANIEL H. FRANK *and* OLIVER LEAMAN
MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY *Edited by* A. S. MCGRADE
MILL *Edited by* JOHN SKORUPSKI
NEWTON *Edited by* I. BERNARD COHEN *and* GEORGE E. SMITH
NIETZSCHE *Edited by* BERND MAGNUS *and* KATHLEEN HIGGINS
OCKHAM *Edited by* PAUL VINCENT SPADE
PASCAL *Edited by* NICHOLAS HAMMOND
PEIRCE *Edited by* CHERI MISAK
PLATO *Edited by* RICHARD KRAUT
PLOTINUS *Edited by* LLOYD P. GERSON
QUINE *Edited by* ROGER F. GIBSON
RAWLS *Edited by* SAMUEL FREEMAN
THOMAS REID *Edited by* TERENCE CUNEO *and* RENÉ VAN WOUDENBERG
ROUSSEAU *Edited by* PATRICK RILEY
BERTRAND RUSSELL *Edited by* NICHOLAS GRIFFIN
SARTRE *Edited by* CHRISTINA HOWELLS
SCHOPENHAUER *Edited by* CHRISTOPHER JANAWAY
THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT *Edited by* ALEXANDER BROADIE
SPINOZA *Edited by* DON GARRETT
THE STOICS *Edited by* BRAD INWOOD
WITTGENSTEIN *Edited by* KANS SLUGA *and* DAVID STERN

The Cambridge Companion to

FOUCAULT

Second Edition

Edited by Gary Gutting
University of Notre Dame

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521840828

© Cambridge University Press 2005

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2005

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

The Cambridge companion to Foucault / edited by Gary Gutting – 2nd ed.
p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to philosophy)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-521-84082-1 – ISBN 0-521-60053-7 (pbk.)
1. Foucault, Michel. I. Gutting, Gary. II. Title. III. Series.
B2430.F724C36 2006
194–dc22 2005005777

ISBN-13 978-0-521-84082-8 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-84082-1 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-60053-8 paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-60053-7 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for
the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or
third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this book
and does not guarantee that any content on such
Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

Contributors *page* ix

Preface to the Second Edition xiii

Biographical Chronology xvii

Introduction
Michel Foucault: A User's Manual 1
GARY GUTTING

1. Foucault's Mapping of History 29
THOMAS FLYNN

2. Foucault and the History of Madness 49
GARY GUTTING

3. The Death of Man, or Exhaustion of the Cogito? 74
GEORGES CANGUILHEM
TRANSLATED BY CATHERINE PORTER

4. Power/Knowledge 95
JOSEPH ROUSE

5. Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics, and Ancient Thought 123
ARNOLD I. DAVIDSON

6. Michel Foucault's Ethical Imagination 149
JAMES W. BERNAUER AND MICHAEL MAHON

7. The Analytic of Finitude and the History of Subjectivity 176
BÉATRICE HAN
TRANSLATED BY EDWARD PILE

8. Foucault's Encounter with Heidegger and Nietzsche 210
HANS SLUGA

9. Foucault and Habermas 240
DAVID INGRAM

10. Foucault's Relation to Phenomenology 284
TODD MAY

11. Against Interiority: Foucault's Struggle with Psychoanalysis 312
JOEL WHITEBOOK

12. Foucault's Modernism 348
GERALD L. BRUNS

13. Queering Foucault and the Subject of Feminism 379
JANA SAWICKI

Bibliography 401
Addendum to Bibliography, 1993–2005 435
Index 455

CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES W. BERNAUER is professor of philosophy at Boston College. He is the author of *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought*. He is the editor of *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt* and, with David Rasmussen, coeditor of *The Final Foucault*. His most recent book is coedited with Jeremy Carrette: *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience*. His current project uses Foucauldian approaches in a study of German moral formation on the eve of the Holocaust.

GERALD L. BRUNS is the William P. and Hazel B. White Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame. His most recent book is *The Material of Poetry: Sketches for a Philosophical Poetics*.

ARNOLD I. DAVIDSON edited and wrote an introduction to Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* and is coeditor of *Questions of Evidence*. His most recent book is *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts*. He is the executive editor of the journal *Critical Inquiry*.

THOMAS FLYNN is Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Philosophy at Emory University. He is the author of *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism* and *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, vol. 1: *Toward an Existentialist Theory of History*; vol. 2: *A Poststructuralist Mapping of History*.

GARY GUTTING holds the Notre Dame Chair in Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction, French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, Pragmatic Liberalism and the Critique of Modernity*, and *Michel*

Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason. He is founder and editor of *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, an electronic book-review journal (http://ndpr.nd.edu/).

BÉATRICE HAN studied philosophy at the École normale supérieure and at the Sorbonne. She is now a reader in philosophy at the University of Essex. She is the author of *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical* and of many articles on Foucault, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. She is currently working on a book entitled *Transcendence Without Religion*.

DAVID INGRAM is professor of philosophy at Loyola University Chicago. His books on critical theory include *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason*; *Critical Theory and Philosophy*; *Reason, History, and Politics*; and *Rights, Democracy, and Fulfillment in the Era of Identity Politics*.

MICHAEL MAHON is associate professor of humanities at Boston University's College of General Studies.

TODD MAY is professor of philosophy at Clemson University. His writings primarily concern contemporary French philosophy, especially Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. His most recent book is *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction*.

CATHERINE PORTER is visiting professor at Cornell University and Professor of French Emerita at the State University of New York College at Cortland, where she chaired the Department of International Communications and Culture. She has translated over twenty-five works of contemporary French nonfiction in the areas of literary theory and criticism, philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, and sociology, including books by Tzvetan Todorov, Shoshana Felman, Luce Irigaray, Sarah Kofman, Gérard Genette, Denis Hollier, Louis Marin, and Bruno Latour. Forthcoming translations include *On Justification* by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot.

JOSEPH ROUSE is the Hedding Professor of Moral Science and Chair of the Science in Society Program at Wesleyan University. He is the author of *How Scientific Practices Matter: Reclaiming Philosophical Naturalism*; *Engaging Science: How to Understand Its Practices*

Philosophically; and *Knowledge and Power: Toward a Political Philosophy of Science*.

JANA SAWICKI is W. Van Alan Clark '44 Third Century Professor of Social Science at Williams College. She is the author of *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body* and many articles on Foucault, feminism, and, more recently, queer theory.

HANS SLUGA is professor of philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of *Gottlob Frege* and *Heidegger's Crisis*. He is also the editor of a four-volume collection of essays on *The Philosophy of Frege* and (together with David Stern) *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*. He has, in addition, published numerous articles on Frege, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Foucault and is finishing a book on the concept of the political (*The Care of the Common*) that draws specifically on the work of Carl Schmitt, Hannah Arendt, and Michel Foucault.

JOEL WHITEBOOK, a practicing psychoanalyst in New York City, is on the faculty of the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research. In addition to numerous articles on psychoanalysis, philosophy, and critical theory, he is the author of *Perversion and Utopia*. Dr. Whitebook is currently writing an intellectual biography of Freud for Cambridge University Press.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

"It is unlikely that any collection of academic essays could fulfill all the expectations stirred by the engaging term 'companion.' We think of a combined friend and cicerone, knowledgeable and charming, who leads us with easy clarity to an appreciation of the important features of a major site; in short, an informed and personable *guide vert* to a three-star French philosophical monument. Without pretending to the intimacy and charm our title might suggest, this set of essays does hope to provide an informed and reasonably accessible guide to most of Foucault's major works and themes."

This quotation from the first edition (1994) of *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* still expresses the goals of our enterprise. In this new edition, readers will find most of the original essays, sometimes revised, as well as five entirely new pieces (those by Han, Sluga, May, Bruns, and Whitebook). The essays by Rouse, Bernauer and Mahon, Ingram, and Sawicki have been revised. Three essays from the original volume (by Norris, Rabinow, and Watson) have not been reprinted; in each case, the author agreed that there was need for an updated or more extensive treatment, but was not able to carry out a revision, so that a new treatment was commissioned. The first edition's translation of the encyclopedia entry "Foucault, Michel, 1926–," published by Foucault under the name "Maurice Florence," has been omitted because the piece is now available in James Faubion, ed., *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, Volume 2: Aesthetics: Method and Epistemology* (New York: New Press, 1998). The bibliography has been supplemented by a list of books and articles on Foucault that have appeared since 1993.

A revised edition makes sense, first, because of the continuing influence, over twenty years after his death, of Foucault's work. There

is now a new generation of scholars, from an extraordinary range of disciplines, interested in his writings. Further, the body of Foucault's work is itself being augmented and transformed by the publication of the thirteen years of lectures he gave at the Collège de France. In some cases, these newly published lectures are little more than repetitions of what appears in his books. But in many cases they add new perspectives or even present material that Foucault never published. This new volume allows us to take account of this new material where it is relevant.

The volume opens with my Introduction, which issues a warning (perhaps not endorsed by all of my fellow contributors) against general interpretations of Foucault's work and sketches a few of his specific achievements as a maker of histories, theories, and myths. Since almost all of Foucault's books are in one way or another histories, the next essay is Thomas Flynn's overview of the successive forms his historical project has taken, from archaeology to genealogy to problematization. The following five essays cover in turn Foucault's major writings from 1961 to his death in 1984. My piece approaches *The History of Madness* (1961) through an account of and reflection on its reception by professional historians. Next comes the first English translation (by Catherine Porter) of Georges Canguilhem's perceptive and influential review of *Les mots et les choses* (1966). Joseph Rouse provides an interpretation of the account of power, knowledge, and their essential relations that is at the heart of Foucault's book on the prison, *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and the first volume (1976) of his *History of Sexuality*. Arnold Davidson treats Foucault's work on Greek and Roman sexuality in the next two volumes of his history, *The Use of Pleasure* (1984) and *The Care of the Self* (1984). James Bernauer and Michael Mahon discuss the ethical viewpoint Foucault developed throughout the *History of Sexuality*.

The next seven essays place Foucault in relation to a variety of thinkers and movements that are particularly important for understanding his work and its impact. Béatrice Han, Hans Sluga, and David Ingram discuss Foucault in relation to German philosophy. Han treats his connection to Kant and the idealist tradition, Sluga discusses his strong ties to Nietzsche and Heidegger, and David Ingram develops a fruitful confrontation between Foucault and Jürgen Habermas. Todd May provides a general discussion of Foucault's complex relations to French and German phenomenology,

whereas Joel Whitebook treats Foucault's equally complex relation to Freud and psychoanalysis. Gerald Bruns discusses Foucault's connections to literary modernism, and Jana Sawicki relates his work to recent feminist theory and to queer theory.

I want to express special appreciation for Terry Moore's work as editor on both the first and the second editions of this book. His efficiency, affability, and unfailing good sense made all the difference. Terry's untimely death has been a tremendous loss to academic publishing and to the discipline of philosophy.

BIOGRAPHICAL CHRONOLOGY

1926	Born October 15 in Poitiers; named (after his father) Paul-Michel Foucault.
1936	Enrolls at Lycée Henri-IV in Poitiers.
1940	Enrolls at Collège St. Stanislas, a Jesuit secondary school.
1945	Studies in Paris at Lycée Henri-IV to prepare for entrance examination to École Normale Supérieure; taught philosophy by Jean Hyppolite.
1946	Admitted to École Normale Supérieure, where he receives the *licence de philosophie* (1948), the *licence de psychologie* (1949), and the *agrégation de philosophie* (1952).
1952	Employed in the Faculté des Lettres, Université de Lille; receives *Diplôme de psycho-pathologie* from the Institut de psychologie, Paris.
1955–1958	Teaches at University of Uppsala, Sweden.
1958	Serves as director of the French Center at the University of Warsaw.
1959	Serves as director of the French Institute in Hamburg, Germany.
1960	Teaches psychology at the Université de Clermont-Ferrand.
1961	Receives Doctorat ès lettres; thèse primaire published as *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961); thèse complémentaire: introduction to and translation (with notes) of Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (translation and notes published Paris: Vrin, 1964).

1962	Becomes professor of philosophy at Université de Clermont-Ferrand.
1966	Visiting professor in Tunisia at University of Tunis.
1967	Chosen professor at the Université de Paris at Nanterre, but returns to Tunisia when the Ministry of Education delays ratification of the choice.
1968	Serves as chairman of Philosophy Department at new experimental university at Vincennes.
1969	Elected to the Collège de France, choosing to designate his chair as in the "History of Systems of Thought." Gives inaugural lecture, "L'ordre de discours," December 2, 1970.
1970	Presents his first lectures in the United States and Japan.
1971	Helps found the Groupe d'information sur les prisons (GIP), an organization for scrutinizing and criticizing prison conditions in France.
1972	Makes another trip to the United States, including a visit to the New York State prison at Attica.
1973	Lectures in New York, Montreal, and Rio de Janeiro.
1975	Takes part in protests against Franco's executions of militants.
1976	Visits Brazil and California.
1978	Reports on the Iranian revolution for an Italian newspaper. Visits Japan.
1981	Active in protests against the Communist government of Poland and in support of Solidarity.
1983	Teaches at the University of California at Berkeley as part of an agreement to visit there every year.
1984	Dies in Paris, June 25.

This chronology is based on Daniel Defert, "Quelques repères chronologique," in J.-C. Hug, *Michel Foucault: Une Histoire de la Vérité* (Paris: Syros, 1985), 109–114; and James Bernauer, "Michel Foucault: A Biographical Chronology," in James Bernauer and David Rasmussan, eds., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 159–166. For further information on Foucault's life, see the

biographies by Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (New York: Pantheon, 1994), and James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), and the "témoinages" collected in *Le débat* 41 (Sept.–Nov. 1986).

GARY GUTTING

Introduction
Michel Foucault: A User's Manual

AGAINST INTERPRETATION

For all of Foucault's reservations about modernity and authorship, his writings are typical of those of a modernist author in their demand for interpretation. Any writing, of course, requires some interpretation as part of our efforts to evaluate, refine, extend, or appreciate its achievement or to provide special background that readers outside the author's culture or historical period may require. But certain authors – in literature, the twentieth-century modernists are among the best examples – present themselves as so immediately and intrinsically "difficult" as to require special interpretative efforts even for those well equipped to understand them. *The Wasteland*, *Cantos*, and *Finnegans Wake*, for example, require explanation, even for culturally and historically attuned readers, in a way that *Paradise Lost*, the *Essay on Man*, and *Emma* do not. Philosophy, at least since Kant and Hegel, has also provided its share of "intrinsically obscure" writing. Although it may not be easy to formulate the precise difference, it is clear that Wittgenstein, the later Heidegger, and Derrida require a sort of interpretation that Russell, Dewey, and Quine do not.

Foucault's penchant, particularly prior to *Discipline and Punish*, for the modernist obscure explains much of the demand for interpretations of his work. But the need to interpret Foucault sits ill with his desire to escape general interpretative categories. More important, as the enterprise of interpretation is usually understood, interpreting Foucault is guaranteed to distort his thought. Interpretation typically means finding a unifying schema through which we can make overall sense of an author's works. Interpretations of Foucault, accordingly,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

single out some comprehensive unity or definitive achievement that is thought to provide the key to his work. They claim to have attained a privileged standpoint that provides the real meaning or significance of his achievement.[1]

Interpretation distorts because Foucault's work is at root ad hoc, fragmentary, and incomplete. Each of his books is determined by concerns and approaches specific to it and should not be understood as developing or deploying a theory or a method that is a general instrument of intellectual progress. In Isaiah Berlin's adaptation of Archilochus's metaphor, Foucault is not a hedgehog but a fox.[2]

Foucault's writings tempt us to general interpretation along two primary axes. In the first dimension he appears as a philosophical historian, progressively developing a series of complementary historical methods: an archaeology of discourse in *The History of Madness*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things*, and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*; a genealogy of power relations in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality I*; and a problematization of ethics in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*. In the second dimension he appears as a historicist philosopher, offering, parallel to his methodological innovations, successively deeper and mutually supporting theories of knowledge, power, and the self. It is natural to combine these two dimensions in an overall interpretation of Foucault's work as a new comprehensive understanding of human reality supported by new methods of historical analysis.

One of the most intelligent and interesting general interpretations of Foucault is that of Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow.[3] They present Foucault as developing a "new method" (both historical and philosophical) whereby he "goes beyond" structuralism and hermeneutics. This method they term "interpretative analytics": *analytics* because it shares Kant's critical concern for determining "the sources and legitimate uses" of our concepts; *interpretative* because it seeks "a pragmatically guided reading of the coherence of the practices" in which the concepts are expressed.[4] Dreyfus and Rabinow agree that interpretative analytics "is not a general method," since it recognizes that it itself is practiced within a historically contingent context and that its practitioner "realizes that he himself is produced by what he is studying; consequently he can never stand outside it."[5] Nonetheless, Dreyfus and Rabinow do see

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Foucault's method as occupying a privileged position on the contemporary scene:

> since we still take the problems of our culture seriously . . . we are drawn ineluctably to a position like Foucault's. In a sense, it is the only position left that does not regress to a tradition that is untenable. . . . This does not mean that one is forced to agree with Foucault's specific diagnosis of our current situation. . . . But . . . some form of interpretative analytics is currently the most powerful, plausible and honest option available.[6]

Dreyfus and Rabinow offer a general interpretation in that they read the whole of Foucault's work as directed toward the development of a single historico-philosophical method that has a privileged role in contemporary analyses. Even if this method is not ahistorically universal, they clearly present it as Foucault's definitive achievement for our time: the preferred instrument for current social and cultural analysis.

I am uneasy with this and other general interpretations of Foucault because they deny the two things that, to my mind, are most distinctive and most valuable in his voice: its specificity and its marginality. It is striking that Foucault's books hardly ever refer back to his previous works. *The Birth of the Clinic* never mentions *The History of Madness*, even though the two books share the common ground of the history of medicine in the nineteenth century; *The Order of Things* describes the episteme of the Classical Age with scarcely a hint of the author's previous extensive dealings with that period in *The History of Madness* and *The Birth of the Clinic*; *The History of Sexuality I*, for all its conceptual, methodological, and topical similarities to *Discipline and Punish*, refuses to acknowledge any connection; and *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, although formally the second and third volumes of a history of sexuality, acknowledge the first volume only to note their divergence from it. This lack of self-citation is not mere coyness. Each of Foucault's books strikes a specific tone that is muffled and distorted if we insist on harmonizing it with his other books. In examining psychiatry, medicine, the social sciences, and other contemporary disciplines, his goal was always to suggest liberating alternatives to what seem to be inevitable conceptions and practices. But his analyses are effective precisely because they are specific to the particular terrain of the discipline he is challenging, not determined by some

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

general theory or methodology. As we shall see, Foucault does not hesitate to construct theories and methods, but the constructions are always subordinated to the tactical needs of the particular analysis at hand. They are not general engines of war that can be deployed against any target. This is why each of Foucault's books has the air of a new beginning.

General interpretations of Foucault suppress his marginality by presenting his work as the solution to the problems of an established discipline or as the initiation of some new discipline. This ignores the crucial fact that disciplines are precisely the dangers from which Foucault is trying to help us save ourselves. His attacks are on the apparently necessary presuppositions (such as that madness is mental illness, that imprisonment is the only humane punishment for criminals, that ending sexual repression is the key to human liberation) that define disciplines. Therefore, they can be launched only from the peripheral areas where the defining assumptions begin to lose hold. To present Foucault as working within an established discipline or, even worse, as attempting to found one himself is to contradict the basic thrust of his efforts.[7]

Resisting our inclination to general interpretation accords not only with the direction of Foucault's work but also with some of his own explicit pronouncements. For example, in "What Is an Author?" and elsewhere,[8] he challenges the unifying categories (author, works, etc.) presupposed by general interpretation. And in an anonymous interview, "The Masked Philosopher," he describes his dream that books would not be subjected to totalizing judgments but would rather find "a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination [that] would not be sovereign or dressed in red [but would] catch the seafoam in the breeze and scatter it."[9]

On the other hand, it is only fair to note that Foucault himself was prone to providing overall interpretations of his work. Thus, in 1969 he characterizes all his previous books (*The History of Madness*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things*) as "imperfect sketches" of the archaeological method for analyzing discursive formations that is explained in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.[10] But then in 1977 he says, "When I think back now, I ask myself what else was I talking about in [*The History of Madness*] or *The Birth of the Clinic*, but power?"[11] By 1982 he is saying: "it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research."[12]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The ambivalence of Foucault's view of his work is particularly apparent in a discussion at the end of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault imagines a critic who suggests that archaeology is

> yet another of those discourses that would like to be taken as a discipline still in its early stages . . . yet another of those projects that justify themselves on the basis of what they are not, . . . disciplines for which one opens up possibilities, outlines a programme, and leaves the future development to others. But no sooner have they been outlined than they disappear together with their authors. And the field they were supposed to tend remains sterile forever.[13]

Foucault first responds with forthright denials of "scientific" pretensions:

> I have never presented archaeology as a science, or even as the beginning of a future science. . . . The word archaeology is not supposed to carry any suggestion of anticipation; it simply indicates a possible line of attack for the analysis of verbal performances.[14]

But he then goes on to emphasize the close connection of archaeology to current sciences. They are, he says, a primary object of archaeological analysis; its methods are closely related to those of some sciences – especially generative grammar; and its topics are closely correlated to those of disciplines such as psychoanalysis, epistemology, and sociology. Foucault even suggests that a "general theory of productions" would, if developed, be an "enveloping theory" for archaeology. He goes on to say that he is perfectly aware that "my discourse may disappear with the figure that has borne it so far." But he also says, "It may turn out that archaeology is the name given to a part of our contemporary theoretical conjuncture" and suggests as one possibility that "this conjuncture is giving rise to an individualizable discipline, whose initial characteristics and overall limits are being outlined here."[15] It is clear that, at least when he wrote *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault was tempted by the hope of becoming the founder of a new discipline.

General interpretations of Foucault are tempting because, for all their distortion, they can put us on to some important truths. My suggestion is not that we renounce them, but that we regard them as nonunique and developed for specific purposes. (Had Foucault lived, he would have surely continued to produce them as

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

an accompaniment to his ever-changing specific concerns.) Without becoming obsessed with finding the general interpretation that will give us the "final truth" about Foucault's work, we should be prepared to use a variety of such interpretations to elucidate, for particular purposes, specific aspects of his writings. For example, the methodological axis of interpretation, which sees Foucault moving from archaeology through genealogy to ethics, is useful for appreciating his contribution to historical method and hence relating his work to the *Annales* school, French history and philosophy of science, the "new historians," disputes about the role of events in history, and so on.[16] The topical axis of interpretation, which views him as starting with the study of knowledge, coming to see the inextricable connection of knowledge to power, and finally subordinating both to a primary concern with the self, shows how to read Foucault as contributing to recent discussions in the epistemology and philosophy of science (particularly social epistemology and "postmodern" philosophy of science) and in social theory.[17]

It is, however, less risky and even more profitable to regard Foucault as an intellectual artisan, someone who over the years constructed a variety of artifacts, the intellectual equivalents of the material objects created by a skilled goldsmith or cabinetmaker. We need to take account of the specific circumstance occasioning the production of each artifact in order to understand and appreciate it. But each artifact may also have further uses not explicitly envisaged by its creator, so that we also need to examine it with a view to employment for our own purposes. Foucault was particularly adept at crafting three sorts of intellectual artifacts: histories, theories, and myths. As an alternative to a general interpretation of his work, I propose to discuss some examples of these productions.

FOUCAULT'S HISTORIES

Foucault wrote book-length histories of madness, clinical medicine, the social sciences, the prison, and ancient and modern sexuality. Although much has been made of his archaeological and genealogical methods, his approach to each topic is driven much more by the specific historical subject matter than by prior methodological commitments. "Archaeology" and "genealogy" are primarily retrospective (and usually idealized) descriptions of Foucault's complex

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

efforts to come to terms with his historical material. His "discourse on method," *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, is a reconstruction, with a not insignificant amount of trimming and shaping, of what went on in the three histories that preceded it.[18]

An appreciation of Foucault's histories requires locating them on a finer grid than that defined by the two dimensions of archaeology and genealogy. I propose tracking Foucaultian histories along four dimensions: histories of ideas, histories of concepts, histories of the present, and histories of experience.

Although Foucault's explicit mentions of standard history of ideas are at best disdainful, we need to keep in mind that he frequently offers the sorts of textual interpretations and comparisons that are the mainstay of orthodox history of ideas. Central to *The History of Madness*, for example, is his reading of the passage in the *Meditations* in which Descartes dismisses the possibility that he is mad as a grounds for doubt.[19] Similarly, crucial claims of *The Order of Things* are based on interpretations of scientific and philosophical texts from Paracelsus and Aldrovandi to Smith and Kant. Moreover, despite Foucault's particular disdain for historians of ideas' concern with attributions of originality, key points of his argument in *The Order of Things* depend on showing that, for example, Cuvier rather than Lamarck developed the basic framework for evolutionary theory and that Marx's work in economics is really just a variant on Ricardo's. Much of Foucault's last two volumes, on ancient sexuality, also need to be read and evaluated by the norms of standard interpretative history of ideas. On at least one important level, they are simply explications of texts by Galen, Xenophon, and Plato, among others.

Much of Foucault's historiography falls in the genre of "the history of concepts," as that had been understood by his friend and mentor Georges Canguilhem. This approach flows from an insistence on the distinction between the concepts that interpret scientific data and the theories that explain them. By contrast, the standard Anglo-American view (shared by both positivists such as Hempel and their critics such as Kuhn) is that theories are interpretations of data and therefore define the concepts in terms of which data are understood. On Canguilhem's view, concepts give us a preliminary understanding of data that allows us to formulate scientifically fruitful questions about how to explain the data as conceptualized.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Theories then provide different – and often conflicting – answers to these questions. For example, Galileo introduced a new concept of the motion of falling bodies (in opposition to Aristotle's); then he, Descartes, and Newton provided competing theories to explain the motion so conceived. As long as concepts are regarded as functions of theories, their history will be identical with that of the development of theoretical formulations. But for Canguilhem concepts are "theoretically polyvalent"; the same concept can function in quite different theoretical contexts. This opens up the possibility of histories of concepts that are distinct from the standard histories that merely trace a succession of theoretical formulations.

Canguilhem demonstrated the power of this approach in his history of the concept of reflex action.[20] The standard view is that this concept was first introduced by Descartes in his *Traité de l'homme*. Such a view is natural if we do not make Canguilhem's distinction between concepts and theories. The concept of reflex action is at the heart of modern mechanistic theories in physiology, and Descartes was the first to describe reflex phenomena and try to account for them mechanistically. But Canguilhem is able to show that, even though Descartes anticipates modern physiology in offering a mechanistic explanation of the reflex, he does not in fact have, either explicitly or implicitly, the modern concept of the reflex. His explanation is of the phenomenon conceived quite differently than modern physiology conceives it. By contrast, Canguilhem shows, the modern concept of the reflex is fully present in the (distinctly nonmodern) vitalistic physiology of Thomas Willis.[21]

Foucault makes a similar use of the history of concepts in *The Order of Things* when he argues that the Darwinian idea of an evolution of species is implicit in Cuvier but not in Lamarck. He admits that Lamarck's developmental theory recognizes biological change in a way that Cuvier's fixist theory does not. But, Foucault argues, it is Cuvier and not Lamarck who introduces the fundamental idea that biological species are productions of historical forces rather than instantiations of timeless, a priori possibilities. Lamarckian "evolution" is merely a matter of living things successively occupying preestablished niches that are quite independent of historical forces, such as natural selection. For Cuvier, however, the fact that species do not change over time is itself a result of the historical forces that have led to their production. Lamarckian change is just

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

a superficial play of organisms above the eternally fixed structure of species; Cuvier's fixism is a historical stability produced by radically temporal biological processes. Accordingly, Foucault maintains that Cuvier rather than Lamarck provides the conceptual framework that makes Darwin's theory of evolution possible.

Of all Foucault's books, *The Birth of the Clinic* (published in a series edited by Canguilhem) comes the closest to a pure history of concepts, the concept in question being that of physical illness as it developed from the end of the eighteenth century through the first third of the nineteenth. *The Order of Things* also makes extensive use of Canguilhem's approach. Foucault's accounts of the empirical sciences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are simply histories of the relevant concepts. But *The Order of Things* also extends and transforms Canguilhem's method. For Canguilhem concepts correspond to disciplines, and the history of a concept is written within the confines of the relevant discipline. But Foucault links apparently very different disciplines by showing similarities in their basic concepts. He argues, for example, that the Classical empirical sciences of general grammar, natural history, and analysis of wealth share a common conceptual structure that makes them much more similar to one another than any one of them is to its modern successor (respectively philology, biology, and economics). Even more important, Foucault maintains that such philosophical concepts as *resemblance, representation*, and *man* pervade all the disciplines of a given period, a view that leads him to the notion of an episteme as the system of concepts that defines knowledge for a given intellectual era.

These extensions of Canguilhem's history of concepts transform it by moving to a level where the historian is no longer required to define a discipline in its own terms. As a historian of biology, Canguilhem deals with concepts (such as reflex action) explicitly deployed by contemporary biology. Foucault focuses not only on such first-order biological concepts but also on concepts (such as representation and historicity) that are conditions of possibility for the first-order concepts.

This analysis of the "intellectual subconscious" of scientific disciplines is precisely Foucault's famous archaeological approach to the history of thought. Archaeology is an important alternative to standard history of ideas, with its emphasis on the theorizing of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

individual thinkers and concern with their influence on one another. Foucault suggests (and shows how the suggestion is fruitful) that the play of individuals' thought, in a given period and disciplinary context, takes place in a space with a structure defined by a system of rules more fundamental than the assertions of the individuals thinking in the space. Delineating the structures of this space (the goal of the archaeology of thought) often gives a more fundamental understanding of the history of thought than do standard histories centered on the individual subject (which Foucault disdainfully labels "doxology").

Many of Foucault's histories fall under the category he designated "history of the present." Of course history is, by definition, about the past, but Foucault's histories typically begin from his perception that something is terribly wrong in the present. His motive for embarking on a history is his judgment that certain current social circumstances – an institution, a discipline, a social practice – are "intolerable."[22] His primary goal is not to understand the past but to understand the present; or, to put the point with more nuance, to use an understanding of the past to understand something that is intolerable in the present. In this sense his characterization of *Discipline and Punish* as "history of the present" (30–31) applies to all his histories.

Apart from the paradoxical language, there is really nothing extraordinary in Foucault's project of trying to understand the present in terms of the past; in one way or another, this is what most historians are up to. But Foucault reverses a standard polarity of this enterprise. Whereas much traditional history tries to show that where we are is inevitable, given the historical causes revealed by its account, Foucault's histories aim to show the contingency – and hence surpassability – of what history has given us. Intolerable practices and institutions present themselves as having no alternative: How could we do anything except set up asylums to treat the mentally ill? How deal humanely with criminals except by imprisoning them? How attain sexual freedom except by discovering and accepting our sexual orientation? Foucault's histories aim to remove this air of necessity by showing that the past ordered things quite differently and that the processes leading to our present practices and institutions were by no mean inevitable.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Foucault's history of madness, for example, is an assault on our conception of madness as mental illness and the practice of psychiatry based on this conception. We tend to think that people who shout unprovoked obscenities in public places or refuse to eat anything other than cat food are by definition mentally ill and require the care of qualified medical professionals. Mental illness is the inevitable diagnosis of such behavior, and psychiatric treatment the only way of dealing with it. Foucault's history of madness is designed to show first that there have been alternative conceptions of mad behavior with at least as much cognitive respectability as ours. In particular, during the Classical Age (about 1650 to 1800), Europeans viewed madness not as an illness requiring medical treatment but as a moral fault that reduced human beings to a level of animality that could only be isolated and contained, not cured. Foucault maintains that this is not a false conception, refuted by the truth of modern psychiatry. Rather, both the Classical and the modern conceptions of madness are social constructions, intelligible and apparently compelling in their own periods, but with no privileged access to the truth of madness.

Foucault further maintains that the modern conception of madness as mental illness was unwittingly constructed from two key elements of the Classical conception. The notion that the mad are animals was transformed into the modern view of madness as a natural phenomenon, governed by biological and psychological laws, whereas the Classical moral condemnation of madness was retained through the asylum system of confinement, which surreptitiously imposed bourgeois values on its inmates. He reads the emergence of modern psychiatry not as an ineluctable triumph of compassion based on scientific objectivity, but as the product of scientifically and morally suspect forces peculiar to the social and intellectual structures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In *The Order of Things* Foucault offers a similar analysis of the modern social sciences. He maintains that all social scientific knowledge is based on a particular conception of human reality, the conception of *man*. Man is defined as that entity for which representations of objects exist. To assert the reality of man in this special sense is to posit a being with a puzzling dual status; something that is both an object in the world and an experiencing subject through which the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

world is constituted. Modern thought takes this conception of man as definitive of human reality as such, but Foucault maintains that it is just one contingent construal of that reality – and one that will soon pass.

The Order of Things can be read broadly as a historical critique of the modern concept of man. First, Foucault begins by trying to show that the concept had no role during the immediately preceding Classical period. That age simply identified thought with representation; to think of something was just to represent it as an item in a table on genera and species. But that meant that there could be no Classical thought of representation itself. To think of representation would require representing it, which would in turn require placing it as one species in the table of kinds of thought. But this was impossible, since representation was regarded as identical with thought. It was, accordingly, impossible for the Classical Age to think of representation and therefore impossible for it to form the concept of man, which is defined in terms of representation. In this sense man did not exist for the Classical Age. The concept, Foucault argues, emerges only at the end of the eighteenth century, when Kant for the first time treats representation as just one form of thought and seeks the conditions that make it possible.

Foucault also details ways in which the viability of the concept of man has come into question during the modern period. His discussion of "the analytic of finitude" highlights the failure of modern philosophical efforts (from Kant through Heidegger) to forge a coherent understanding of an entity that is somehow both the source of the world and an object in the world. He argues that the more successful efforts of the human sciences to attain knowledge of human beings have led to "counter-sciences," such as Lacan's psychoanalysis and Lévi-Strauss's anthropology, that undermine the concept of man.

We have seen how Foucault's archaeological method is an outgrowth of his use of Canguilhem's history of concepts. Similarly, his genealogical method can be understood in terms of his desire to write histories of the present. In fact, in one use of the term, Foucault simply identifies genealogy with history of the present, regarding it as any effort to question the necessity of dominant categories and procedures. More narrowly, genealogy is a history of the present specifically concerned with the complex casual antecedents of a socio-intellectual reality (in contrast to archaeology, which is

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

concerned only with the conceptual structures subtending the reality). *Discipline and Punish* is the fullest expression of genealogy in this narrow sense, since it, more than any other of Foucault's books, is concerned with practices and institutions rather than experiences and ideas.[23]

Foucault frequently referred to his historical analyses as "histories of experience." Such reference is especially prominent in *The History of Madness*, which continually speaks of the Renaissance, Classical, and modern experiences of madness, and in the two volumes on the ancient history of sexuality, which Foucault explicitly presents as "a history of the experience of sexuality" (*The Use of Pleasure*, 4). But the idea is present throughout Foucault's histories. The Preface to *The Order of Things*, for example, presents that work as an analysis of "the pure experience of order and of its modes of being" (xxi).

"History of experience" does not, however, have a univocal sense throughout Foucault's historical writings. In *The History of Madness*, which is still significantly marked by Foucault's early attraction to existential phenomenology, the talk of experience evokes, as Foucault later noted,[24] the notion of an anonymous subject of an age's thought and perception. The account of *The History of Madness* accordingly often suggests a quasi-Hegelian *Phänomenologie des kranken Geistes*. Subsequent references (for example, to the experience of order in *The Order of Things* or to the "gaze" in *The Birth of the Clinic*) are more appropriately read in terms of the nonsubjective linguistic structures (discursive formations) Foucault theorizes about in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. The "experience" of the last two volumes of the history of sexuality signals a return of the subject, although not the quasi-Hegelian specter of *The History of Madness*. Now the experience is located in individual persons, who are themselves, however, situated in the fields of knowledge and the systems of normativity that are the respective objects of archaeology and genealogy.

These four dimensions define the field on which Foucault's histories take their diverse forms. Rather than taking any single book as the monotone development of a particular method or strategy, we should read each of Foucault's historical studies as the marshaling of a variety of historical approaches to come to terms with a particular historical reality. The precise combination of approaches depends on the object of inquiry. The history of concepts is most

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

appropriate for disciplines well past the "threshold of scientificity"[25] and so is particularly prominent in *The Birth of the Clinic*'s treatment of medicine and *The Order of Things*'s treatment of the social sciences and their predecessors. All of Foucault's studies are histories of the present in that their subject matter corresponds to some contemporary ideas and practices that he finds especially dangerous. But the approach is paramount in *The History of Madness*, *Discipline and Punish*, and *The History of Sexuality I*, where there is a specific and well-entrenched institutional locus (the asylum, the prison, governmental biopower) of the danger. The history of experience is most prominent in *The History of Madness* and *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, where, although in very different ways, Foucault recognizes a central role for the subject.

Foucault's distinctiveness as an historian of thought lies less in his invention of new methods than in his willingness to employ whatever methods seem required by his specific subject matter. Archaeology and genealogy are innovations of some importance. The former, developed out of Canguilhem's history of concepts, writes a history of thought centered not in the individual subject but in the linguistic structures defining the fields in which individual subjects operate. The latter, as a particular version of history of the present, undermines grand narratives of inevitable progress by tracing the origins of practices and institutions from a congeries of contingent "petty causes." But neither method is the exclusive vehicle of any given Foucaultian analysis, and neither has precisely the same sense in its various applications.

Further, despite the imperial tone of some Foucaultian rhetoric, neither of these methods eliminates the need for historical work of a more standard sort. Archaeology is a useful supplement and, in some cases, a necessary corrective to standard (subject-centered) approaches to intellectual history, but it can hardly stand as a substitute for such work. Its weakness is the obverse of its strength: the bracketing or decentering of the subject. The power of archaeology is apparent from what it finds in the conceptual structures that lie beneath and outside the consciousness of individual subjects. Its limitation is its abstraction from the intellectual lives of subjects, which are not purely foam spewed up by the archaeological ocean but the most concrete and original locus of intellectual achievement. Similarly, the microanalyses of Foucault's genealogy usefully undermine

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the apparent inevitability of many large-scale accounts. But there are relevant factors operative at the macrolevel that the close focus of genealogy is too narrow to detect.

There are those who suggest that Foucault is not really a historian and that his work should not be evaluated by the standard norms and canons of historiography.[26] They are correct in the sense that a Foucaultian history often has its distinctive agenda, with goals quite different from that of standard historiography. His histories of the present, for example, do not aim at a full and balanced reconstruction of past phenomena in their own terms. They focus selectively on just those aspects of the past that are important for understanding our present intolerable circumstances. Such histories may suggest comprehensive schemata that either intrigue or outrage orthodox historians, who have every right to develop or refute Foucault's general claims about, for example, the status of the mad in eighteenth-century Europe or the fundamental mentality of the Classical Age. But even if, read as standard history, his accounts are found inaccurate, they may still be adequate to their task of grounding a historical critique of current malpractices. For example, reservations regarding the overall adequacy of Foucault's account of Tuke's "moral therapy" may not affect the validity of his conclusions about modern psychiatry's lack of moral neutrality.

Foucault's histories of experience provide an example of another sort. Here he is concerned to describe the basic categories that structure the way a given age perceived and thought about objects such as madness or disease. Such a description is derived from historical facts about discourse and behavior during the given age, but Foucault's claims about the "mentality" of an age do not require that he be right about every fact he puts forward to illustrate them. For example, historians such as Roy Porter have rightly challenged Foucault's assertions about the extent of confinement of the mad in eighteenth-century Europe without thereby subverting his view that the attitudes behind confinement were central to the Classical experience of madness.

Although Foucault's particular focus may sometimes allow him to escape from criticisms that would refute a more orthodox historical account, this is not because his enterprise falls outside the standard disciplinary norms of historiography. Histories of experience, of concepts, or of the present do need to be justified by historical evidence,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

as Foucault is entirely aware. But just what sort of evidence is appropriate depends on the precise sort of historical claim being made. If a history of the present is confused with a global account of the past for its own sake or if a history of an experience is mistaken for a set of empirical generalizations about what people in the past said or did, then Foucault is being evaluated by the wrong sort of norms. But every one of his historical claims needs to be justified on the basis of some set of facts accessible to standard historiography. Otherwise Foucault's claims will be either gratuitous or not really historical.

FOUCAULT'S THEORIES

Foucault is an impressive theoretician who builds complex analytic structures with rare facility and acuity. His theorizing is typically not for its own sake but in response to the demands of a specific historical or critical project. Moreover, the theories devised are not intended as permanent structures, enduring in virtue of their universal truth. They are temporary scaffoldings, erected for a specific purpose, that Foucault is happy to abandon to whomever might find them useful, once he has finished his job.

Consider, for example, Foucault's uses of theories of language. His two most extensive treatments of language are in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*; and although these books were separated by only three years, it would be hard to imagine more thoroughly different approaches. *The Order of Things* deals with language in a broadly Heideggerian framework of historical ontology. The question is how the being of language has varied over time, and the answer is given by describing the diverse ways that language has both existed in and referred to the world.

During the Renaissance, according to Foucault, language had "been set down in the world and form[ed] a part of it, both because things themselves hide and manifest their enigma like a language and because words offer themselves to men as things to be deciphered" (*The Order of Things*, 35). As a result, the Renaisssance studied language as it would any other natural object. Ramus, for example, did not regard etymology as having to do with the meanings of words but with the intrinsic properties of letters, syllables, and words. And his syntax was concerned with the consequences of these intrinsic properties for combinations of words, not with criteria for the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

meaningfulness of such combinations. For the Renaissance, "language is not what it is because it has a meaning; its representative content . . . has no role to play here" (*The Order of Things*, 35).

With the Classical Age, there is a radical change in the ontological status of language: "language, instead of existing as the material writing of things, was to find its area of being restricted to the general organization of representative signs" (*The Order of Things*, 42). Language is no longer intertwined with the world, a subsystem of resemblances ontologically on a par with the nonlinguistic resemblances that constitute the overall system of reality. Language is now a separate ontological realm, related to but sharply distinct from the world it describes. "The profound kinship of language with the world was . . . dissolved. . . . Discourse was still to have the task of speaking that which is, but it was no longer to be anything more than what it said" (*The Order of Things*, 43). The entire reality of language was exhausted in its function of representing objects.

With the modern period (roughly, following Kant), the transparent, purely representative character of language is lost and language becomes once again just one part of the world. Now, however, its reality is not that of an eternal, divinely contrived system of resemblances but that of complexly dispersed historical phenomena. No longer the golden key to understanding the world, language has become our unavoidable but profoundly recalcitrant means of expression – recalcitrant precisely because of the historical sedimentations that constrain and distort everything we try to say. Foucault sees formalization and hermeneutical interpretation, the two apparently opposed instruments of modern philosophical analysis, as in fact complementary efforts to overcome the obstacles language poses to knowledge.

With the modern age, as Foucault suspects, ending, the being of language is once again undergoing a fundamental shift. The final result is still undetermined and unpredictable, although Foucault suggests that it may involve a rebirth of language as a unified plentitude. In any case, he has no doubt that the question of language is "where the whole curiosity of our thought now resides" (*The Order of Things*, 306).

In *the Archaeology of Knowledge* there are only a few hints of Heideggerian historical ontology. Languages are historical in the sense that the thought of different periods arises from different sets

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of linguistic systems ("discursive formations"). But language itself is characterized by an atemporal basic structure characteristic of all discursive formations. This structure is given by Foucault's elaborate typology of the rules governing the statements (*énoncés*) that are the basic elements of a discursive formation. Classical natural history and modern biology are very different modes of thought because the discursive rules governing their statements are very different. But in the schema of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* there is no suggestion that language as such has undergone any fundamental transformation from the Classical to the modern age. In both periods it is a system of statements governed by rules that instantiate Foucault's atemporal type of a discursive formation.

It might seem then that in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault renounces the Heideggerianism of *The Order of Things* in favor of a structuralist theory of language, despite his intemperate disavowals of the structuralist label. Indeed, when (in the conclusion of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) Foucault imagines a critic objecting "You have refused to see that discourse, unlike a particular language [*langue*] perhaps, is essentially historical" he replies, "You are quite right" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 200, translation modified). My suggestion, however, is that what happens from *The Order of Things* to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is not Foucault's conversion to a new position but his selection of a new intellectual tool. In *The Order of Things* Foucault's concern is eschatological: he sets himself up as the prophet of the end of one epistemic age and the beginning of another. In casting his gaze over all that has preceded the coming transformation, he sees new conceptions of language as central in each stage of development. A Heideggerian picture of language as a historico-ontological presence is a natural and effective vehicle for presenting such a viewpoint. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault's concern is methodological: he is trying to construct a general approach to the history of thought that does not presuppose the centrality of the phenomenological subject. For this purpose it is natural and effective to present language as an atemporal structure of rules. To ask Foucault which theory of language is really right is like asking the quantum physicist whether light is really a wave or a system of particles. The only sensible answer is that there are particular contexts in which each view has distinctive advantages.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

My suggestion is not that Foucault need be an antirealist in principle about theories, any more than the quantum physicist who refuses to choose between a wave and a particle picture need be an antirealist in principle. The physicist may well think that there is some ultimate truth about the nature of light, even while maintaining that the choice between the wave and the particle picture is not relevant to the question of what this truth is. Such a physicist might even think that the question of a theory's ultimate truth was of no concern to him or her as a physicist, on the grounds that physics aims only at accounts that are empirically adequate. Similarly, my suggestion is not that Foucault thinks he has philosophical grounds for rejecting the very idea of a true theory, but that he is concerned about values theories may have quite apart from questions about their ultimate truth.

This nonrealist approach is also helpful in thinking about Foucault's famous and controversial account of power. This account is laid out, generally and abstractly it seems, in a series of propositions in *The History of Sexuality I*. For example:

> power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations. . . . Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations. . . . Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective. (*The History of Sexuality I*, 94)

Charles Taylor, most effectively among many others, has criticized Foucault's theory of power as a gross oversimplification:

> His espousal of the reversal of Clauswitz's aphorism, which makes us see politics as war carried on by other means, can open insights in certain situations. But to make this one's basic axiom for the examination of modern power as such leaves out too much. Foucault's opposition between the old model of power, based on sovereignty/obedience, and the new one based on domination/subjugation leaves out everything in Western history which has been animated by civic humanism or analogous movements. . . . Without this in one's conceptual armoury Western history and societies become incomprehensible.[27]

But it is not at all clear that the theory Foucault propounds is, as Taylor suggests, intended to elucidate anything as grand as "Western history and societies." The chapter of *The History of Sexuality I* in

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

which Foucault lays down his propositions about power is not titled "The Nature of Power," but simply "Method," the question being, as Foucault explicitly puts it, one "of forming a different grid of historical decipherment by starting from a different theory of power" (*The History of Sexuality I*, 90–91). Further, this theory will not be put forward as an independent construct; it will be a matter of "advancing little by little toward a different conception of power through a closed examination of an entire historical material" (91), namely, the very specific material that makes up the body of Foucault's projected history of modern sexuality. Foucault's goal, then, is not to provide a universally applicable theory of modern power but to find a theory that will help us understand "a certain form of knowledge regarding sex" (92). He is after nothing more than what Taylor agrees he has: a theory that "can open insights in certain situations."

Certainly, Foucault is also interested in deploying his theory of power in other relevant domains. He first developed it in his study of the modern prison in *Discipline and Punish*, where he also showed how the theory elucidated a range of modern institutions, from armies to schools, that had a "carceral" structure. But Foucault sees such extensions as demonstrating the fruitfulness of a method rather than the universality of a picture. Moreover, he makes no claims about the exclusive validity of his approach, even to the domains in which he thinks it particularly enlightening. According to his theory, power is a matter of the subtle and meticulous control of bodies rather than the influence of ethical and judicial ideas and institutions. Nonetheless, he says that "it is certainly legitimate to write a history of punishment against the background of moral ideas or legal structures." His point is just that there remains the question (which his work purports to answer positively), "Can one write such a history against the background of a history of bodies?" (*Discipline and Punish*, 25). It is, then, not surprising that, when formulating "four rules" expressing the consequences of his theory of power for writing a history of sexuality, Foucault emphasizes that they "are not intended as methodological imperatives; at most they are cautionary prescriptions" (*The History of Sexuality I*, 98).

FOUCAULT'S MYTHS

The power of Foucault's writing is due not only to his carefully wrought histories and theories; it also derives from the much less

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

consciously developed, deeply emotional myths that inform many of his books. These myths take the traditional form of a struggle between monsters and heroes. *The History of Madness*, for example, is built on the struggle between the terrors inflicted on the mad by moralizing psychiatrists and the dazzling transgressions of mad artists such as Nietzsche, van Gogh, and Artaud. As so often, the horrors of the monsters are the most effectively portrayed. Rage against them periodically cracks the mannered surface of Foucault's subtle and learned prose with outbursts of derision, sarcasm, and moral indignation. He denounces the moral psychiatry of the nineteenth-century reformers, which "substituted for the free terror of madness the stifling anguish of responsibility; fear no longer reigned on the other side of the prison gates, it now raged under the seals of conscience" (247); "the insane individual . . . far from being protected, [was] kept in a perpetual anxiety, ceaselessly threatened by Law and Transgression" (245). Foucault presents such psychiatry as a "gigantic moral imprisonment" that can be called liberation "only by way of antiphrasis."[28] *The History of Sexuality I* expresses a similar disdain at the liberation from repression allegedly effected by modern sciences of sexuality: "The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our 'liberation' is in the balance" (159). Even the generally detached analysis of *The Birth of the Clinic* is laced with venom toward the alleged compassion of "medical humanism": "the mindless phenomenologies of understanding mingle the sand of their conceptual desert with this half-baked notion" (xiv).

Although Foucault's monsters take different forms from book to book, all are manifestations of the grand bogeyman of French intellectuals since Flaubert: bourgeois society. Hatred of the institutions of this society – particularly the family and conventional morality – gives power and intensity to Foucault's prose. But it also renders him uncharacteristically insensitive to the complexities and nuances of the despised phenomena. They remain little more than scarecrows on his historical landscapes, and their logical function is, appropriately, that of straw men.

Until the 1970s, Foucault opposed his bourgeois scarecrows to the heroic monuments of the great deviant artists. In his historical studies, these most often appear simply as names in honorific litanies. But beneath these brief liturgical evocations, there is a rather well developed view of avant garde (modernist and postmodernist) literature and art, sketched toward the end of *The History of Madness*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and at various points of *The Order of Things* and more fully articulated in his book on Raymond Roussel and in a series of essays published during the 1960s, mostly in *Tel Quel*. Foucault's artists exemplify the two primary components of his positive morality: transgression and intensity. Human fulfillment requires first an opening up of possibilities that lie beyond the limits of prevailing norms. This he understands in terms of Bataille's concept of transgression, a notion developed with great subtlety in his essay on Bataille.[29] For the Foucault of the 1960s, art – particularly writing – is the primary locus of transgression. Writing

> implies an action that is always testing the limits of its regularity, transgressing and reversing an order that it accepts and manipulates. Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. . . . It is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears.[30]

For Foucault, transgression is neither a denial of existing values and the limits corresponding to them (it contains, he says, "nothing negative") nor an affirmation of some new realm of values and limits. It is (and here Foucault employs Blanchot's term) a "contestation" of values that "carries them all to their limits." In Nietzschean terms, transgression is an affirmation of human reality, but one made with the stark realization that there is no transcendent meaning or ground of this reality:

> To contest [transgress] is to proceed until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limit defines being. There, at the transgressed limit, the "yes" of contestation reverberates, leaving without echo the heehaw of Nietzsche's braying ass.[31]

Foucault sees transgression as essentially tied to intensity; it "is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies."[32] Such intensity is the direct consequence of a transgression that by its very nature places us beyond the deadening and consoling certainties of conventional life. But it also is something that was – and remained – of major importance to Foucault in much more personal terms. In an uncharacteristically revelatory comment to an interviewer in 1983, he noted,

> I'm not able to give myself and others those middle-range pleasures that make up everyday life. Such pleasures are nothing for me and I'm not able

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to organize my life in order to make place for them. . . . A pleasure must be something incredibly intense. . . . Some drugs are really important for me because they are the mediation to those incredibly intense joys that I am looking for.[33]

James Miller's biography takes Foucault's fascination with intensity – particularly with what Miller calls "limit-experiences" and relates to Foucault's use of drugs and participation in sado-masochistic sexual rituals – as the biographical key to his work.[34] Although intensity is, as we have just seen, an important category in Foucault's thought, Miller overemphasizes it to the point of distortion. This occurs on two levels. On what we might call the microlevel, Miller systematically misreads specific texts by attributing to Foucault (on the basis of meagre biographical information) views that the text explicitly attributes to someone else (David Halperin offers some clear examples in his critique of Miller).[35] In support of his interpretative method, Miller cites Jean Starobinski's much admired work on Rousseau.[36] But whereas Starobinski had available voluminous autobiographical and other confessional materials, in the case of Foucault there is really nothing beyond some anecdotes from friends and acquaintances and occasional brief remarks Foucault made in interviews or other conversations. When there are vast tracts of someone's personal life about which we know virtually nothing, and when the knowledge we have of most other areas is at best sketchy, the effort to read the texts in terms of the life can only be an exercise in speculation. Miller is simply projecting his own ideas about what certain thoughts, feelings, situations, or actions might mean, with no reason for thinking that this is what they did mean for Foucault.[37]

On the macrolevel, Miller simply ignores or dismisses large chunks of Foucault's work that do not admit analysis in terms of his biographical reading. He ignores almost all the central historical discussion of *The History of Madness* in favor of a focus on the preface to the first edition (which Foucault dropped from later editions) and the discussion of the mad artist toward the end of the book. He passes over the subtle epistemological and linguistic analyses of *The Birth of the Clinic* and pays attention only to the brief discussions of death. And he dismisses out of hand almost all of *The Order of Things* and of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Even *Discipline and Punish* and the three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, which might seem

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to be especially relevant to Foucault's personal life, receive little attention because they have so little to do with "limit-experiences." We would hardly expect an interpretative master key to fit so few locks.

As John Rajchman has very effectively argued, in *Discipline and Punish* and related writings Foucault moved away from his assertion of the ethical centrality of modernist art.[38] As a result, his heroes take a new form. Hope is no longer primarily in the lightning flashes of artistic genius but in the struggles and suffering of marginalized individuals and groups: the parricide (Pierre Rivière), the hermaphrodite (Herculine Barbin), protesting prisoners, and Maoist students. Transgression and intensity remain fundamental ethical categories, but they are now increasingly rooted more in lived social and political experiences than in refined aesthetic sensitivity. Foucault begins to move from heroic myth to mundane reality, although there is still considerable idealization and romanticizing of the marginalized. Similarly, the bourgeois monsters of the 1960s take on the more realistic cast (no less evil for that) of the structures and functionaries of complex power networks.

In the last books on ancient sexuality, however, Foucault's style and tone abruptly change. The volcanic subtexts of mythological struggles almost entirely disappear in favor of the cool exploration of alternative aesthetic forms of human existence. It is impossible for us to know the significance of this shift. Perhaps it was the beginning of what would have become a fundamentally new attitude and approach in Foucault's work; perhaps it merely reflects his view of the particular historical materials he was dealing with; or perhaps it exhibits his way of facing death. In any case, Foucault's last writings attain a calm humanity not found in his previous work.

NOTES

1 Here I am taking "interpretation" to mean "general interpretation" in order to emphasize that interpretative efforts typically put forward some single unifying method or vision as the key to understanding an author's oeuvre. There is, of course, a weaker sense of interpretation as any sort of comment on or explication of a text, with which I have no quarrel in principle.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

2 A fragment of the archaic Greek poet Archilochus runs, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Berlin uses this image to divide thinkers into two classes: those (the hedgehogs) "who relate everything to a central vision . . . in terms of which they understand, think, and feel – a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance," and those (the foxes) "who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle." Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinker*s (London: Penguin, 1979), 22.
3 H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
4 Ibid., 122, 124.
5 Ibid., 124–125.
6 Ibid.
7 To this extent, I agree with Allan Megill's claim that Foucault's work is antidisciplinary ("The Reception of Foucault by Historians," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 [1987]: 117–141). I do not, however, agree with the suggestion that this means Foucault's work cannot be evaluated by the standards of existing disciplines, particularly history. The fact that disciplines are dangerous (that is, possible sources of domination) does not mean that they are not valid sources of knowledge. They are in fact all the more dangerous because of the knowledge they embody. Consequently, an effective challenge to a discipline will have to make a case that can be made plausible in the discipline's own terms, even though the case works against the disciplinary grain. I return to this topic at the end of the following section, "Foucault's Theories."
8 Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," in Bouchard, Donald, ed., *Language, Counter-Memory, and Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113–138. See also Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 21–26.
9 In Lawrence Kritzman, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 323–330.
10 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 14–15.
11 Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 115.
12 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," Appendix to Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 209.
13 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 206.
14 Ibid.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

15 Ibid., 207–208.
16 On these topics, particularly Foucault's connection with the French tradition in history and philosophy of science, see Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
17 For this approach to Foucault, see Joseph Rouse's excellent treatment in *Knowledge and Power: Toward a Political Philosophy of Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987) and in "Foucault and the Natural Sciences," in J. Caputo and M. Yount, eds., *Institutions, Normalization, and Power* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).
18 Foucault remarked that he saw the possibility of regarding these three books – *The History of Madness, The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things* – as part of a unified project only after he had finished the last of them. See "La naissance d'un monde," interview with J.-M. Palmier, *Le Monde*, May 3, 1969.
19 Foucault, *History of Madness*, 55–58. Much more than his other works, *The History of Madness* makes claims regarding social and political history, such as the dates and extent of confinement of the mad in various European countries. For a discussion of *The History of Madness*'s historical adequacy, see my "Foucault and the History of Madness," this volume.
20 Georges Canguilhem, *La formation du concept de reflex aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1970).
21 For a more thorough discussion of these issues, see Gutting, *Foucault's Archaeology*, 32–37.
22 See André Glucksmann's discussion of Foucault and the intolerable in "Michel Foucault's Nihilism," in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, trans. Timothy Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1992), 336–339.
23 For a discussion of the development of Foucault's genealogical method and its role in his work, see Gary Gutting, "Foucault's Genealogical Method," in P. French, T. Uehling, and H. Wettstein, eds., *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 15 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 327–344.
24 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 16.
25 For this notion, see Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 186–189.
26 Megill, "Reception of Foucault," 133–134; Jan Goldstein, review of *Discipline and Punish. Journal of Modern History* 51 (1979): 117.
27 Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in David Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 82–83.
28 Foucault's antipathy to psychiatry is very apparent in his essay "La recherche scientifique and la psychologie," in *Des chercheurs français*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

s'interrogent, J.-E. Morère, ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), 171–201.

29 Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression" in Bouchard, Donald, ed., *Language, Counter-Memory, and Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 29–52.

30 Foucault, "What Is an Author?," 116.

31 Foucault, "Preface to Transgression," 35, 36.

32 Ibid., 35.

33 "The Minimalist Self," interview with Stephen Riggins, in Lawrence Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, and Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 12, 13.

34 James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

35 David Halperin, "Bringing out Michel Foucault," *Salmagundi* (Winter 1993): 79–82. Another striking example, not discussed by Halperin, is Miller's interpretation of Foucault's 1969 article "What Is an Author?": "Foucault sought out 'limit-experiences' for himself, trying to glimpse Dionysus beneath Apollo, hazarding the risk of 'a sacrifice, an actual sacrifice of life,' as he put in 1969, 'a voluntary obliteration that does not have to be represented in books because it takes place in the very existence of the writer'" (Miller, *Passion*, 32). Miller's clear implication is that Foucault is saying that he himself has risked his life (presumably in sadomasochistic practices), seeking "voluntary obliteration." But the text of Foucault's essay makes it absolutely clear that he is not saying anything about his own views or practices; he is explaining what he takes to be the new relation between death and writing in modern literature. "This conception of a spoken or written narrative as a protection against death [for example, in Greek epic or the Arabian Nights] has been transformed by our culture. Writing is now linked to sacrifice and to the sacrifice of life itself. . . . Where a work had the duty of creating immortality, it now attains the right to kill, to become the murderer of its author. Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka are obvious examples of this reversal" ("What Is an Author," 117). Even if we suppose that Foucault agrees with this modern conception of writing (not implausible) and that the regards his own work as an instance of the sort of writing he has in mind (less plausible), there is no reason to think that his talk of "sacrifice of life" and of "right to kill" has the literal meaning required by a connection of it to sadomasochism. Such an interpretation requires us to believe an evident absurdity: that Foucault thought Flaubert, Kafka, and Proust were literally risking their lives through their writing.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

36 James Miller, "Policing Discourse: A Response to David Halperin," *Salmagundi* (Winter 1993): 97.
37 For example, in *Passion*, Miller cites anecdotal evidence that Foucault's father, a surgeon, was a strong disciplinarian with whom his son had frequent conflicts. He immediately reads this in terms of contemporary clichés about the medical personality, authoritarian fathers, and rebellious youth. But if we know anything about Foucault, it is that he was a very unusual and complicated person – someone of whom our clichés are very unlikely to be true.
38 John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), chapter 1.

I am grateful to Anastasia Gutting for helpful comments on the penultimate draft of this introduction.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

THOMAS FLYNN

1 Foucault's Mapping of History

All of Foucault's major works are histories of a sort, which is enough to make him a historian of a sort. The challenge is to determine what sort of history he does and thus what kind of historian he is. It is fortunate that Foucault adopted distinctive terms for his specific approaches at different phases of his career. His early works, the ones that earned him his reputation, were called "archaeologies" and the subsequent ones "genealogies"; the volumes on the history of sexuality that appeared at the time of his death he called "problematizations."

These approaches do not exclude each other. Rather, like successive waves breaking on the sand, each is discovered after the fact to have been an implicit interest of the earlier one, for which it served as the moving force. Thus Foucault insisted that the question of power relations, which characterizes his genealogies, was what his archaeologies were really about, and, subsequently, that the issue of truth and subjectivity, the explicit focus of his final works, had been his basic concern all along. Although these avowals reveal a greater desire for consistency and coherence than Foucault is supposed to have possessed, much less to have been able to warrant, they hypothesize a unity among the three approaches that enables us to present each in more than sequential order. Accordingly, after a survey of these three modes of "history" in their turn, I shall address four issues that give Foucault's approach to history its distinctive character, namely, the topics of nominalism, the historical event, the spatialization of reason, and the nature of problematization. I shall argue that these themes serve to criticize, respectively, Platonists, historians of culture, dialecticians, and traditional historians of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the battles-and-treaties variety. My concluding remarks will assess Foucault as a "postmodern" philosopher of history.[1]

HISTORY AS ARCHAEOLOGY

Discounting a brief neomarxian study of psychology published in 1954[2] and a lengthy Introduction to the French translation of Ludwig Binswanger's *Dream and Existence* (1954), which shows his youthful fascination with existential phenomenology,[3] Foucault's first major works were "archaeologies" of madness, clinical medicine, and the human sciences, respectively. Rather than study the "arche," or origin, these archaeologies examine the "archive," by which he means "systems that establish statements (*énoncés*) as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and as things (with their own possibility and field of use)" (*AK*, 128). More simply put, the archive is "the set (*l'ensemble*) of discourses actually pronounced" (*FL*, 45); not just any discourses, but the set that conditions what counts as knowledge in a particular period. The archive is discourse not only as events having occurred, but as "things," with their own economies, scarcities, and (later in his thought) strategies that continue to function, transformed through history and providing the possibility of appearing for other discourses.

This linguistic understanding of the archive is modified by reference to discursive *practices*, specifically, any set of basic practices that constitute the "conditions for existence" for other discursive practices. Even in what is arguably Foucault's most "structuralist" text, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he insists that the "discursive relations" he is studying obtain "at the limit of discourse" considered as language. They pertain not to the language (*langue*) of discourse, but to "discourse itself *as practice*" (*AK*, 46, emphasis mine). As he explains,

> my object is not language but the archive, that is to say the accumulated existence of discourse. Archaeology, as I intend it, is kin neither to geology (as analysis of the sub-soil), nor to genealogy (as descriptions of beginning and sequences); it's the analysis of discourse in its modality of *archive*. (*FL*, 25)

That modality is the "historical a priori" of a discourse. The contradictory form of this expression evinces the tension that Foucault's

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

position generates between relativism ("historical") and objectivity ("a priori") in archaeology. Analysis of discourse in its archival mode (archaeology) is the search for those enabling and unifying "forms" – a term he continues to use in this context in his very last works (*UP*, 14).

Like any original method, archaeology has its proper object, namely, discursive and nondiscursive *practices*, although the nondiscursive receive little attention until the genealogies. Similar to Wittgenstein's "game," a practice is a preconceptual, anonymous, socially sanctioned body of rules that govern one's manner of perceiving, judging, imagining, and acting. From the vantage point of his subsequent genealogies, Foucault describes practice as "the point of linkage (*enchaînement*) of what one says and what one does, of the rules one prescribes to oneself and the reasons one ascribes, of projects and of evidences" (*IP*, 42). Neither a disposition nor an individual occurrence, a practice forms the intelligible background for actions by its twofold character as *judicative* and "*veridicative*." That is, on the one hand, practices establish and apply norms, controls, and exclusions; on the other, they render true/false discourse possible. Thus the practice of legal punishment, for example, entails the interplay between a "code" that regulates ways of acting – such as how to discipline an inmate – and the production of true discourse that legitimates these ways of acting (*IP*, 47). The famous power/knowledge dyad in Foucault's larger schema merely elaborates these judicative and veridicative dimensions of "practice." An archive is the locus of the rules and prior practices forming the conditions of inclusion or exclusion that enable certain practices and prevent others from being accepted as "scientific," or "moral," or whatever other social rubric may be in use at a particular epoch. In other words, archaeologies need not be confined to the sciences. Foucault suggests possible archaeological studies of discursive practices in the ethical, the aesthetic, and the political fields (*AK*, 192–195). His subsequent studies pursue those suggestions.

Reference to "epoch" is crucial, for these archives are time-bound and factual; they are discovered, not deduced; they are the locus of practices as "positivities" to be encountered, not as "documents" to be interpreted. Foucault can thus characterize the archive paradoxically as a "historical a priori." The claim that these practices are to be registered as facts, not read as the result of intentions of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

some sort, gives his archaeology its "positivist" tilt, an inclination he continued to favor.

Inspired by the work of his teacher George Canguilhem, Foucault's early studies are archaeologies of those discursive practices that tread the borderline of the scientific. These "histories" of science are chartings of the epistemic breaks that account for the sudden appearance of new disciplines and the equally rapid demise of certain old ones. But if there is a *post factum* "necessity" about these breaks ("fittingness" is perhaps the better word, except that it rings too aesthetic for this stage in Foucault's career), it is only in the sense that some areas of scientific investigation arise in precisely those spaces where earlier practices had proved weak or absent, although this could not have been predicted from the *status quo ante*. As Foucault explains in his programmatic Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France, his intent is to restore "chance as a category in the production of events" (*AK*, 231). This respect for the aleatory becomes even more pronounced in his genealogies.

This early emphasis on *epistemes* (roughly, those conditions that constitute the "veridicative" function of a practice, its claim to the status of scientific knowledge) led many to link Foucault with the structuralists – an association he vigorously rejected. There is little doubt that the immense success of *The Order of Things* was due in part to its being perceived by the public as a structuralist tour de force. Although Foucault shared many concepts with the structuralists as well as a common enemy (subjectivist, humanist thought), his nominalism and "positivism," not to mention the Nietzschean tenor of his writing overall, are clearly post-structuralist.

When one views together the four works that constitute Foucault's archaeological period, namely, *The History of Madness*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things*, and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, one senses a curious unity-within-diversity. All four address the practices of exclusion that constitute the discourse that will bear the honorific "science." All manifest a profound respect for the period surrounding the French Revolution and its immediate aftermath as the watershed for apparently unrelated discursive and nondiscursive practices. And they all reveal a sense of the unspoken and unspeakable relationships that the archaeologist has been the first to discover between such apparently disjointed areas as clinical medicine, medicalization of madness, and the scientific status of various social inquiries – which are pronounced to have more in common with each

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

other than with their presumed precursors in traditional historical accounts.

In this sense, archaeology is both *counter*-history and social critique. It is counter-history because it assumes a contrapuntal relationship to traditional history, whose conclusions it more rearranges than denies and whose resources it mines for its own purposes. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, subtitled *An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, for example, Foucault offers us an alternative account of many of the same facts that anchored the received view of how anatomoclinical medicine came to replace the "medicine of species" that had dominated thought and practice in the Classical Age. What others had taken as crucial in the history of this displacement, such as the use of corpses in pathological anatomy, Foucault argues, was symptomatic of a more basic and far-reaching change at the level of epistemology. The well-known opposition to the use of corpses in pathology, he notes, was not due to religious or moral scruples, as was commonly believed, but resulted from the epistemic conviction of classificatory medicine that cadavers would be of little use. After the epistemic break (a concept Foucault adopts from the philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard), attention focused on the surface of a lesion, the site of a disease; clinicians were now interested in "geography" rather than in "history"; their question was no longer the essentialist "What is wrong with you?," but the nominalistic "Where does it hurt?"

But archaeology is social critique as well. It radicalizes our sense of the contingency of our dearest biases and most accepted necessities, thereby opening up a space for change. In its appeal to discursive practices, it underlines the close link between perceiving, conceiving, saying, and doing. It is not that Classical physicians had refused to admit the evidence that lay before them; they simply perceived the object differently from their modern successors. Indeed, this epistemic shift would result in the emergence of a new object for their investigation. Foucault will make a similar claim for the rise of the delinquent in the face of a science of criminology. In both instances traditional accounts, by trying to get "beneath" the surface of the positivities in question, confused the conditioned with its conditions.

In viewing the archaeologies, one notes a pattern in Foucault's approach to historical topics that will continue throughout the next phases of his career. He begins with a powerful image, an iconic

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

statement of the thesis he intends to unveil: the *Narrenschiff* with its cargo of madmen; Pomme treating a hysteric with baths, ten or twelve hours a day for ten months; Velasquez attempting to depict representation. One could call this the "phenomenological" or descriptive moment in his method. This is followed by a bold claim that counters the received opinion. Then begins the rearrangement of the evidence into a new configuration. The result is an alternative reading that yields new insights: Enlightenment reason, far from liberating madness, confines it; Classical medicine is blind to the individual cases it studies; nineteenth-century political economy is shown to have more in common epistemically with biology and philology of the same period than with eighteenth-century analyses of wealth.

Whether these alternatives are intended to replace or simply to complement the standard accounts is unclear. In an interview with a group of historians, Foucault asserts the latter (*IP*, 41), but his vigorous advocacy of epistemic shifts in *The Order of Things*, for example, suggests the former. In fact, his claims regarding the extent of epistemic or archival boundaries become more modest as time goes on. Thus, in *The Order of Things* he insists there is only one episteme for a given epoch (*OT*, 168), whereas in the Foreword to the English edition of that same work four years later, he cautions that the work is "a strictly 'regional' study" and that such terms as "thought" or "Classical science" refer "practically always to the particular discipline under consideration" (*OT*, x). He exemplifies the latter view by locating the epistemological break for the life sciences, economics, and language analysis at the beginning of the nineteenth century and that for history and politics at the middle (*FL*, 15). He is explicit in distinguishing his *episteme* from a Kantian category and insists that the term simply denotes "all those relationships which existed between the various sectors of science during a given epoch" (*FL*, 76).

GENEALOGIES OF THE PRESENT

No more than archaeology is genealogy a return to origins, a project that Foucault associates with Platonic essentialism. Rather, its concern is the descent (*Herkunft*) of practices as a series of events. Unlike the continuities of a theory of origins, genealogy underscores the jolts and surprises of history, the chance occurrences, in order to

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

"maintain passing events in their proper dispersion" (*LCP*, 146). To this extent it resembles archaeology.

It moves beyond the earlier method in its explicit focus on power and bodies. Genealogy "poses the problem of power and of the body (of bodies), indeed, its problems begin from the imposition of power upon bodies."[4] As Foucault notes, "The body – and everything that touches it: diet, climate, and soil – is the domain of the *Herkunft* [*genealogy*]" (*LCP*, 148). This emphasis on the body as the object of discipline and control gives Foucault's genealogical studies of the practice of punishment (*Discipline and Punish*) and of sexuality (*History of Sexuality, I*) their distinctive character. His genealogy of the carceral system centers on the way "the body as the major target of penal repression disappeared" at a certain point in history (*DP*, 8), only to be subjected to more subtle control by the "normalizing" techniques of the human sciences in the nineteenth century. And the first volume of his genealogy of sexuality reveals "the encroachment of a type of power on bodies and their pleasures" that the Victorian proliferation of "perversions" produced (*HS*, 48). As we should now expect, this focus on the body continues in his subsequent work. A chapter in the second volume of his history of sexuality, which appeared just before he died, is entitled "Dietetics" to underscore the greater concern of the classical Greeks for sex in the context of diet and physical regimen than with sex as primarily a moral matter.

Power relations underwrite all Foucault's genealogies. This translates "history" from a project of meaning and communication toward a "micro-physics of power," in Foucault's telling phrase (*DP*, 139). It likewise shifts the model for historical understanding from Marxist science and ideology, or from hermeneutical text and interpretation, to strategy and tactics. "The history which bears and determines us," he writes, "has the form of a war rather then that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning" (*P/K*, 114).

Given the major role that the concept plays in Foucault's genealogies, it is unfortunate that he offers no definition of "power" as such other than describing it as "action on the action of others" (*EW* 3:341). Of course, as befits a historical nominalist, he insists that "power" does not exist, that there are only individual relations of domination and control. Moreover, he cautions us, "power" should not be taken in a pejorative sense. It is in fact a positive concept,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

functioning in our divisions of the true and the false, the good and the evil, as well as in the distinction and control of ourselves and one another. He is particularly intent on unmasking the prevalent legalistic understanding of "power."

This inevitability of power relations led critics such as Jürgen Habermas to list Foucault among the "neoconservatives." Although it is true that this usage figures in his anti-utopian thinking and that its stark realism, if that's the word, separates him from Marxist and other optimists, his claim that every exercise of power is accompanied by or gives rise to resistance opens a space for possibility and freedom in any context. This stance leaves him remarkably close to Jean-Paul Sartre, whose maxim was that we can always make something out of what we have been made into. The historical (not to mention the ethical) problem is what role genealogy, much less archaeology, leaves for individual initiative in these matters. In fact, it seems to leave very little.[5] The genealogies operate on strategies without a strategist.[6] The "dialectic of emancipation" that Foucault sees at work in Enlightenment theories of history, including those of Marx and the Marxists, has no place in a postmodern account – a point to which we shall return in conclusion.

There is an archaeological dimension to his genealogy of the modern penal system. It consists in uncovering those discursive and nondiscursive practices that make it possible, indeed natural, to speak of surveillance, re-education, and training – words from the military and scholastic vocabulary – in the context of judicial punishment. The descriptive aspect of his enterprise reveals a rapid and widespread change in the penal practices of the European and North American communities between 1791 and 1810. Prior to that, governments inflicted on criminals any of a vast array of punishments, most of them corporal. These ranged from flogging and the pillory to the gruesome torture and execution of a would-be regicide, an account of which opens Foucault's book. Yet within two decades this multiplicity of punishments had been reduced to one: detention. Foucault asks why.

In addressing this question, he adopts Lord Acton's distinction between the history of a period and that of a problem. The former would address the ideological movements, economic changes, social conditions, and, of course, the individual agents that fashioned this dramatic shift in practice. It is a work of erudition. Foucault's focus, however, is on the problem: What made this transformation

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

possible? Description has revealed a radical break, the kind that interests the archaeologist, who will analyze it to discover a transformation and displacement of discursive and nondiscursive practices. What genealogy adds to this inquiry is a specific interest in the new economy of power relations at work in this practice of high-minded penal reform. As genealogist, Foucault thus joins Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud as a "master of suspicion," uncovering the unsavory provenance (*pudenda origo*) of ostensibly noble enterprises.

Two terms that recur at crucial junctures throughout Foucault's histories are "transformation" and "displacement." In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he points out that he "held in suspense the general, empty category of [historical] change in order to reveal transformations at different levels" (*AK*, 200). His opposition to traditional history is in part the rejection of a uniform model of temporalization. *Discipline and Punish*, for example, superimposes on the standard history of nineteenth-century penal practices the transformation in the way the body is related to power, a real but unconscious shift in what he terms the "political technology of the body" (*DP*, 24). This "radical event," in the language of *Archaeology*, is not attributable to any individual, such as a founder or a reformer, and yet its temporal parameters can be charted with relative precision.

Foucault follows his former teacher Louis Althusser in adopting the Freudian term "displacement" to characterize this new "economy of power." It is significant that this is a spatial, not a temporal, term. The vocabulary and the very objects of practical and theoretical concern in the realm of punishment, even if retained in the new dispensation, are altered in meaning and use by the "punitive reason" that becomes operative in the early nineteenth century and the "carceral system" it serves to legitimate. What he calls the "technology of power" mediates the humanization of punishment and the rise of the human sciences – a new perspective on the archaeological thesis of *The Order of Things*. As before the displacement, the object is ostensibly the body of the criminal, but now that body is confined for the sake of *discipline*. It is the individual's body as a social instrument that must be rendered a docile and pliable tool of economic productivity. This, rather than the vengeance of the sovereign, is the goal of the "reformed" techniques of punishment.

The architectural emblem for this displacement of punishment is Bentham's Panopticon. Symbol and instrument of constant surveillance, it assured the automatic application of power by

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

rendering the prisoner perpetually visible; since the overseers could not be seen, the inmates became their own guards – the ideal of a carceral society. Panopticism, Foucault concludes, "is the general principle of this new 'political anatomy' whose object and end are not the relations of sovereignty [as before the break] but the relations of discipline" (*DP*, 208).

PROBLEMATIZATIONS

In an interview with his research assistant François Ewald, published shortly before his death, Foucault characterizes his current work as "problematization." The term denotes "the ensemble of discursive and nondiscursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and the false and constitutes it an object of thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis or the like)."[7] The mention of practices and of epistemic value (the true and the false) harkens back to archaeology, and talk of control of self and others (elsewhere in the interview) indicates that genealogy is still at work here. But reference to play and, specifically, to "truth games" (*les jeux de vérité*) introduces a new phase of his approach to history and affords yet another perspective on his previous work. What truth game is the person playing, for example, who regards himself as insane or sick? As a living, speaking, working being? As a criminal or the subject of sexual desire? Each of Foucault's successive books is now seen as addressing these questions.[8]

The change occurred during the eight-year gap between the first and the next two volumes of his *History of Sexuality*. As Foucault explains in a lengthy Introduction to volume two, his previous investigations were the fruit of "theoretical shifts" by which he analyzed the cognitive and the normative relations of "experience" in modern Western society. These are the "veridicative" and judicative dimensions mentioned earlier as the domains of archaeology and genealogy, respectively. It is worth noting, however, that they are now described as dimensions of "experience," not simply of "discourse" nor of discursive practice:

> It appeared that I now had to undertake a third shift in order to analyze what is termed "the subject." It seemed appropriate to look for the forms and modalities of the relation to self by which the individual constitutes and recognizes himself *qua* subject. (*UP*, 6)

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

How one constitutes oneself and is constituted the subject of sexuality (or a political subject) – what he calls "subjectivation" – now becomes his concern. In this work he asks why sexual conduct became an object of moral solicitude. Why this "problematization"?

Typically, he rereads his previous work in light of this question. His archaeologies are said to have examined the forms of problematization; the genealogies enabled him to examine the practices involved in their formation. Now he wishes to focus on the problematizing of sexual activity and pleasure via "practices of the self" by appeal to the criteria of an "aesthetic of existence." He acknowledges both an archaeological and a genealogical dimension to the experience he analyzes. But the distinctive question is the problematizing of sexual activity in the constitution of the moral self. He studies the relation between "technologies of the self" and the regulation of sexual practices and (later) desires in the context of the "truth games" being played by the relevant participants.

Problematization, in effect, is an important complement to the other two approaches to an historical issue, the charting of the experience in question along a third axis. Foucault insists that none of the axes along which he plots the events in question is the complete story. Indeed, there is no such thing as the "whole" picture. There is simply a multiplication of events (and presumably of axes as well), which elsewhere he terms a "polyhedron of intelligibility," to mix spatial metaphors, the number of whose sides is indefinite.

FOUCAULT'S HISTORICAL CARTOGRAPHY

To chart Foucault's distinctive approach to history, it will help to select four coordinates that lend a certain coherence to what might better be termed a philosophical "style" à la Nietzsche than a theory. Rather than circumscribe the work of so polymorphous a thinker, these topics designate four overlapping fields on which he simultaneously pursued his investigations. Their superimposition should clarify the kind of history that Foucault was engaged in.

Historical Nominalism

Foucault's method is radically anti-Platonic and individualistic. His sympathy with the Sophists, Cynics, and other philosophical "outsiders" is based on a profound distrust of essences, natures, and other

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

kinds of unifying, totalizing, and exclusionary thought that threaten individual freedom and creativity. That is to say, his misgivings are moral (in the broad sense) as well as epistemological, as becomes clear from his numerous remarks about an "aesthetic of existence" toward the end of his life.

What Foucault calls his "nominalism" is a form of methodological individualism. It treats such abstractions as "man" and "power" as reducible for purposes of explanation to the individuals that comprise them. This is the context of his claim, for example, that "power does not exist," that there are only individual instances of domination, manipulation, edification, control, and the like. His infamous assertion that "man" did not exist before the nineteenth century, even when tempered by appeal to the human sciences that generated the category (which, in turn, served to legitimize them), must be interpreted in the additional sense that "man" is a mere *flatus vocis* even for the human sciences. Failure to respect Foucault's underlying nominalism has frustrated the critics who have complained about the elusive character of his concept of power.

It is the historian's task to uncover discursive and nondiscursive practices in their plurality and contingency in order to reveal the *fields* that render intelligible an otherwise heterogeneous collection of events. There is no foundational principle, no originating or final cause. Such words as "influence" and "author" dissolve under nominalistic scrutiny. "History," as Foucault writes it, is the articulation of the series of practices (archive, historical a priori) that accounts for our current practices, where "account" means assigning the relevant transformations (differentials) and displacements or charting the practice along an axis of power, knowledge, or "subjectivation." Thus Foucault's program offers the "new historians" too much and too little: too many diverse relations, too many lines of analysis, but not enough unitary necessity. We are left with a plethora of intelligibilities and a lack of necessity. But he resolutely refuses, as he puts it, to place himself "under the sign of unique necessity" (*IP*, 46).[9]

The Event

In selecting this topic, we can assess Foucault in terms of the controversy that arose among historians during the 1960s and

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

1970s regarding the comparative merits of "history of events" (*histoire événementielle*) and "non-event-oriented history" (*histoire nonévénementielle*). Defenders of the former, traditional approach considered themselves humanists, employing hermeneutical methods in ascertaining the meaning of documents; whereas those in the latter camp were closer to the social sciences, favoring comparativist or structuralist insights, statistical arguments, and computer techniques. Foucault, who criticized the "confused, understructured, and ill-structured domain of the history of ideas" (*BC*, 195), was commonly linked with the latter, and his "histories" were judged to be "structuralist" attacks on humanist values.

It is not by accident, therefore, that he chose to make the concept of event the center of his historical analyses. But his peculiar use of "event" serves to distinguish him from old and new historians alike. Practices are events in the Foucaultian sense; so, too, are statements. The famous epistemological breaks of his archaeologies are events, as are the "micro" exercises of power in the "capillaries" of the body politic. Appeal to "event" enables Foucault to avoid such "magical" concepts as historical "influence" and vague notions like "continuity" by proliferating events without number. An event, he explains,

> is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked "other." (*LCP*, 154)

It is precisely "the singular randomness of events" that enables him to reintroduce the central role of chance into historical discourse. His ironic defense against "structuralist" charges is that no one favors the history of events more than he! In fact, a close reading of his work reveals that the concept of event broadens to bridge the gap between these two schools of historiography.[10]

Spatialization of Reason

Foucault's spatialized thinking extends far beyond his well-known use of spatial metaphors to include the use of lists, tables, geometrical configurations, and illustrations. These are not merely ancillary to his approach, but pertain to the core of his historical method,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

which is "diagnostic" and, as such, comparatist and differential. He seems to have adopted as a general rule what he characterized in *The Birth of the Clinic* as "the diacritical principle of medical observation," namely, that "the only pathological fact is a comparative fact" (*BC*, 134). What we described earlier as "counter" history is Foucault's use of a comparatist and differential method. This not only frees him from historical "realism" that seeks to ascertain the truth "as it actually happened," but also liberates him from the confines of dialectical thinking. His shift from time to space as the paradigm guiding his approach to historical topics counters the totalizing, teleological method favored by standard histories of ideas, with their appeal to individual and collective consciousness and to a "tangled network of influences" (*OT*, 63).

The best-known examples of Foucault's spatialized thinking are his analyses of Velasquez's *Las Meninas* in *The Order of Things* and of Bentham's Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*. In the former, like an art critic, he leads us along the path of argument by repeatedly calling our attention to the singular image before us. We are drawn to the graphic conclusion that representation cannot represent itself, that "the very being of that which is represented is now going to fall outside representation itself" (*OT*, 240). By a powerful iconic argument, Foucault shows that "representation has lost the power [it enjoyed in the Classical period] to provide a foundation . . . for the links that can join its various elements together" (*OT*, 238–239). That connection will next be sought in "man" and, failing that, in the very differential that Foucault, as postmodern historian, both practices and preaches.

Foucault's famous description of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon relates power and knowledge, norm and surveillance, in an interplay of architecture and social science to reveal the self-custodial nature of modern society, where "prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons" (*DP*, 228). Again the demonstrative force of his analyses depends on the spatial organization of the institutions he discusses. As with the Velasquez painting, one is constantly referred back to the visual evidence, to the plans, the prospects, the models. But now the line of sight is *strategic*, not just descriptive; the contours inscribe the relations of control, not just forms of intelligibility. The space has become genealogical.[11]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Problematization

Foucault's interest in contrast and difference does not imply commitment to an underlying unity. This was evident in his focus on the event. The redescription of his histories as problematizations and their linkage with differential or spatialized thought emphasizes this fact:

> The freeing of difference requires thought without contradiction, without dialectics, without negation; thought that accepts divergence; affirmative thought whose instrument is disjunction; thought of the multiple – of the nomadic and dispersed multiplicity that is not limited or confined by the constraints of similarity. . . . What is the answer to the question? The problem. How is the problem resolved? By displacing the question. . . . We must think problematically rather than question and answer dialectically. (*LCP*, 185–186)

We have seen how writing the history of a "problem" rather than of a "period" frees Foucault from the obligation to exhaustive research of the historical sources. Not that he can ignore the "facts"; rather, he is warranted to consider only those events that are relevant to the problem at issue, its transformation and displacement, the strategies it exhibits, and the truth games it involves. This also relieves him of the need to "totalize" or "synthesize" in the Sartrean and Hegelian senses, respectively. Such an approach, he insists, would be considered anti-historical only by "those who confuse history with the old schemas of evolution, living continuity, organic development, the progress of consciousness or the project of existence" (*P/K*, 70).

POSTMODERN HISTORY

Although we could speak of "post-structuralist" history just as easily,[12] "postmodern" seems the more appropriate term to designate the histories of someone who drew sharp epistemic lines between modernity, its predecessor, and its successor, and then proceeded to fill in all three spaces with description and analysis. Like the term "existentialist," the use and abuse of which it is coming to resemble, "postmodern" is notoriously difficult to define. Prudence counsels that we fashion a cluster of themes and concepts whose criss-crossing and overlapping will reveal a family resemblance among the uses of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the term. In Foucault's case, this postmodern cluster includes the four topics just discussed.

His nominalism is not of itself distinctive. The historian Paul Veyne reads Henri Irénée Marrou as supporting Foucault's claim that "nothing is more reasonable than a nominalist conception of history."[13] In this respect, both share what was probably Aristotle's view of the profession. But the radicalization of this position to the point of evacuating the historical subject, coupled with a Nietzschean appeal to relations of power and resistance, gives Foucaultian history an "agonistic" character that Jean-François Lyotard considers characteristic of "postmodern" logic.[14]

The dispersion of events and multiplicity of lines of "explanation" is another feature of the postmodern. In this regard, Lyotard speaks of the end of "master narratives" like the Marxist and the evolutionary. Foucault's "polyhedron of intelligibility" and his exclusion of any "dialectic of emancipation," such as Enlightenment thinking is supposed to have bequeathed us, are rightly seen as postmodern in spirit. This is obviously the case if one takes the Habermasian defense of modernity as paradigmatic of the genre.[15]

What is most distinctive of Foucault as a postmodern thinker is what I have called his "spatialization of reason" as studied in his histories and exhibited in his writings. His implicit appeal to space, with its transformations and displacements as well as its comparativist and diacritical method, rather than to time as the model for historical explanation undermines the telic nature of traditional historical accounts, even as it restores the dispersive, "Dionysian" character to time, which had been tamed by existentialists and other narrativists.

Foucault's focus on problematization supports numerous regional studies and discourages larger undertakings. His more limited understanding of "episteme," as well as his nominalist use of "power," has a similar, particularizing effect. In fact, his writings consistently counter the Aristotelian prohibition against a "science of the singular" by appeal to the case study method of modern medicine, which he employs throughout his histories.

Finally, his move away from explanation toward diagnosis is typically postmodern in its eschewal of foundations, origins, ultimates, and grand theories in favor of practical, moral (in the broad sense) concerns. Assuming the demise of representational thinking, which

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

he subjected to a profound critique in *The Order of Things*, Foucault has no intention of grasping the event-fact "as it actually occurred." Rather, he writes a "history of the present" that, in effect, seeks to diagnose and suggest alternative avenues of behavior, or at least their possibility. Such is his postmodern understanding of history, which "has more in common with [modern] medicine than [modern] philosophy" (*LCP*, 156).

Given the breadth and boldness of Foucault's approach, it is liable to criticism from a variety of quarters. There is something of the poet in his easy way with striking examples at the price of tedious factual corroboration. Indeed, in a famous phrase he once avowed, "I am well aware that I have not written anything but fictions," but then hastened to add, "which is not to say they have nothing to do with the truth" (*P/K*, 193). Professional historians, for example, who specialize in the fields he covers, have been quick to take issue with his list of historical facts.[16] The price of being an historian *suo modo* seems to be that he is not entirely at home either with professional historians or with philosophers. His greatest influence appears to have been on scholars working in literature and in the social sciences.

Many philosophers will question the tenability of Foucault's radically nominalistic claims. This is an ancient quarrel, which need not be rehearsed here. But its central role in his philosophy demands a defense or at least an explicit discussion, which is never forthcoming. If nominalism fails, so, too, do many of Foucault's assertions about power, truth, and subjectivation.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the spatialization of history is its freeing of the discipline from its moorings in philosophical anthropology, the famous "death of man" thesis that caused so much ink to spill after the appearance of *The Order of Things*. Speaking of archaeology as "diagnosis," Foucault claims that it "does not establish the fact of our identity by the play of distinctions." Rather, "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, he concludes, "far from being the forgotten and recovered origin, is this dispersion that we are and make" (*AK*, 131). A condition of the existence of this dispersion is spatialized language that dissolves the unity of the self, dissipates projects by chance events, and multiplies rationalities.[17] But

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

this, of course, also generates a "counter-anthropology" to undergrid Foucault's counter-history. And the ethical implications of that position were just beginning to be worked out at the time of Foucault's death. Whether it can advance beyond a certain aestheticism is not yet clear.

But the chief difficulty with the Foucaultian project as history arises from the fact that, to speak like a nominalist, the lived, experienced time of the responsible agent is too firmly entrenched; it is, to use more comfortable terms, an essential ingredient in our human condition. As exhibited in our ability to recount and follow narratives, this experience lies at the heart of what we call "history," whether of the agents and forces that condition it or of the historians who fashion its form. No doubt Foucault indicated the inadequacy of any simple narrative account, although he did so with great rhetorical (narrative) skill. Doubtless, too, he chastened those who would look for a single meaning-direction to history or who wish to single out its atomic agents or root causes. But his suspicions have not rooted out the experiential basis of historical narrative. Indeed, his own narratives have served to underscore its inevitability.[18]

It has been said that the kind of music aestheticians analyze is the kind no one can hear. *Mutatis mutandis*, might not something similar be said of Foucault's "postmodern" history?

NOTES

1 The following abbreviations are used in citing Foucault's writings. Full references are given in the Bibliography of this volume.
   AK: *The Archaeology of Knowledge*
   BC: *The Birth of the Clinic*
   DP: *Discipline and Punish*
   EW: *Essential Works*, by volume and page
   FL: *Foucault Live*
   HS: *History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*
   IP: *L'Impossible Prison*
   LCP: *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*
   OT: *The Order of Things*
   P/K: *Power/Knowledge*
   UP: *The Use of Pleasure*

2 *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (Paris: PUF, 1954). A revised version (PUF, 1962) was translated by Alan Sheridan as *Mental Illness and Psychology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

3 English translation by Forrest Williams, "Dream, Imagination, and Existence," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 19:1 (1984–1985): 29–78.
4 François Ewald, "Anatomie et corps politiques," *Critique* 343 (1975): 1229.
5 I have since come to recognize that Foucault leaves more space for individual initiative than has been commonly acknowledged (see my *Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason*, vol. 2 *A Poststructuralist Mapping of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 162–63; hereafter *PMH*.
6 In this, too, he is remarkably close to the later Sartre, who saw the possibility of "totalization without a totalizer" as *the* question about the meaning of history.
7 Interview with François Ewald, "Le Souci de la vérité," *Magazine littéraire* 207 (May 1984): 18.
8 See my "Truth and Subjectivation in the Later Foucault," *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985): 531–540.
9 For a development of this argument, see my "Foucault and Historical Nominalism," in H. A. Durfee and D. F. T. Rodier, eds., *Phenomenology and Beyond: The Self and Its Language* (Netherlands: Kluwer, 1989), 134–147. Portions of this essay have been included here with permission. See also *PMH*, ch. 2.
10 An extended discussion of this topic occurs in my "Foucault and the Career of the Historical Event," in Bernard P. Dauenhauer, ed., *At the Nexus of Philosophy and History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 178–200. Portions of this piece have been used here with permission. See also *PMH*, ch. 3.
11 See my "Foucault and the Spaces of History," *Monist* 45 (1991): 165–186 and *PMH* ch. 5.
12 See Derek Attridge et al., eds., *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Foucault, in fact, observes: "While I see clearly that behind what was known as structuralism, there was a certain problem – broadly speaking, that of the subject and the recasting of the subject – I do not understand what kind of problem is common to the people we call post-modern or post-structuralist" (*PPC*, 34).
13 Paul Veyne, *Writing History*, trans. Mina Moore-Rinvolucri (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), 43.
14 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Conditions: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 10.
15 See, for example, Richard J. Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

16 See, for example, Jacques Proust et al., "Entretiens sur Foucault," *La Pensée* 137 (February 1968): 4–37, as well as Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 175–179.
17 Flynn, "Spaces of History," 181.
18 These and similar objections are developed at length in Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988), and in David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

GARY GUTTING

2 Foucault and the History of Madness

> I am not a professional historian; nobody is perfect.
>
> Michel Foucault[1]

FOUCAULT AMONG THE HISTORIANS. PART I

Michel Foucault's work always had an ambivalent relation to established academic disciplines, but almost all his books are at least superficially classifiable as histories. His first major work, in particular, seems to proclaim its status in the title: *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*.[2] One plausible way of trying to understand and evaluate this seminal book is by assessing its status as a work of history.

The reactions of professional historians to *Histoire de la foile* seem, at first reading, sharply polarized.[3] There are many acknowledgments of its seminal role, beginning with Robert Mandrou's early review in *Annales*, characterizing it as a "beautiful book" that will be "of central importance for our understanding of the Classical period."[4] Twenty years later, Michael MacDonald confirmed Mandrou's prophecy: "Anyone who writes about the history of insanity in early modern Europe must travel in the spreading wake of Michel Foucault's famous book, *Madness and Civilization*."[5] Later endorsements have been even stronger. Jan Goldstein: "For both their empirical content and their powerful theoretical perspectives, the works of Michel Foucault occupy a special and central place in the historiography of psychiatry."[6] Roy Porter: "Time has proved *Madness and Civilization* far the most penetrating work ever written on the history of madness."[7] More specifically,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Foucault has recently been heralded as a prophet of "the new cultural history."[8]

But criticism has also been widespread and often bitter. Consider H. C. Eric Midelfort's conclusion from his very influential assessment of Foucault's historical claims:

> What we have discovered in looking at *Madness and Civilization* is that many of its arguments fly in the face of empirical evidence, and that many of its broadest generalizations are oversimplifications. Indeed, in his quest for the essence of an age, its *episteme*, Foucault seems simply to indulge in a whim for arbitrary and witty assertion so often that one wonders why so much attention and praise continue to fall his way.[9]

Many of Midelfort's criticisms, if not always his overall assessment, have been widely endorsed by, for example, Peter Sedgwick, Lawrence Stone, Ian Hacking, and Dominick LaCapra.[10]

From the above juxtaposition of texts, it would seem that historians are sharply split in their view of the value of Foucault's work. But the division pretty much disappears on closer scrutiny. Those who applaud Foucault have primarily in mind what we may call his meta-level claims about how madness should be approached as a historiographical topic. They are impressed by his view of madness as a variable social construct, not an ahistorical scientific given, and of the history of madness as an essential part of the history of reason. These views are now generally accepted by historians of psychiatry,[11] and Foucault was one of the first to put them forward. In this sense he is a widely and properly revered father of the new history of psychiatry. But on the "object-level" of specific historical facts and interpretations, the consensus of even favorably disposed historians is that Foucault's work is seriously wanting. Andrew Scull, whose work shares much of the general spirit of Foucault's, nonetheless endorses what he rightly says is "the verdict of most Anglo-American specialists: that *Madness and Civilization* is a provocative and dazzlingly written prose poem, but one resting on the shakiest of scholarly foundations and riddled with errors of fact and interpretation."[12] Similarly, Patricia O'Brien, in an article expressing great enthusiasm for Foucault's work, agrees that "historians who are willing to admit that Foucault was writing history find it bad history, too general, too unsubstantiated, too mechanistic."[13]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Even historians who have a more favorable view of Foucault's specific historical claims are reluctant to accept him as a member of their tribe. Jan Goldstein, after maintaining that "Foucault used historical material to great advantage" and that "his historical sense was extraordinarily acute," goes on to note that "Foucault always considered himself at least as much a philosopher as a historian, whose epistemological and political project required that he challenge the ordinary canons of history writing."[14] Consequently, as she remarks in a review of *Discipline and Punish*, "the usual criteria of historical scholarship cannot be used to assess Foucault's work."[15] MacDonald is similarly ambivalent: "Much of what Foucault has to say seems to me to be correct, in spite of his rejection of the prevailing standards of historical discourse" (xi). Allan Megill goes even further. For him, not only does Foucault's work fall outside the discipline of history, "he is *anti*disciplinary, standing outside all disciplines and drawing from them only in the hope of undermining them."[16]

At least one Foucaultian, Colin Gordon, has opposed this consensus, arguing that historians have rejected Foucault's conclusions because they have not properly understood him. The difficulties of *Histoire de la folie* and, especially, the greatly abridged nature of its English translation have led to misinformed criticism. "*Histoire de la folie* has been a largely unread or misread book."[17] If, he suggests, we read Foucault's full text with care, we will find most of the standard criticisms to be misplaced and recognize his work as a rich source of detailed historical insight.

We have, then, three suggestions regarding Foucault's history of madness. The consensus of working historians is that it is bad history. To this Colin Gordon responds that it is good history (or, at least, that there are not yet sufficient grounds for thinking it is bad). Questioning the presupposition of both these views is the claim of Goldstein and Megill that it is not history at all.

Gordon is clearly right that many of the standard historical criticisms of *Histoire de la folie* are misdirected. Midelfort, because of his wide influence, is the best example. He says that

> considered as history, Foucault's argument rests on four basic contentions. The first . . . is the forceful parallel between the medieval isolation of leprosy and the modern isolation of madness. . . . Second is Foucault's contention that in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance the mad led an 'easy

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

wandering life,' madness having been recognized as part of truth. . . . The third major contention . . . is that this openness [of the Middle Ages and Renaissance to madness] disappeared in the Age of the Great Confinement, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century. . . . The fourth and final contention posits a transition to madness as mental illness, in which Foucault examines the work of the reformers, Tuke and Pinel, and concludes that they "invented" mental illness.[18]

The reader of Foucault's book is immediately struck by the oddity of claiming that these are its "basic contentions." Although Foucault explicitly offered a history of madness in the Classical Age, it seems that three of his four central claims are about other periods. In fact, neither of the first two contentions is central to Foucault's argument. He begins his book by suggesting that leprosy in the Middle Ages bore some striking functional parallels to madness in the Classical Age: Both lepers and the mad were objects of fear and repulsion; both were isolated in houses designed more for separation from society than for cures; both were used as joint signs of divine justice and mercy; and in some cases funds and institutions originally meant for lepers came to be used for the mad. There is, Foucault thinks, a nice parallel between the two phenomena, a parallel he uses as a rhetorically effective opening of his book. But as far as historical substance goes, the leprosy discussion is entirely nonessential. Leave it out and the core of Foucault's argument about the nature of Classical madness and its relation to modern psychiatry is unaffected.

To some extent, the same is true of the contrast Foucault sets up between the integration of madness into medieval and Renaissance existence and its exclusion by the Classical Age. The main point is that exclusion and confinement were distinctive features of the Classical Age's attitude toward madness. Foucault sketches an ingenious and provocative story about the medieval and Renaissance viewpoints, but no central argument depends on this account. The needful point is merely that exclusion and confinement distinguish the Classical Age in a fundamental way from the preceding centuries. Beyond this, Foucault's hypotheses as to what went on in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are just intriguing marginalia.

In any case, the specific objections Midelfort raises to Foucault's claims about the pre-Classical period are of little weight. He points out, for example, that the mad were isolated from society during

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

this period, particularly when they posed a threat to others or themselves, and that there were special hospitals for the mad in Spain during the fifteenth century. Here Midelfort mistakes a claim about the fundamental attitude of a period with a claim about the first introduction of a practice. Finding examples of confinement that precede the Classical Age does not count against the claim that confinement had a unique role in that period. One could just as well argue against the secular character of modern society by citing examples of medieval and Renaissance free-thinking. Midelfort also misunderstands Foucault's position when he urges against it that "instances of harsh treatment of the mad [during pre-Classical periods] could be multiplied *ad nauseam*."[19] This evidence counts against Foucault's view only on the assumption that the pre-Classical inclusion of madness as part of the "truth of human existence" entailed humane treatment of the mad. But such an assumption makes a travesty of Foucault's account, on which Renaissance madness, for example, is either the critically ironic inverse of reason or a tragic and horrifying encounter with monstrous truths.[20] In either case, madness is an integral but disconcerting aspect of human life, essential but by no means welcomed.[21]

What Midelfort presents as Foucault's fourth basic contention – the "invention" of mental illness by the nineteenth-century reformers – is indeed central. Foucault's history of madness in the Classical Age is intended as a basis for showing that madness as mental illness was a social construction foreign to that period and original with the nineteenth century. Midelfort's criticism of this contention, however, is based on fundamental misunderstandings of Foucault's position. He says, for example, that "Foucault frequently implies that prior to the nineteenth century madness was not a medical problem." As he notes, such an "assertion seems deliberately preposterous" (256), but no more so than Midelfort's attribution of it to Foucault, who has frequent and detailed discussions of Classical medical treatments of the mad. Foucault does insist that confinement was not practiced for therapeutic purposes and that the distinctive Classical experience of madness associated with confinement did not see the mad as ill. But he also insists on the ineliminable role of Classical medical treatment of madness and in fact poses the relation between nonmedical confinement and medical therapy as a major problem for understanding madness in the Classical Age.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

As to Foucault's claim that reformers such as Pinel introduced a fundamentally new conception of madness as mental illness, Midelfort responds that "recent scholarship . . . documents Pinel's explicit debt to earlier English theoreticians and to classical antiquity. Far from standing in a new environment governed by new rules . . . , Pinel clearly felt himself in continuous dialogue with the Hippocratic-Galenic tradition."[22] But this response is quite beside the point unless we falsely assume that conceptual innovation requires complete independence from all intellectual influences.[23] The question is whether Pinel transformed the ideas of those to whom he was "indebted" and "in dialogue with" into a fundamentally new conception. Midelfort's pointing out that, like everyone else, Pinel had intellectual ancestors has no bearing on this issue.

Midelfort's critique of Foucault's third contention – about the place of confinement in the Classical Age – is much more to the point. Foucault's claims about confinement are absolutely central to his position. He maintains that the isolation of the mad (along with various other people whose behavior involved a rejection of reason) in houses of internment was a practice that took on central significance during the Classical Age and is essentially connected with the age's fundamental experience of madness. If Foucault is wrong about Classical confinement, then the foundation of his account of madness in the Classical Age is undermined.

Roy Porter has developed this crucial criticism of Foucault in some detail. Foucault, he notes, insists that large-scale confinement was a western European phenomenon, occuring, if in somewhat different ways and at different rates, in France, Germany, England, Spain, and Italy. But at least for England during the "long eighteenth century" (from the Restoration to the Regency), Porter maintains, Foucault is very much off the mark. Although there was some confinement of the mad and other deviants in workhouses, "the vast majority of the poor and the troublesome were not interned within institutions, remaining at large in society, under the administrative aegis of the Old Poor Law." In particular, studies of the treatment of the mad in specific regions of England show "that lunatics typically remained at large, the responsibility of their family under the eye of the parish."[24] Although some of the mad were confined, the numbers were quite small: perhaps as little as 5000 and surely no more than 10,000 by early in the nineteenth century, compared with the almost 100,000

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

confined in 1900. Confinement, Porter suggests, was much more a nineteenth-century phenomenon; during Foucault's Classical Age, "the growth in the practice of excluding the mad was gradual, localized, and piecemeal."[25]

Porter also raises important questions about Foucault's claim that in confinement the mad were homogeneously mixed with a wide variety of other sorts of deviants (prostitutes, free-thinkers, vagabonds, etc.) who violated the Classical Age's ideal of reason. "This picture of indiscriminate confinement does not seem accurately to match what actually happened in England. Few lunatics were kept in gaols, and workhouse superintendents resisted their admission." This tendency "not to lump but to split" was, Porter urges, particularly evident in London, where "scrupulous care was taken to reserve Bethlem for lunatics and Bridewell for the disorderly."[26]

Finally, Porter challenges two of Foucault's key claims about the way the Classical Age conceived madness (its "experience" of madness). According to Foucault, madness, like all the varieties of unreason, was rejected in the first instance because it violated the Classical Age's morality of work. The mad, being idle, were a threat to the stability of a bourgeois society in which labor was the central value. Further, Foucault held that, within the category of unreason, the mad were distinctive for their animality, which put them in radical opposition to the human domain of reason. Porter finds both claims dubious in light of the English experience. "I do not," he says, "find prominent in eighteenth-century discourse the couplings Foucault emphasizes between sanity and work, madness and sloth. Less still was there any concerted attempt to put the asylum population to work."[27] As to the animality of the mad, Porter acknowledges it as one central image, but maintains that there is an at least as important counterimage that Foucault scarcely recognizes. This is the Lockean view of the mad as not raging animals but people who, through misassociation of ideas, go desperately awry in their reasoning. Porter says that Foucault sees this view of madness as arising only with the moral therapy of Tuke and Pinel early in the nineteenth century, whereas in fact it was a very important dimension of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conceptions of madness.

If Porter is right, Foucault is fundamentally wrong in his characterization of madness in the Classical Age: Confinement is not a practice definitive of the epoch's attitude toward madness, the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

exclusion of the mad is not an expression of bourgeois morality, and animality is not the essence of Classical madness. Is he right? Is Foucault's history bad? Or are Porter and other critics misunderstanding Foucault's historical claims? Or, finally, is Foucault up to something other than history? As a basis for answering these questions, I offer a fairly close reading of the section of *Histoire de la folie* (Part II, Chapters 2–5) in which Foucault develops the fundamentals of his account of madness in the Classical Age. This will provide grounds for drawing some conclusions about the historical value of his work.

FOUCAULT ON CLASSICAL MADNESS

For all its *annalistes* and structuralist affinities, Foucault's history of madness begins from one great *event:* the confinement, within a few years, of a significant portion of the population of western Europe in special houses of internment. Foucault presents this event as an abrupt and major change. He speaks of it as an "abruptly reached . . . threshold" that occurred "almost overnight" (66; *MC*, 45; see note 2 for an explanation of the reference schema used in this chapter) and describes it as a "massive phenomenon" (75; *MC*, 46) that, for example, displaced in just six years 1 percent of the population of Paris (5000–6000 people) and similar proportions elsewhere during the Classical Age (59, 66, n.2; *MC*, 38, 49).

Foucault, however, is not interested in the event of confinement for its own sake, but in the attitudes toward and perceptions of madness connected with it – what he repeatedly refers to as "the Classical experience of madness." The event of confinement is the sudden manifestation of a long-developing "social sensibility" (66). The goal of his history of madness is to describe exhaustively this experience or sensibility and to show how it provided the basis for the modern psychiatric conception of madness as mental illness.

The experience Foucault is tracking is not, he maintains, simply an experience of madness. Rather, the Classical Age saw madness as one division of a wider category, which Foucault calls "unreason" (*déraison*). This corresponds to the fact that not only the mad, but also a wide variety of other people were confined. Foucault offers successively deeper analyses of just how those confined were perceived.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

On the most immediate level, confinement was an economic policy meant to deal with problems of poverty, particularly begging and unemployment. It was a way of getting a large class of idle, potentially disruptive people off the streets and putting them to work in a controlled environment. In purely economic terms, however, confinement was a failure. It hid but did not eliminate poverty, and any gains in employment due to work requirements on those interned were offset by corresponding losses of employment outside the houses of confinement (82).

But, Foucault maintains, the real significance of internment went beyond this economic surface. Far more than an unsuccessful solution to specific economic problems, it represented a new "ethical consciousness of work, in which the difficulties of the economic mechanisms lost their urgency in favor of an affirmation of value" (82; *MC*, 55). Foucault cites Calvin and Bossuet to show the religious basis for the ethical centrality of work: Since the Fall, a refusal to work manifests an absurd pride, which would presume on the divine generosity to provide what we need with no effort of our own:

> This is why idleness is rebellion – the worst form of all, in a sense: it waits for nature to be generous as in the innocence of Eden, and seeks to constrain a Goodness to which man cannot lay claim since Adam. . . . Labor in the houses of confinement thus assumed its ethical meaning: since sloth had become the absolute form of rebellion, the idle would be forced to work, in the endless leisure of a labor without utility or profit. (84; *MC*, 56–57)

On this second level, then, those confined (*les déraisonnés*) were not regarded as the neutral objects of unfortunate economic processes, but as moral reprobates worthy of society's condemnation and punishment.

Foucault goes on to maintain that implicit in the Classical condemnation of "unreasoning" behavior was a deep restructuring of moral categories. He considers the three major classes of those, other than the mad, who were interned: sexual offenders, those guilty of religious profanation, and free-thinkers (*les libertins*). In every case, behavior that was previously evaluated in other terms was reduced to a violation of bourgeois morality. For example, those suffering from venereal diseases had at first been treated as merely victims of an illness like any other (97–101). But with the beginning of the Classical Age, their afflictions were seen as punishments for their

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

sexual indiscretions. Another, more interesting, case is the inverse fates of sodomy and homosexuality (102). Previously, sodomy had been violently condemned as a religious profanation and homosexuality tolerated as an amorous equivocation. With the Classical Age, sodomy is treated less severely, being regarded as a mere moral fault, not a religious offense requiring the stake. Conversely, homosexuality is no longer overlooked but is treated like other serious offenses against sexual morality. There is a Classical convergence of diverse attitudes toward deviant behavior to the single level of morality.

Foucault further maintains – with particular illustrations from the Classical attitude toward prostitution and debauchery – that the internment of sexual offenders was primarily designed to protect the bourgeois family:

> In a sense, internment and the entire 'police' regime that surrounds it serves to oversee [*contrôler*] a certain order in familial structure. . . . The family with its demands becomes one of the essential requirements of reason; and it is it that above all demands and obtains internment. . . . This period sees the great confiscation of sexual ethics by the morality of the family. (104)

Similarly, such things as blasphemy, suicide, and magical practices, previously regarded as outrageous profanations of religion, are reduced to offenses against the monotone morality of the bourgeoisie. Magic, for example, once violently suppressed as an objectively powerful challenge to religion through its evocation of evil powers, now is regarded as merely a personal delusion that threatens the secular social order. In the same way, free-thinking (*libertinage*) is no longer a perverse but rational assault on religion's holy truth. It is merely the pathetic consequence of a licentious way of life.

Foucault's first fundamental thesis about Classical madness, then, is that it is assimilated to the broader category of unreason. This is a very puzzling category to us, since it seems to be trying to occupy a nonexistent middle ground between freely chosen criminality and naturally caused illness. If the mad and their partners in unreason have acted freely against the social order, why, we ask, are they merely confined and not punished like other offenders? If they are not sufficiently responsible to merit punishment, why are they not treated like the ill, as innocent victims of natural forces? Foucault acknowledges our difficulty in grasping the conception, but he insists

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

that this is not due to any intrinsic incoherence, but to fundamental disparities between Classical and modern modes of experience.

Foucault does not, however, think we can stop with this simple, if puzzling, account of Classical madness. In some ways the mad were not treated like others who were interned. There were hospitals (such as the Hôtel de Dieu in Paris and Bethlem in London) where special provision was made for the medical treatment of the mad. True, such provision is the exception, and Foucault emphasizes that the internment of the mad (apart from the special hospitals) had no medical intention. Physicians were assigned to houses of internment only to treat whatever illnesses the inhabitants might come down with, not as part of a program of medical treatment for madness as such. But even though the medical view of madness is the less prominent (there were only eighty madmen in the Hôtel de Dieu compared to the hundreds – perhaps even 1000 – in the Hôpital Général), it cannot be ignored: "these two experiences each have their own individuality. The experience of madness as illness, as restricted as it is, cannot be denied" (131). The problem is to understand the juxtaposition of these two very different experiences.

Foucault vehemently rejects the Whiggish temptation to see Classical medical treatment of the mad as the first stirrings of progress toward an enlightened realization (fully blooming in the nineteenth century) that madness is mental illness. He notes that in fact a medical approach to madness developed at the end of the Middle Ages, beginning – possibly under Arab influence – in Spain early in the fifteenth century. During this period there were increasing numbers of institutions (or sections of them) specifically reserved for the mad. What is striking about the Classical Age is its relative regression in the recognition of the mad, who became less distinct and more part of the undifferentiated mass of the interned. In this process, the mad became much less the object of medical attention. Some of them were treated as hospital patients in the Classical Age, but, according to Foucault, this was mainly a holdover from earlier periods. It is internment rather than treatment of the mad that is characteristically Classical. He supports his claim by citing examples of important institutions (such as Bethlem) that increasingly became mere houses of confinement in the course of the Classical Age. So Foucault by no means claims that medical treatment of the mad

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

(and hospitals designed for this purpose) did not exist in the Classical Age. He does not even claim that the period represents a regression in the medical knowledge of madness: "the medical texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suffice to prove the contrary" (138). Even though the viewpoints of medical therapy and of internment are by no means on a par in the Classical Age, both are present and need to be accounted for. This shows, he says, how "polymorphic and varied the experience of madness could be in the epoch of classicism" (147).

The fact remains that the specifically medical awareness of madness was neither autonomous nor fundamental. Classical madness is, at root, regarded as a disorder of the will, like other forms of unreason. There is, accordingly, "an obscure connection between madness and evil" that passes "through the individual power of man that is his will. Thus, madness is rooted in the moral world" (155).

Even within the realm of unreason, however, madness has a distinctive status. Foucault traces the special status of madness from the striking Classical practice of exhibiting the mad to a curious public. The standard explicit justification of confinement during the Classical Age was the need to avoid scandal. Unreason is hidden away to prevent imitation, to safeguard the reputation of the Church, to preserve the honor of families. But madness is a paradoxical exception: It was during the Classical Age that the practice of displaying the mad to public view (most famously, at Bethlem and Bicêtre) was most prominent.

Foucault finds the explanation of this exception in the peculiar and essential relation of madness to animality in the Classical conception. Like most historians of the period, Foucault does not resist the temptation to cite some of the more vivid reports of how the Classical Age treated the mad like animals. To some extent, he admits, this is (as the Classical Age would have urged) a matter of security against the violence of the insane. But Foucault thinks that there was a more specific and much deeper Classical meaning to the animality of madness.

> The animal in man no longer has any value as the sign of a Beyond [as it did in, for example, the Renaissance]; it has become his madness, without relation to anything but itself: his madness in the state of nature. The animality that

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

rages in madness dispossesses man of what is specifically human in him; not in order to deliver him over to other powers, but simply to establish him at the zero degree of his own nature. For classicism, madness in its ultimate form is man in immediate relation to his animality. (166; *MC*, 73–74)

The mad are animals in the precise sense that they have totally rejected their human nature and put themselves outside the community of reasonable persons.

But why should the Classical Age consider this sort of animality a legitimate object of spectacle? Foucault thinks the answer lies in the new role of madness in Christian thought. Previously there was a reverence and awe before madness based on the idea that Christian faith, as a scandal to reason, was a glorified form of madness. With the Classical Age, this idea is abandoned. Christian wisdom is unequivocally on the side of reason; faith involves no sacrifice of the intellect. Madness, with its choice of animality, is mankind's farthest remove from the truth; the mad are those who have reached the lowest human depths. But this is precisely why madness can function as the unique sign of the extent of divine mercy and the power of grace. The fact that Christ, in taking on human life, allowed himself to be perceived as mad and that his gracious solicitude extended to lunatics shows that salvation is available even to those who have fallen the farthest from the light. Thus the exhibition of the mad served the dual salutary purpose of reminding men how far they might fall and that God's mercy extended even this far.

Here, then, we have the essence of the Classical experience of madness, as Foucault explicates it in Part I of *Histoire de la folie*. There is much more to his story. Whereas Part I extracts the Classical experience from the event of confinement, Part II provides a complementary account of the experience from the standpoint of Classical medical theory and practice, arguing, however, that the two forms of the experience share the same fundamental structure.[28] The essence of this structure is a paradoxical unity of moral guilt and animal innocence. To us, the Classical Age's interning the mad along with those belonging to other categories of unreason is a confusion, a blurring of the distinctive psychology of madness. But Foucault thinks that there is the positive structure of a perception, not the negativity of confusion. Madness is understood by the Classical Age precisely

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

through its place on the horizon of unreason. At one point, Foucault marks this place by a striking religious metaphor: "What the Fall is to the diverse forms of sin, madness is to the other faces of unreason" (176). It is the principle, the model of all the others. More fully, madness

> flows through the entire domain of unreason, connecting its two opposed banks: that of moral choice . . . and that of animal rage. . . . Madness is, gathered into a single point, the whole of unreason: the guilty day and the innocent night. (176)

This is the "major paradox" involved in the Classical experience of madness: It is equally connected to the moral evaluation of ethical faults and to the "monstrous innocence" of animality. Madness is experienced as "founded on an ethical choice and, at the same time, thoroughly inclined toward animal fury" (177). Such an experience is far removed from (Classical and modern) legal definitions of madness, which seek a division of responsibility (fault) and innocence (external determinism), and from (Classical and modern) medical analyses, which treat madness as a natural phenomenon. Nonetheless, this experience is the key to understanding the Classical view of madness in both thought and practice.

Foucault's ultimate goal in writing his history of madness in the Classical Age was to illuminate (or expose) the true nature of modern (nineteenth century to the present) psychiatry. He repeatedly asserts his view that the modern conception of mental illness and the corresponding institution of the asylum have been unknowingly constructed out of elements of the Classical experience of madness.[29] In particular, he maintains that the theme of innocent animality becomes a "theory of mental alienation as pathological mechanism of nature," and that, by maintaining the practice of internment invented by the Classical Age, psychiatry has preserved (without admitting it) the moral constraint of madness. Both "the positivist psychiatry of the nineteenth century" and that of our own age "have thought that they speak of madness solely in terms of its pathological objectivity; in spite of themselves, they dealt with a madness still entirely imbued with the ethics of unreason and the scandal of animality" (177). These Classical residues in the modern period are the basis of Foucault's analysis and critique (in Part III of *Histoire de la folie*) of modern psychiatry.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

FOUCAULT AMONG THE HISTORIANS. PART II

We are now in a position to appreciate in a deeper way the difficulties that historians find in Foucault's work on madness, to see why Porter, for example, for all his praise of Foucault, says he came away from reading *Madness and Civilization* "bewitched, bothered, and begrudging."[30] The central issue of confinement is a good starting point. Porter, as we have seen, has serious objections to the existence of any "great confinement," at least in England, during the Classical Age. Most of the mad simply weren't confined. Those who were, contrary to Foucault, were carefully separated from other deviants. How should Foucault respond? He has no hope of refuting Porter on the level of the empirical facts. Porter's claim, incorporating numerous careful studies done since Foucault's book, has a decisive advantage here. Foucault might try a tactical retreat: Porter is right for England, but France, in which Foucault is mainly interested, is (as even Porter seems to admit)[31] a different story. Perhaps, then, confinement is a French – or even a continental – phenomenon, with the English, as so often, following a different drummer. But such a retreat puts Foucault into an impossible position, since he purports to be describing not the practices and beliefs of individuals, which might well differ from country to country, but the experience of a culture. He is interested in the fundamental categories in terms of which people perceive, think, and act, not the specific sensations, beliefs, and actions falling under these categories. To allow that the English experience of madness was informed by a different set of fundamental categories would require viewing English and French (or continental) culture as radically different to an extent that seems indefensible – and is certainly never defended by Foucault.

But perhaps Foucault's concern with fundamental experiential categories rather than with specific perceptions, beliefs, and actions is itself the key to a response to Porter. For, after all, Porter's critique is based on just the sort of specific beliefs and actions that are not Foucault's primary concern. Foucault is not making empirical generalizations about what people in various countries thought or did; he is trying to construct the categorical system that lay behind what was no doubt a very diverse range of beliefs and practices. Confinement, then, is a fact, perhaps most striking in France, but, as Porter admits, also present in England and the rest of Europe. Foucault is concerned

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

with the categorical conditions of possibility for this fact. He wants to know what in the way the Classical Age experienced madness made the sort of confinement it practiced possible. Of course there were, as Foucault admits and even emphasizes, other dimensions of Classical practice, most notably medical therapy, that involved integration rather than isolation of the mad from the community. In some cases this may have meant that, as Porter finds for England, the progress of confinement was slow and piecemeal. But such empirical divergences do not refute Foucault's categorical analysis of the Classical experience of madness.

I think the above is a properly Foucaultian response to Porter. But I also think that accepting it alters the terms of Foucault's confrontation with historical criticism. The crux is this: Given that Foucault's categorical analysis is not refuted by the empirical deviations Porter points out, just what would refute the analysis and, even more important, what would support it?

Here there is a crucial, though easily unnoticed, difference between Foucault and standard historians like Porter. At the outset of his study of madness in the long eighteenth century, Porter formulates his project in a way that seems entirely congruous with Foucault's history of madness. He says that he is "attempting principally to recover the internal coherence of now unfamiliar beliefs about the mind and madness, and to set them in their wider frames of meaning."[32] Further, like Foucault's book, Porter's is filled with facts: names, dates, anecdotes, and quotations from primary sources. Nonetheless, the books are poles apart, and the difference is in the way factual details are related to the overall project of understanding how madness was perceived and treated from 1650 to 1800.

On one level, the difference is that for Porter the facts are primarily *supports* for the interpretative schema, whereas for Foucault they are primarily *illustrations* of it. The opening of Foucault's chapter on confinement is a good example. He begins (57–58) with an analysis of Descartes's rejection of madness as grounds for philosophical doubt, from which he extracts his basic idea of a Classical exclusion of madness from the realm of human existence. Surely he does not regard a single passage from one author as proof of an epoch's conception of madness; the passage from Descartes can only be an illustration of his assertion. He then discusses confinement as a practical expression of this exclusion. The development of confinement

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

is discussed in some detail for France (59–64), but only two brief paragraphs, one on England and the other on the rest of Europe, are deemed enough to show that confinement had "European dimensions" (64; *MC*, 43). Neither paragraph offers much beyond a list of houses of confinement and the dates of their founding. Foucault says nothing about other ways of treating the mad (although, as we have seen, he later pays considerable attention to medical treatment). Most important, he never (here or elsewhere) discusses the extent of confinement relative to other practices and provides no data establishing his view that confinement is the typical Classical reaction to madness. Porter, as we have seen, has substantial evidence that confinement was relatively uncommon in England and, given the strong influence of the Lockean conception of madness, was by no means the distinctively Classical way of dealing with it.

Foucault's procedure is similar throughout the book. His claim that a religious view about the role of work in our postlapsarian world underlies the Classical moral condemnation of madness is supported by brief citations from Calvin, Bossuet, and Bourdaloue (83–84). He bases his claim that there was a "great confiscation of sexual ethics by the morality of the family" (104) on two cases of internment, a few quotations from Molière, and two citations from Classical legal documents (104–105). His "proof" (138) that confinement expressed the fundamental Classical experience of madness and that medical treatment was a marginal holdover of previous practices is that, after Bethlem was opened to the non-mad, there was soon no notable difference between it and the French *hôpitaux généraux*, and that St. Luke's included both the mad and the non-mad from its founding in 1751. With regard to his striking claim that the Classical Age saw unreason as the result of a voluntary choice, he admits that "this awareness is obviously not expressed in an explicit manner in the practices of internment or in their justifications" (156). But he maintains that such a choice can be inferred from Descartes's remarks on madness and that the point is entirely explicit in Spinoza (156–158).

Foucault's penchant for using facts as illustration rather than support does not mean that, as Midelfort suggests, he is "simply indulg[ing] in a whim for arbitrary and witty assertion." It is rather a sign of what I will call his idealist (as opposed to empiricist) approach to history. A characterization of Foucault's history of madness as idealist is apt for a variety of reasons. It is primarily not a

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

history of events or institutions but of an experience, the experience of madness. Also, this experience is not understood in terms of the perceptions or thoughts of individuals; rather, its subject is the anonymous consciousness of an age. (Foucault later criticized *Histoire de la folie* because it "accorded far too great a place, and a very enigmatic one too, to what I called an 'experience,' thus showing to what extent one was still close to admitting an anonymous and general subject of history."[33]) Further, Foucault's history exhibits the tense Hegelian combination of anarchic and totalitarian tendencies: a fascination with conflicting complexities (so that every thought is almost limitlessly qualified and complemented), along with an ultimately triumphant compulsion for unity (so that all the complexity is relentlessly organized). Finally, in typical idealist fashion, the operative justification of Foucault's historical construction is its interpretative coherence rather than its correspondence with independently given external data.

This idealistic cast makes professional historians very uneasy with Foucault's work. They think that, in his insistence on a single unified interpretation, Foucault ignores the messy loose ends that close empirical scrutiny seems to find everywhere in history. David Rothman, for example, complains that "for all the sweep of the analysis, the categories seem rigid (are reason and unreason mutually exclusive?), and there remains too little room for other considerations." He goes on to remark that Foucault's "explanation is so caught up with ideas that their base in events is practically forgotten."[34] Likewise, Ian Dowbiggin, although acknowledging the debt of his account of nineteenth-century psychiatry to Foucault, remarks that "there is a seamless quality to Foucault's model that . . . fits historical reality poorly."[35]

As an idealist historian, Foucault could well respond that he is not after an account gerrymandered to fit every recalcitrant fact, an impossible project in any case. What he wants is a comprehensive, unifying interpretation that will give intelligible order to an otherwise meaningless jumble of individual historical truths. The facts are not irrelevant for Foucault, but the primary support for his position is not its demonstrable correspondence with them but its logical and imaginative power to organize them into intelligible configurations. The idea that the Classical Age was one of confinement is an immensely powerful instrument for connecting themes in the theology, literature, philosophy, and medicine of the Classical Age

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

with one another and with the age's political, religious, social, and economic practices. Once we begin to think in terms of confinement as a fundamental category, we are, as Foucault shows, able to develop an extensive and subtle interpretative framework that both raises provocative questions and gives them intriguing answers. Other interpretations may "fit" the facts as well or better than Foucault's, but his provides a perspective with distinctive advantages in unifying power and intellectual fruitfulness. From this standpoint, although the facts that illustrate Foucault's claims about confinement are not decisive empirical evidence, they are compelling examples of the power of his interpretative framework.

To distinguish between idealist and empiricist history is, of course, only to specify the opposite ends of a continuum. No system of interpretation can have historical significance if it is not supported by some significant body of corresponding facts, and no factual data can be formulated independent of some prior interpretative system. Consequently, even though most standard historical practice is nowadays much closer to the empirical end of the continuum than Foucault's, my characterization of his work as idealist does not mean that it is, as Goldstein and Megill suggest, outside the discipline of history. Every historical study must balance idealist interpretation with empiricist fact-gathering, and Foucault's work does not cease to be history because it is at the currently less-favored end of the continuum.

Moreover, the reasons Goldstein and Megill offer for thinking Foucault is not an historian seem unpersuasive. Goldstein says that Foucault is unhistorical because "he questioned the necessary continuity of history."[36] The issue, however, is whether the continuity Goldstein has in mind is essential for history as such or is just the defining characteristic of one sort of history. Foucault himself, in responding to Sartrean claims that his approach eliminates history, insisted that he eliminated only that history for which "there is an absolute subject of history, . . . who assures its continuity."[37] That such an elimination is consistent with the historical nature of Foucault's enterprise is supported by the fact that his approach remains firmly rooted in the central historical category of the event.[38] It is also relevant to recall that, whatever the role of discontinuity between historical periods in his subsequent works, *Histoire de la folie* frequently insists on important continuities between Classical and modern conceptions of madness (see the passages cited in note 29).[39]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Megill argues that *Histoire de la folie* lies outside of history (and of all academic disciplines) because it is ambiguous in a way appropriate to literature, rather than an academic discipline: "there is something central to the disciplinary project that seems thwarted in Foucault. It is as if, through his love of ambiguity, he has thrown a monkey wrench into the disciplinary machinery."[40] I agree that the antidisciplinary rhetoric of ambiguity Megill emphasizes is an important element in *Histoire de la folie*. But this shows only that it is not exclusively a historical analysis. What basis is there for thinking that, for example, Foucault's elaborate interpretation of the Classical experience of madness, sketched in the middle section of this essay, is not an historical account, evaluable by the disciplinary canons of history? It may well be that, even if such evaluation resulted in the total rejection of the account as accurate history, there would still be literary (and, perhaps, some sort of philosophical) merit in what Foucault wrote. But the fact remains that, whatever else may be going on, *Histoire de la folie* does offer a very detailed history of madness in the Classical Age. My own view is that the book shows an antihistorical character primarily in Foucault's intermittent efforts to evoke madness as it is experienced by the mad themselves. This experience he tends to present as an absolute transcending the history of changing social constructions of madness. (The theme is most apparent in the Preface to the first edition, which Foucault later dropped.) Contrary to Megill, I think this theme is clearly outside the main thrust of the book.[41]

What, then, should we conclude about what we might now, not entirely facetiously, describe as Foucault's *Die Phänomenologie des kranken Geistes*?[42] Granted, as I have just been arguing, that it *is* history, is it good or bad history? The easy answer is that it is good idealist history but bad empiricist history. That, however, is too easy, since a schema of historical interpretation may be so empirically deficient that even its most ingenious and exciting speculations are not worth pursuing. (In the same way, an empirically impeccable account may be so devoid of interpretative interest as to be hardly worth an historian's yawn.)

This, I think, is as far as philosophical kibitzing can take the discussion of Foucault's history of madness. I have argued that there is no good reason to place *Histoire de la folie* entirely outside the domain of history, immune to the critical norms of historiography. I have also maintained that neither of the two most important

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

historical critiques of Foucault shows that his work is bad history. Midelfort's apparently decisive criticisms are mostly based on misunderstandings of Foucault's views. Porter's critique of Foucault's central views on confinement raises an important empirical challenge, but does not, in itself, undermine the interpretative power of Foucault's idealist history. So far there have been no decisive tests of the fruitfulness of Foucault's complex interpretative framework. What is still needed, it seems to me, is an assessment of his overall picture of Classical madness through detailed deployments of its specific interpretative categories. Is, for example, Jan Goldstein right in her suggestion that historians of the Enlightenment should pay more attention to Foucault's idea of a tension in the Classical experience of madness between man as a juridical subject and man as a social being?[43] How much explanatory power is there in Foucault's claim that Classical confinement involved a reduction of all sexual offenses to the norms of bourgeois morality? What level of understanding can we reach by developing his account of the religious significance of Classical madness? To what extent is the nature of nineteenth-century psychiatry illuminated by thinking of it as constructed from the polar Classical conceptions of madness as innocent animality and as moral fault? The issue of Foucault's status as a historian of madness should remain open until historians have posed and answered questions such as these.

NOTES

1 Michel Foucault, Comment at the University of Vermont, October 27, 1982. Cited by Allan Megill, "The Reception of Foucault by Historians," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987): 117.

2 Title of second edition, published in Paris (Gallimard, 1972), to which all references will be given in parentheses in the main test. The English translation, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1965), is of a drastically abridged French edition. Cited passages that appear in *Madness and Civilization* (*MC*) will be given in Howard's version, other passages in my own translation. For more details on various French editions of *Histoire de la folie*, see Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70, n. 6. Colin Gordon has rightly emphasized the need to consult the full French text; see his "*Histoire de la folie:* An Unknown Book by Michel Foucault," *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990): 3–26. Also see the responses to Gordon's

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

article by a variety of writers (among others, Robert Castel, Roy Porter, Andrew Scull, H. C. Eric Midelfort, Jan Goldstein, Dominick La Capra, and Allan Megill) and Gordon's reply, "History, Madness and Other Errors: A Response," in the same volume.

3 This essay will focus on *Histoire de la folie*, which is Foucault's only full-scale discussion of madness and, so far, the work of his most influential on historians of psychiatry. Mention should also be made of his earlier, mainly nonhistorical, discussions, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954) and the long introduction to a French translation of Ludwig Binswanger's *Traum und Existenz* (*Le rêve et l'existence*), trans. J. Verdeaux (Bruges, Belgium: Desclée de Brouwer, 1954, 9–128) ("Dream, Imagination, and Existence," trans. F. Williams, *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 19 [1984–1985]: 29–78). A second edition of the former work, greatly revised, mostly in accord with the views of *Histoire de la folie*, appeared as *Maladie mentale et psychologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962) (*Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. A Sheridan [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987]). For a discussion of these early works and their relation to *Histoire de la folie*, see Gutting, *Foucault's Archaeology*, 55–69.

Foucault's later work on the history of the prison (*Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan [New York: Pantheon, 1977]) and on nineteenth-century sexuality (*The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley [New York: Pantheon, 1978]) have also had an important influence on historians of psychiatry. Their challenging views on the inextricable connections of power and knowledge and on the deep functional similarities of modern institutions such as asylums, prisons, factories, and schools may in the long run be more important for historians of psychiatry than even the *History of Madness*. In this connection, see Robert Nye's *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

4 Robert Mandrou, "Trois clefs pour comprendre la folie à l'époque classique," *Annales: Economics, Sociétés, Civilisations* (1962): 761–772.

5 Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), xi.

6 Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 396.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

7 Roy Porter, "Foucault's Great Confinement," *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990): 47.
8 Patricia O'Brien, "Foucault's History of Culture," in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 25–46.
9 H. C. Eric Midelfort, "Madness and Civilization in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal of Michel Foucault," in Barbara Malament, ed., *After the Reformation: Essays in Honor of J. H. Hexter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 259.
10 Peter Sedgwick, *Psycho Politics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982),132, n. 22; Lawrence Stone, "Madness," *New York Review of Books*, December 16, 1982, 36ff. (see also the subsequent "Exchange" between Foucault and Stone, *New York Review of Books*, March 31, 1983, 42–44); Ian Hacking, "The Archaeology of Foucault," in David Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 29; Dominick LaCapra, "Foucault, History, and Madness," *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1989): 32–34.
11 See, for example, Roy Porter, *Mind Forg'd Manacles* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), xi, 33; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 1; Andrew Scull, *Museums of Madness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, 70); and the Introduction to W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd, eds., *The Anatomy of Madness*, vol. I (London: Tavistock, 1985), 3–4.
12 Andrew Scull, "Michel Foucault's History of Madness," *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990): 57.
13 O'Brien, "Foucault's History of Culture," 31.
14 Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, 3.
15 Jan Goldstein, [Book Review]. *Journal of Modern History* 51 (1979): 117.
16 Megill, "Reception of Foucault," 133–134.
17 Gordon, "Response," 381.
18 Midelfort, "Madness and Civilization," 249–251.
19 Ibid., 253.
20 Colin Gordon points out that Midelfort seems to be misled by a mistranslation in *Madness and Civilization*, which has Foucault speaking of the "easy wandering life" of the mad in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. See Gordon, "Unknown Book," 17. For Midelfort's response to Gordon (on this and other points), see "Comments on Colin Gordon," *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990): 41–46.
21 I hesitate to add to the already overextended controversy about Midelfort's contention that Foucault is wrong in his belief that the "ship of fools," so prominent in medieval literature and painting, actually

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

existed. Let me say merely that Foucault's use of the ship is almost entirely concerned with its literary and artistic significance and that it is central to his argument only as a striking (and rich) *symbol* of what he thinks was the status of medieval madness. Depriving him of the assumption that such ships actually existed has a nugatory effect on the evidence for his view.

22 Midlefort, "Madness and Civilization," 258–259.

23 Midelfort also takes Foucault to task for accepting as fact the myth of Pinel's liberation of the mad from their chains at Bicêtre. This is a blatant misreading, since Foucault is not only well aware of the lack of factual basis for the anecdote, but explicitly treats the story as a myth. For further details, see Gordon, "Unknown Book," 15–16.

24 Porter, "Foucault's Great Confinement," 48.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 49.

27 Ibid.

28 On the other hand, Foucault's discussion in Part II importantly refines and deepens his view, particularly by relating the experience of madness to Classical conceptions of imagination, passion, the mind–body union, and language. For a full analysis of Foucault's view of Classical madness (and of the entire project of *Histoire de la folie*), see Chapter 2 of my *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

29 See, for example, *Histoire de la folie*, 97, 100–101, 103, 116, 139, 146–149, 177.

30 Porter, "Foucault's Great Confinement," 47.

31 Porter, *Mind Forg'd Manacles*, 7.

32 Ibid., x.

33 *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 16, translation modified.

34 David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1971), xviii.

35 Ian Dowbiggin, *Inheriting Madness: Professionalization and Psychiatric Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 170.

36 Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, 3.

37 "Michel Foucault explique son dernier livre," interview with J.-J. Brochier, *Magazine littéraire* 28 (1969): 24.

38 See Foucault's remarks on this point in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 114.

39 For more on Foucault's attitude toward continuity, see Robert Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France*, 11–12, and Patrick

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Hutton, "The History of Mentalities: The New Map of Cultural History," *History and Theory* 20 (1981): 254.

40 Allan Megill, "Foucault, Ambiguity, and the Rhetoric of Historiography," *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990): 358.

41 Ibid., 350–356. For further discussion of Foucault and the experience of madness, see Gutting, *Foucault's Archaeology*, 263–265.

42 In comparing Foucault as a historian of madness to Hegel, I am not saying that Foucault endorsed the metaphysics of the Absolute that underlies Hegel's histories. Foucault's idealism is much more methodological than metaphysical, and primarily derives from the strong influence of phenomenology on his earlier writings. (This influence is most prominent in the essay on Binswanger cited in note 3.) Foucault's penchant for idealistic as opposed to empirical history decreased over the years, but I would argue that it remains strong at least through *Les mots et les choses* and never entirely disappears from his work. Foucault was well aware of his Hegelian tendencies: "We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us" ("The Discourse on Language," appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 235).

43 Jan Goldstein, "'The Lively Sensibility of the Frenchman': Some Reflections on the Place of France in Foucault's *Histoire de la folie*," *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990): 336.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

GEORGES CANGUILHEM
TRANSLATED BY CATHERINE PORTER

3 The Death of Man, or Exhaustion of the Cogito?

The philosophers who have considered Cervantes's *Don Quixote* to be a major philosophical event can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Indeed, to my knowledge only two have done so: Auguste Comte and Michel Foucault. If Comte had written a history of madness – and he could have – he would have made room for Cervantes, for he referred to *Don Quixote* more than once in defining madness as an excess of subjectivity and as a passion for countering the contradictions of experience by endlessly complicating the interpretations that experience can have. Yet the author of *Histoire de la folie* turned to Descartes, not Cervantes, for help in presenting the Classical era's idea of madness.[1] Conversely, in *Les Mots et les choses*,[2] Cervantes and Don Quixote are honored with four brilliant pages, and Descartes is mentioned just two or three times. The single Cartesian text cited, a short passage from the *Regulae*, comes up only by virtue of the manifest subordination of the notion of measure to the notion of order in the idea of *mathesis*. And probably also by virtue of the precocious use of the *Regulae* in *La Logique de Port-Royal*, Foucault elevates that hitherto neglected account of the logic of signs and grammar to the status of a seventeenth-century masterwork. By this striking displacement of the sites where they might have been expected to be invoked as witnesses, Descartes and Cervantes come to be invested with adjudicative or critical power. Descartes is one of the artisans who set out the standards that resulted in the relegation of madness to the asylum space, where nineteenth-century pathologists found it as an object of knowledge. Cervantes is one of the artisans who wrenched words from the prose of the world and wove them together in the warp of signs and the woof of representation.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Les Mots et les choses took a text by Borges as its starting point (xv), and it looked to Velasquez and Cervantes for the keys to a reading of the Classical philosophers. The year it appeared, a printed invitation to the Fourth World Congress of Psychiatry was adorned with the effigy of Don Quixote, and a Picasso exhibit in Paris recalled the still contemporary enigma of the message entrusted to *Las Meninas*. Let us utilize Henri Brulard's term *espagnolisme*, then, to characterize the philosophical cast of Foucault's mind. For Stendhal, who detested Racine in his youth and trusted no one but Cervantes and Ariosto, *espagnolisme* meant hatred for preachiness and platitudes. To judge by the moralizing reproaches, the outrage, and the indignation aroused in many quarters by Foucault's work, he seems to take direct, if not always deliberate, aim at a type of mind that is as flourishing today as it was during the Bourbon Restoration.

The time seems to have passed when a Kant could write that nothing must escape criticism. In a century in which laws and religion have long since ceased to stave off criticism with their majesty and holiness, respectively, are we going to be forbidden, in the name of philosophy, to challenge the grounding that certain philosophies think they find in the essence or the existence of man? Because, in the concluding pages of Foucault's book, the king's place becomes the place of a dead – or at least a dying – humanity, humanity as close to its end as to its beginning, or better yet to its "recent invention," because we are told that "man is neither the oldest nor the most constant problem that has been posed for human knowledge" (386), must we lose all our composure, as some of those we had counted among the best minds of the day seem to have done? Having refused to live according to the routines of the academy, must one behave like an academician embittered by the imminence of his replacement in the position of mastery? Are we going to witness the creation of a League of the Rights of Man to Be the Subject and Object of Philosophy, under the motto "Humanists of All Parties, Unite!"?

Rather than anathematizing what in a cursory amalgamation is termed "structuralism" or the "structural method," and rather than interpreting the success of a work as proof of its lack of originality, it would be more useful to reflect on the following. In 1943, in *Servius et la Fortune*,[3] Georges Dumézil wrote that he had come across his problem "at the intersection of four paths." We know today, after the reception afforded *La Religion romaine archaïque*[4] in 1967, that

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

by virtue of their meeting at the Dumézil intersection, these four paths have become roads. Along these roads the former detractors of the intersection method, the champions of historical Roman history, would be very happy to accompany Mr. Dumézil today, if their age had left them the time and the strength. Undertakings like those of Dumézil, Lévi-Strauss, and Martinet have determined, without premeditation and by a virtual triangulation, the point where a philosopher would need to situate himself in order to justify these undertakings and their results – by comparing but not amalgamating them. Foucault's success can be fairly taken as a reward for the lucidity that allowed him to perceive this point, to which others were blind.

One fact is striking. Almost all the reviews and commentaries provoked until now by *Les Mots et les choses* single out the term "archaeology" in the subtitle for special – sometimes rather negative – emphasis, and skirt the signifying bloc constituted by the phrase "archaeology of the human sciences." Those who proceed in this way do seem to lose sight of the thesis, in the strict sense of the term, that the ninth and tenth chapters bring together. So far as this thesis is concerned, everything is played out around language – more precisely, around the situation of language today. In the nineteenth century, the substitution of biology for natural history, or the substitution of a theory of production for the analysis of wealth, resulted in the constitution of a unified object of study: life or work. In contrast, the unity of the old general grammar was shattered (303–304) without being replaced by any sort of unique and unifying renewal. Language became the business of philologists and linguists, of symbolic logicians, exegetes, and, finally, pure writers, poets. At the end of the nineteenth century when Nietzsche was teaching that the meaning of words has to refer back to whoever provides it (but just who does provide it?), Mallarmé was effacing himself from his own poem:

> Then the phrase came back again in virtual form; for it had freed itself of that first touch of the wing or palm-branch; henceforth it would be heard through the voice. Finally, it came to be uttered of itself and lived through its own personality.[5]

For the traditional question "What does it mean to think?," Michel Foucault substitutes the question "What does it mean to speak?" – or at least deems that the substitution has been made. To

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

that question, he acknowledges (307) that he does not yet know how to respond, whether to regard the question as an effect of our delay in recognizing its loss of relevance or whether to assume that it anticipates future concepts that will enable us to answer it. These days, when so many "thinkers" make bold to offer answers to questions whose relevance and formulation they have not bothered to justify, we do not often have the opportunity to encounter a man who needs some 300 pages to set forth a question while reflecting that "perhaps labour begins again," and confessing,

> It is true that I do not know what to reply to such questions. . . . I cannot even guess whether I shall ever be able to answer them, or whether the day will come when I shall have reasons enough to make any such choice. (307)

As for the concept of archaeology, most of Foucault's principal critics have latched onto the term only to challenge it and replace it with "geology." It is quite true that Foucault borrows words from the vocabulary of geology and seismology, such as "erosion" (50), "squares" (Fr. *plages*, beaches) and "expanse" (Fr. *nappe*, layer) (217), "shocks" (217), and "strata" (221). The end of the Preface seems to come from a new discourse on the revolutions of the globe: "I am restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet" (xxiv). But it is no less true that what Foucault is trying to bring back to light is not the analogue of a stratum of the terrestrial shell that has been hidden from sight by a natural phenomenon of rupture and collapse, but rather "the deepest strata of Western culture," that is, a "threshold" (xxiv). Notwithstanding the use of the term "habitat" by geography and ecology, man inhabits a culture, not a planet. Geology deals with sediments, archaeology with monuments. Thus we can readily understand why those who deprecate the structural method (supposing that there is such a thing, properly speaking) in order to defend the rights of history, dialectical or not, are determined to try to substitute geology for archaeology. They do so to shore up their claim to represent humanism. Depicting Foucault as a kind of geologist amounts to saying that he naturalizes culture by withdrawing it from history. The naive children of existentialism can then charge him with positivism – the supreme insult.

Thinkers had installed themselves within dialectics. They had gone beyond what had come before (of necessity, according to some;

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

by choice, according to others), but they remained convinced that they understood what they had left behind. Suddenly along came someone who talked about an "essential rupture," who worried about "no longer being able to think a certain thought," who wondered "how [thought] contrives to escape from itself," and who invited us simply to "accept these discontinuities in the simultaneously manifest and obscure empirical order wherever they posit themselves" (50–51). The archaeologist of knowledge discovered, between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, as between the sixteenth and the seventeenth, an "enigmatic discontinuity" (217) that he can only describe, without pretending to explain it, as a mutation, a "radical event" (217), a "fundamental event" (229), "a minuscule but absolutely essential displacement" (238). Of these discontinuities, these radical events beneath the apparent continuity of a discourse that upset human perception and practice, Michel Foucault's earlier work gave two examples. *Histoire de la folie* identified the break that occured between Montaigne and Descartes in the representation of madness. *La Naissance de la clinique*[6] identified the break that occurred between Pinel and Bichat in the representation of illness.

We can hardly avoid wondering what has led critics, most of them no doubt in good faith, to denounce the danger that threatens History here. In a sense, what more can be asked, with respect to historicity, of someone who writes: "Since it is the mode of being of all that is given us in experience, History has become the unavoidable element in our thought" (219)? But because this emergence of history, on the one hand as discourse and on the other hand as the mode of being of empiricity, is taken as the sign of a rupture, one is led to conclude that some other rupture – perhaps already under way – will render the historical mode of thinking foreign to us, or even – who knows? – unthinkable. This is just what Michel Foucault seems to conclude: "By revealing the law of time as the external boundary of the human sciences, History shows that everything that has been thought will be thought again by a thought that does not yet exist" (372). In any event, why refuse, in the interim, to apply the qualifier "historical" to a discourse that reports the raw, undeducible, unpredictable succession of the conceptual configurations of systems of thought? The reason is that a sequential arrangement of this sort excludes the idea of progress. And Foucault specifies: "I am not concerned,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

therefore, to describe the progress of knowledge towards an objectivity in which today's science can finally be recognized" (xxii). In other words, nineteenth-century History is eighteenth-century Progress, which replaced seventeenth-century Order, but this emergence of Progress must not be considered, with respect to History, as an instance of progress. And if the face of Man were to be obliterated from knowledge, "like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (387), nothing in Foucault's writing allows us to suppose that he would view that possibility as a step backward. We are dealing with an explorer here, not a missionary of modern culture.

It is difficult to be the first to give a name to a thing or, at the very least, to list the distinctive features of the thing one is proposing to name. That is why the concept of *episteme*, which Foucault devoted his work to clarifying, is not immediately transparent. A culture is a code that orders human experience in three respects – linguistic, perceptual, practical; a science or a philosophy is a theory or an interpretation of that ordering. But the theories and interpretations in question do not apply directly to human experience. Science and philosophy presuppose the existence of a network or configuration of forms through which cultural productions are perceived. These forms already constitute, with respect to that culture, *knowledge* different from the knowledge constituted by sciences and philosophies. This network is invariant and unique to a given epoch, and thus identifiable through reference to it (168). Failing to recognize it entails, in the history of ideas as in the history of the sciences, misunderstandings that are as serious as they are persistent.

The history of ideas in the seventeenth century, as it is ritually described, is a case in point:

> One might say, if one's mind is filled with ready-made concepts, that the seventeenth century marks the disappearance of the old superstitious or magical beliefs and the entry of nature, at long last, into the scientific order. But what we must grasp and attempt to reconstitute are the modifications that affected knowledge itself, at that archaic level which makes possible both knowledge itself and the mode of being of what is to be known. (54)

These modifications are summed up in a retreat of language with respect to the world. Language is no longer, as it was in the Renaissance, the signature or mark of things. It becomes the instrument for manipulating, mobilizing, juxtaposing, and comparing things;

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the organ allowing them to be composed in a universal tableau of identities and differences; a means not for revealing order, but for dispensing it.

The history of ideas and sciences in the seventeenth century thus cannot be confined to the history of the mechanization, or even the mathematization, of the various empirical domains (56). Moreover, in speaking of mathematization, one ordinarily thinks about measuring things. Yet it is their ordering that ought to strike us as primordial. Otherwise, how can we understand the appearance, during the same period, of theories like that of general grammar, or the naturalists' taxonomy, or the analysis of wealth? Everything becomes clear, and the classical unity emerges, if we suppose that all these domains "rely for their foundation upon a possible science of order" and that "the ordering of things by means of signs constitutes all empirical forms of knowledge as knowledge based upon identity and difference" (37).

This basis of a possible science is what Foucault calls an *episteme*. As such, it is no longer the primary code of Western culture, and it is not yet a science like Huygens's optics nor a philosophy like Malebranche's system. It is what is required for us even to imagine the possibility of that optics in Huygens's day or that philosophy in Malebranche's, rather than three-quarters of a century earlier. It is what is required for us to comprehend the various attempts to construct the sciences as kinds of analyses that are able to reach elements of reality and kinds of calculations or combinations that make it possible to match, through the ordered combination of elements, the universality of nature. To know nature is no longer to decipher it, but to represent it.

For Descartes, as for Leibniz, if the theory of physics is presented as an attempt at decoding, the certainty to which it gives rise is only moral, based on the probability that the true theory is the system of signs that is most complete, most coherent, most open to the complements to come. There is no getting around it: When all is said and done, it is not Michel Foucault who wrote the concluding lines of *Principles of Philosophy*, or Leibniz's letter to Conring of March 19, 1678. It seems to me quite difficult to challenge the contention that bringing to light the "archaeological network that provides Classical thought with its laws" (85) offers a productive renewal of the way the chronological contours of the period and the intellectual kinships or

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

affinities within the field of that *episteme* have been conceptualized. But I also think that such a stimulating indication of renewal, if it succeeded in provoking numerous and rigorous studies designed to take a fresh look at the doxology of the Classical era, might lead to modifications in Foucault's thesis, according to which the discontinuous and autonomous succession of networks of fundamental utterances precludes any effort to reconstitute the past we have left behind.

Let us read the following sentence attentively:

> No doubt it is because Classical thought about representation excludes any analysis of signification that we today, who conceive of signs only upon the basis of such an analysis, have so much trouble, despite the evidence, in recognizing that Classical philosophy, from Malebranche to Ideology, was through and through a philosophy of the sign. (80)

To whom does that evidence appear?

Certainly not to *us*, who have so much trouble in recognizing – without, however, let us note, being totally incapable of recognizing. The evidence certainly appears to Michel Foucault. But then, whereas the *episteme* of a given era cannot be fully grasped via the intellectual history of that era, which is subtended by the *episteme* of a different era, the two are not entirely foreign to one another. If they were, how should we understand the appearance today, within an epistemological field without precedent, of a work like *Les Mots et les choses*? Perhaps this remark has already been made. It is inevitable that it should be made. It is not certain, moreover, that the paradox such a remark exposes is really a paradox. When Foucault, taking up the question of Classical knowledge (303–304), resumes the archaeological demonstration that he had undertaken earlier (56–71), he goes on to invoke a "slow and laborious technique" that would allow the reconstitution of a network; he recognizes that it is "difficult today to rediscover how that structure was able to function"; he declares that Classical thought has ceased to be "directly accessible to us" (303–304). What remains, then, is the fact that painstakingly, slowly, laboriously, indirectly, we can dive deep down from our own epistemic shores and reach a submerged *episteme*.

In the same way, the prohibition on lifting the seven seals that close the book of the past, applied to a certain sort of history, perhaps

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

amounts to an invitation to proceed with elaborating a different sort of history:

> If the natural history of Tournefort, Linnaeus, and Buffon can be related to anything at all other than itself, it is not to biology, to Cuvier's comparative anatomy, or to Darwin's theory of evolution, but to Bauzée's general grammar, to the analysis of money and wealth as found in the works of Law, or Verón de Fortbonnais, or Turgot. (xxiii)

It would be no trivial achievement if Foucault's reading were to inject a generalized fear of anachronism into the heart of the history of science. The historian of science unwittingly takes from the science whose historian he has made himself the idea of a progressively constituted truth. An example of a conscience at ease within anachronism is found in a text by Emile Guyénot, *Les Sciences de la vie aux* XVII*e et* XVIII*e siècles: l'idée d'évolution*.[7]

Despite what most of Foucault's critics have claimed, the term "archaeology" says just what he wants it to say. It is the condition of an *other history*, in which the concept of event is retained, but in which events affect concepts and not men. Such a history must in its turn recognize breaks, like any history, but breaks that are situated differently. There are few historians of biology and still fewer historians of ideas who do not describe a continuity of thought between Buffon or Maupertuis and Darwin, and who do not claim a discontinuity between Darwin and Cuvier – that Cuvier who is so often presented as the evil genius of biology at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Foucault, for his part, locates the discontinuity between Buffon and Cuvier – more precisely, between Buffon and Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu – and he makes Cuvier's work the condition of historical possibility of Darwin's work. We can leave that question on the table, open to argument. It is certainly worth arguing about. Even if one does not think Foucault is right on this point – and I personally think he is right – is that reason enough for accusing him of tossing history out the window? Buffon did not understand how Aldrovandi could have written the history of snakes the way he did. Foucault thinks he understands:

> Aldrovandi was neither a better or a worse observer than Buffon; he was neither more credulous than he, nor less attached to the faithfulness of the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

observing eye or to the rationality of things. His observation was simply not linked to things in accordance with the same system or by the same arrangement of the *episteme*. (40)

Buffon, on the other hand, was linked to things by the same arrangement of the *episteme* as Linnaeus: "Buffon and Linnaeus employ the same grid" (135). Foucault thus proposes nothing less than a systematic program for turning the working methods of most historians of biology inside out (123–128).

Why then does he cause a scandal? Because history today is a kind of magical field in which, for many philosophers, existence is identified with discourse, and the actors of history are identified with the authors of histories, even histories garnished with ideological presuppositions. This is why a program for turning historical discourse inside out is denounced as a manifesto calling for the subversion of the course of history. The subversion of a progressivist discourse cannot be anything but a conservative project. And that is why your structure is neocapitalist. The critics forget, or more precisely ignore, the fact that Foucault – and he does not hide this – found substantial encouragement for denying the preexistence of evolutionist concepts in the eighteenth century in Henri Daudin's remarkable theses, published in 1926, on the methods of classification developed by Linnaeus, Lamarck, and Cuvier.

Henri Daudin, a professor of philosophy at the University of Bordeaux, gave those who knew him no reason to think that it is a betrayal of humanity or the populace to affirm, in opposition to those who amalgamate biological evolutionism and political and social progressism, that Darwin the biologist owes more to Cuvier than to Lamarck. Foucault is right to say that Lamarck is more a contemporary of A.-L. de Jussieu than of Cuvier (275), and his reading of Cuvier's *Leçons d'anatomie comparée*[8] warrants close attention, especially for the thesis according to which "evolutionism is a biological theory, of which the condition of possibility was a biology without evolution – that of Cuvier" (294). In the eighteenth century the theory of the continuous scale of life forms did more to prevent the conception of a history of life than to encourage it. Transitional forms and intermediate species were required for the composition of an unbroken tableau; they did not contradict the simultaneity of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

relationships. The history of living beings on the globe was the history of the progressive clarification of a schema, not the history of its sequential accomplishment:

> Continuity is not the visible wake of a fundamental history in which one same living principle struggles with a variable environment. For continuity precedes time. It is its condition. And history can play no more than a negative role in relation to it: it either picks out an entity and allows it to survive, or ignores it and allows it to disappear. (155)

It is thus not overstating the case to conclude that natural history cannot possibly conceive of the history of nature (157).

I have restricted my attempt to understand what Foucault means when he speaks of *episteme* to that aspect of his demonstration in which, rightly or wrongly, I see myself as having a long-standing interest if not a certain competence. We still have to wonder whether the well-constructed sketches in the history of language, life, and work that are based on this concept of *episteme* suffice to assure us that we are dealing with something more than a simple word here. Is the *episteme*, the reason for conceiving of a program for overturning history, something more than an intellectual construct? And, first, what kind of object is it, for what kind of discourse? A science is an object for the history of science, for the philosophy of science. It is a paradox that the *episteme* is not an object for epistemology. For the time being, and for Michel Foucault, the *episteme* is *that for which* a discursive status is sought throughout *Les Mots et les choses*. For the time being, the object is what the person talking about it says it is.

What sort of verification can be applied to such a discourse? It cannot be a matter of referring, in the name of verification, to an object given in advance to be constituted according to a rule. Cuvier's comparative anatomy sustained a relationship with living or fossil organisms, but those organisms were perceived or reconstructed according to an idea of organisms and of organization that, through the principle of the correlation of forms, overturned eighteenth-century continuist taxonomy. Darwin threw out the chart of the species and traced the succession of living forms with no preordained plan. Daudin wrote a nonconformist history of the dispute between Cuvier and Lamarck. In that history, the archaeologist discovers the traces of an epistemic network. Why? Because he has taken up a position both inside and outside the history of biology. Because, having adopted the tactic of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

reversible overturning, he has superimposed two sets of readings – the ones offered by theories of language and the one provided by economic theories – on the reading of living beings.

The verification of the discourse on the *episteme* depends upon the variety of domains in which the invariant is discovered. In order to perceive the *episteme*, it was necessary to exit from a given science and from the history of a given science; it was necessary to defy the specialization of specialists, and to try to become a specialist not of generality, but of interregionality. To paraphrase one of Foucault's critics, a man as intelligent as he is severe,[9] it was necessary to rise with the larks and go to bed with the owls. The archaeologist has to have read a great number of things that the others have not read. Here is one of the reasons for the astonishment that Foucault's text has aroused in several of his sternest critics. Foucault cites none of the historians in a given discipline; he refers only to original texts that slumber in libraries. People have talked about "dust." Fair enough. But just as a layer of dust on furniture is a measure of the housekeeper's negligence, so a layer of dust on books is a measure of the carelessness of their custodians.

The *episteme* is an object that has not been the object of any book up to now, but that has encompassed – because at bottom it had constituted them – all the books of a given period. Yet if those books have finally been read, is it not through Foucault's "grid"? Would not a different grid produce a different reading harvest? Let us examine the objection. It is certain that Foucault does not read the eighteenth century quite the way Ernst Cassirer does in *La Philosophie des Lumières*,[10] and still less the way Paul Hazard does in his two studies of European thought. It is revealing to compare the chapter on the natural sciences in *La Pensée européenne au* XVIII*e siècle*[11] with the fifth chapter of Foucault's book. It is also revealing to compare the bibliographic references. Foucault cites only original texts. Which of the two scholars is reading by means of a grid? Conversely, a reader like Cassirer who knows how to make his way to the texts, and to little-read texts, proposes a reading of the eighteenth century that is not unrelated to Foucault's, and he, too, discovers a network of themes that constitute a ground on which Kant will one day sprout, without our knowing how.

Undeniably it is Foucault himself who speaks of grids. And to the extent that an allusion to cryptography is involved, readers believe

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

they are justified in trying to find out who is the inventor of the grid. But it may be that Foucault has no grid of his own, only his own particular use of the grid. The idea that language is a grid for experience is not new. But the idea that the grid itself calls for decoding still had to be formulated. Foucault spotted the enigma of language at the point where pure poetry, formal mathematics, psychoanalysis, and linguistics converge. "What is language, how can we find a way round it in order to make it appear in itself, in all its plenitude?" (306). It is in the shock of the return of language (303) as a thing calling for a grid that we encounter the break with the period in which language itself was the grid for things, after having been, even earlier, their signature. In order for the *episteme* of the Classical era to appear as an object, one had to situate oneself at the point where, participating in the *episteme* of the nineteenth century, one was far enough away from its birth to *see* the rupture with the eighteenth century, and close enough to what was being announced as its end to imagine that one was going to *experience* another rupture, the break after which Man, like Order at an earlier moment, would appear as an object. In order to discover that before calling for the application of a grid itself, language, the grid of grids, founded the knowledge of nature by constituting a representative schema of identities and differences from which man, the master of theoretical discourse, is absent, it sufficed, one would like to say, for Foucault to situate himself at a crossroads of disciplines. But to do this he was obliged to follow each discipline's separate path. There was nothing to invent except the simultaneous use of the philosophical and philological inventions of the nineteenth century. This is what could be called objective originality. Still, to find the point where one encounters this originality as the reward for one's work, one must have the impetus of subjective originality that is not given to all.

This situation of objective originality explains why Michel Foucault found himself constrained, as it were, to introduce within the diachrony of a given culture a concept or function of intelligibility that appears analogous at first glance to the one that American cultural analysts have introduced into the synchronic tableau of cultures. The concept of basic personality is what makes it possible, when one is considering the coexistence of cultures, to discern the invariant factor that anchors the integration of the individual into the social whole proper to each particular culture. The basic *episteme*,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

for a given culture, is in a way its universal system of reference to a given period, the only relation that it maintains with the *episteme* that follows being one of difference. In the case of the basic personality, the function of intelligibility it assumes is thought to imply a refusal to put the schema of cultures into perspective from the privileged vantage point of one particular culture. And it is fairly common knowledge that American cultural analysts have provided the policies of their own government with conscience-soothing arguments necessary for taking to task, in a way economically profitable to its authors, the colonial powers of the old continent. But Foucault holds that if the colonizing situation is not indispensable to ethnology (377), the latter discipline nevertheless "can assume its proper dimensions only within the historical sovereignty – always restrained, but always present – of European thought and the relation that can bring it face to face with all other cultures as well as with itself" (377). So that the existence of a culturalist ethnology, having contributed, in its own way, to the liquidation of European colonialism, appears, owing to its inscription within the framework of Western *ratio*, as the symptom of a naive American obliviousness to a cultural ethnocentrism that is illusorily anticolonialist. This is because the concept of basic personality and the concept of *episteme* differ radically in their uses. The first concept is at once that of a given and of a norm that a social whole imposes on its component parts in order to judge them, in order to define normalcy and deviance. The concept of *episteme* is that of a humus on which only certain forms of discursive organization can grow, and for which the confrontation with other forms cannot arise from a value judgment. No philosophy today is less normative than Foucault's, none is more alien to the distinction between the normal and the pathological. What characterizes modern thought, according to him, is that it is neither willing nor able to propose a morality (328). Here again humanists, invited to forego their sermonizing, respond with indignation.

There is nevertheless a question, even more than an objection, that it seems to me impossible to ignore. Where theoretical *knowledge* is concerned, can that knowledge be elaborated in the specificity of its concept without reference to some norm? Among the theoretical discourses produced in conformity with the epistemic system of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, certain ones, such as that of natural history, were rejected by the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

nineteenth-century *episteme*, but others were integrated. Even though it served as a model for the eighteenth-century physiologists of animal economy, Newton's physics did not go down with them. Buffon is refuted by Darwin, if not by Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. But Newton is no more refuted by Einstein than by Maxwell. Darwin is not refuted by Mendel or Morgan. The succession from Galileo to Newton to Einstein does not present ruptures similar to those that can be identified in the succession from Tournefort to Linnaeus to Engler in systematic botany. This objection, which Foucault anticipates (xxii–xxiii), does not seem to me to be answered by the decision not to take it into account on the grounds that it belongs to a different sort of study. Foucault in fact did not rule out all allusions to mathematics and physics in his exploration of the *episteme* of the nineteenth century, but he considers them only as models of formalization for the human sciences, that is, only as a language. This is not a mistaken approach, at least for mathematics, but it is questionable for physics, where theories, when they succeed one another by generalization and integration, have the effect of detaching and separating, on the one hand, the changing discourse and the concepts it uses, and on the other hand, what has to be called, and this time in a strict sense, the resistant mathematical structure. To which Foucault can reply that he is not interested in the truth of discourse, but rather in its positive reality. Still, should we overlook the fact that certain discourses, like the discourse of mathematical physics, have no positive reality beyond what is provided by their norm and that that norm stubbornly conquers the purity of its rigor by depositing in the epistemic succession discourses whose vocabulary appears, from one *episteme* to another, devoid of meaning? At the end of the nineteenth century people had ceased to understand what physicists meant when they spoke about the ether, but they had nevertheless not ceased to grasp the mathematic apodicticity of Fresnel's theories; and no error of anachronism is committed if we seek in Huygens not the origin of a melodic history, but the beginning of a progress.

After this discussion of inevitable questions having to do with the *episteme*, it is time to recall that Michel Foucault sought to write, not the general theory (that will come later) of an archaeology of knowledge, but its application to the human sciences, and that he set out to show when and how man could have become an object for science, as nature had been in the seventeenth and eighteenth

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

centuries. It is not possible to be more radical than he in the refusal to recognize as meaningful any attempt to locate the origins or the premises of our contemporary, so-called human sciences in the Classical era (312). As long as people believed in the possibility of a single, common discourse of representation and of things (311), it was not possible to take man as an object of science, that is, as an existence to be treated as a problem.

In the Classical era, man coincided with his own consciousness of a power to contemplate or to produce the ideas of all beings, among which man defined himself as living, speaking, and tool making; this power was experienced as deficient or defective in the eyes of an infinite power that was thought to base the phenomenon of human power on its concession or delegation of some part of that same infinite power. The Cartesian *cogito* was for a long time viewed as the canonical form of the relation of the thinker to thought – for as long as people failed to understand that there was no alternative to the Cartesian *cogito*, no *cogito* at all but the one that has as its subject an I that can say "Myself." But at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, Kantian philosophy, on the one hand, and the constitution of biology, economy, and linguistics, on the other, raised the question, *What is man?* From the moment when life, work, and language ceased to be attributes of a nature and became natures themselves, rooted in their own specific history, natures at whose intersection man discovers himself natured, that is, both supported and contained, then empirical sciences of all natures are constituted as specific sciences of the product of these natures, thus of man. One of the difficult points in Foucault's demonstration is its exposure of the unpremeditated connivance between Kantianism and the work of Cuvier, Ricardo, and Bopp in the manifestation of the nineteenth-century *episteme*.

In a sense, Descartes's invention of the *cogito* is not what constituted, for more than a century, the essential achievement of its inventor's philosophy. Kant had to prosecute the *cogito* before the critical tribunal of the I *think* and deny it all substantialist import before modern philosophy could adopt the habit of referring to the *cogito* as the philosophic event that inaugurated it. The Kantian *I think*, a vehicle for the concepts of understanding, is a light that opens experience to its intelligibility. But this light comes from behind us, and we cannot turn around to face it. The transcendental

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

subject of thoughts, like the transcendental object of experience, is an unknown. The originally synthetic unity of apperception constitutes, in ante-representative fashion, a restricted representation in the sense that it cannot have access to the ground in which it originates. Thus, unlike the Cartesian *cogito*, the *I think* is posited as an in-itself, without being able to grasp itself for itself. The *I* cannot know itself as *Myself*.

From this point on, in philosophy, the concept of the function of the *cogito* without a functioning subject becomes possible. The Kantian *I think*, since it always remains on the hither side of the consciousness that is achieved of the effects of its power, does not prohibit efforts to find out whether the founding function, the legitimation of the content of our knowledge by the structure of their forms, could not be assured by functions or structures that science itself would determine to be at work in the elaboration of this knowledge. In his analysis of the relations between the empirical and the transcendental (318), Foucault summarizes quite clearly the procedures by which the nonreflexive philosophies of the nineteenth century attempted to reduce "the proper dimension of criticism to the contents of an empirical knowledge" without being able to avoid recourse to a certain criticism, without being able to avoid bringing about a split not between the true and the false, in this case, or between the legitimate and the illusory, but between the normal and the abnormal as indicated, it was believed, by man's nature or history.

Foucault cited Comte only once (320). It would have been worth his while to deal with Comte's case in greater depth, however. Comte often thought that he was the true Kant, through a substitution of the scientific relation between organism and environment for the metaphysical relation between subject and object. Gall and Condorcet supplied Comte with the means for succeeding where Kant had failed: Gall, through cerebral physiology, which gave Comte the idea of a table of functions that would play the role of the Kantian table of categories; Condorcet, through his theory of the progress of the human spirit. The physiological a priori and the historical a priori could be summed up by saying that humanity is what thinks in man. But for Comte, the biological a priori is an a priori for the historical a priori. History cannot denature nature. From the beginning, and not only toward the end, Comte's thought, by proposing to found a science of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

society, that is, of the collective and historical subject of human activities, understood philosophy as a synthesis "presided over by the human viewpoint," that is, as a subjective synthesis. Comte's philosophy is the exemplary case of an empirical treatment of the unrelinquished transcendental project. This empirical treatment seeks its principal instrument in biology, remaining dismissive or ignorant of economy and linguistics. Thus this philosophy, for which geneses are never anything but developments of living structures, does not recognize in the mathematics and the grammar of its day the disciplines that will bring the concept of structure into philosophy, where it will take over from the *cogito*, which positivism abandons sarcastically to eclecticism.

Far be it from me to criticize Foucault for comparing phenomenology and positivism (320–322) in a way many find paradoxical and some find scandalous. The analysis of lived experience seems to him to be an attempt, only a more demanding and thus a more rigorous one, to "make the empirical . . . stand for the transcendental" (321). When Husserl tried to be more radical than Descartes and a better transcendentalist than Kant, the times – by which we can understand the *episteme* – had changed. The *cogito* had ceased to appear to be the most venerable ancestor of the transcendental function, and the extension of the transcendentalist enterprise had ceased to be confused with the philosophical function itself. The Husserlian interrogation was thus to concern science more than nature, and the question that man poses for being more than the question of the foundation of man's being in the *cogito*. "The phenomenological project continually resolves itself, before our eyes, into a description – empirical despite itself – of actual experience, and into an ontology of the unthought that automatically short-circuits the primacy of the 'I think'" (326).

Twenty years ago, the final pages and especially the closing lines of the posthumous work of Jean Cavaillès, *Sur la logique et la théorie de la science*,[12] posited the necessity, for a theory of science, to substitute concepts for consciousness. The philosopher-mathematician who, in a letter to his mentor Léon Brunschvicg, had reproached Husserl for his exorbitant utilization of the *cogito*, also took his leave, philosophically speaking, of his mentor when he wrote, "It is not a philosophy of consciousness but a philosophy of concepts that can provide a doctrine for science. The generative necessity is

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

not that of an activity but that of a dialectic." These words struck many readers, at the time, as enigmatic. Today we can appreciate the predictive value of the enigma. Cavaillès assigned the phenomenological enterprise its limits even before that enterprise had exhibited its unlimited ambitions – even in France itself, which is to say, with a certain lag – and he assigned, twenty years in advance, the task that philosophy is in the process of accepting today – the task of substituting for the primacy of experienced or reflexive consciousness the primacy of concepts, systems, or structures. That is not all. Shot by the Nazis for his Resistance activity, Cavaillès, who called himself a Spinozist and did not believe in history in the existential sense, refuted in advance – by the action he felt himself impelled to undertake, by his participation in the history that he lived out tragically until his death – the argument of those who seek to discredit what they call structuralism by condemning it to generate, among other misdeeds, passivity in the face of reality.

When he wrote the short section called The 'Cogito' and the Unthought (322–328), Michel Foucault no doubt had the feeling that he was not speaking for himself alone; that he was not only indicating the obscure though hardly secret point on the basis of which the rigorous and sometimes difficult discourse proffered in *Les Mots et les choses* was deployed; but also that he was pointing to the question that, distinct from all traditional preoccupations, constitutes the task of philosophy. The modern cogito is no longer the intuitive grasp of the identity, in the activity of thinking, of thinking thought with its being; it is "the constantly renewed interrogation as to how thought can reside elsewhere than here, and yet so very close to itself, how it can *be* in the forms of non-thinking" (324). In *Le Nouvel esprit scientifique*,[13] Gaston Bachelard undertook to distinguish the norms of a non-Cartesian epistemology in the new theories of physics, and wondered (168) what the subject of knowledge becomes when one puts the *cogito* in the passive (*cogitatur ergo est*). In *La Philosophie du non*,[14] he sketched out, with regard to the new theories of chemistry, the tasks of a non-Kantian analytics. Whether he is working in Bachelard's wake or not, Michel Foucault extends the obligation of non-Cartesianism and non-Kantianism to philosophical reflection itself (325). "The whole of modern thought is imbued with the necessity of thinking the unthought" (327). But to think this unthought is not only, according to Foucault, to think

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

in the theoretical or speculative sense of the term; it is to produce oneself while running the risk of astonishing oneself and even taking fright at oneself. "Thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action – a perilous act" (328). It is hard to understand – unless we suppose that they reacted before they had read him carefully – how certain of Foucault's critics could speak, with respect to his work, of Cartesianism or positivism.

Designating under the general heading of anthropology the set of sciences that was constituted in the nineteenth century not as a legacy from the eighteenth century, but as "an event in the order of knowledge" (345), Foucault uses the term "anthropological sleep" for the tranquil assurance with which the contemporary promoters of the human sciences take for granted, as a preordained object for their progressive studies, what was initially only the project of constituting that object. In this respect, *Les Mots et les choses* might play for a future Kant, as yet unknown as such, the awakening role that Kant attributed to Hume. In such a case we would have skipped a step in the nonrepetitive reproduction of epistemic history by saying of this work that it is to the sciences of man what the *Critique of Pure Reason* was to the sciences of nature. Unless – as it is no longer a question of nature and things, but of an adventure that creates its own norms, an adventure for which the empirico-metaphysical concept of man, if not the word itself, might one day cease to be suitable – unless, then, there is no difference to be made between the call to philosophical vigilance and the bringing to light – to a light even more crude than it is cruel – of its *practical* conditions of possibility.

NOTES

1 *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961) (*Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard [New York: New American Library, 1967]).
2 Translated as *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock, 1970; New York: Pantheon, 1971; reprinted New York: Vintage, 1973). All citations are from the 1973 reprint edition.
3 Paris: Gallimard.
4 Paris: Payot, 1966 (*Archaic Roman Religion*, trans. Philip Krapp [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970]).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

5 "The Demon of Analogy," in *Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems. Essays, and Letters*, trans. Bradford Cook (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 3. On Mallarmé and language, see Philippe Sollers, "Littérature et totalité," *Tel Quel* 26 (Summer 1966): 81–95.
6 Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963 (*The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith [London: Tavistock, 1973]).
7 Paris: Albin Michel, 1941.
8 Paris: Baudoin, 1800–1805 (vols. 1 and 2 in *Lectures on Comparative Anatomy*, trans. William Ross [London: Longman and Ries, 1802]).
9 Michel Amiot, "Le Relativisme culturaliste de Michel Foucault," *Les Temps modernes* (January 1967): 1271–1298.
10 *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr, 1932) (*The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove [Boston: Beacon Press, 1955]).
11 Paris: Boivin, 1946 (*European Thought in the Eighteenth Century, from Montesquieu to Lessing*, trans. J. Lewis May [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959]).
12 Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947.
13 Paris: Félix Alcan, 1934, 1937; Presses Universitaires de France, 1941 (*The New Scientific Spirit*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer [Boston: Beacon Press, 1984]).
14 Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1940 (*The Philosophy of No; A Philosophy of the New Scientific Mind*, trans. G. C. Waterston [New York: Orion Press, 1968]).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

JOSEPH ROUSE

4 Power/Knowledge

Michel Foucault wrote extensively about historical reconfigurations of knowledge in what would now be called the human sciences. During the 1970s, however, he argued (most notably in *Discipline and Punish* [*DP*] and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* [*HS*]) that these reorganizations of knowledge were also intertwined with new forms of power and domination. Foucault's works from this period have often yielded contradictory responses from readers. His detailed historical remarks on the emergence of disciplinary and regulatory biopower have been widely influential. Yet these detailed studies are connected to a more general conception of power, and of the epistemic and political positioning of the criticism of power, which many critics have found less satisfactory. Foucault's discussions of the relation between truth and power have similarly provoked concerns about their reflexive implications for his own analysis.

The principal purpose of this essay is to offer a sympathetic interpretation of the understanding of power and of knowledge that informs Foucault's historical studies of prisons and of the construction of a scientific discourse about sexuality. Since Foucault discussed power in this period rather more thematically than he did knowledge, my discussion of knowledge will build extensively upon his remarks about power. The essay will proceed in three parts. First I will briefly recapitulate Foucault's account of the interconnected emergence of new forms of power and knowledge in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The second part will initiate my reflections upon the concepts of "power" and "knowledge" with a critical discussion of political and epistemic sovereignty. Foucault framed his investigations as an alternative to the preoccupation of political

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

thought with questions about sovereignty and legitimacy. Many of his readers have found this critical concern troubling because they worry that it undercuts any possible stance from which Foucault might be able to criticize the modern forms of knowledge and power that he has described. I will argue in the third part of the essay that this worry is plausible only if one ignores Foucault's understanding of both power and knowledge as *dynamic*. Foucault explicitly sketched a dynamics of power; I will show that his account also suggests a similarly dynamic interpretation of knowledge. In both cases, Foucault's account provides ample possibilities for reasoned critical response.

DISCIPLINES AND NORMS

Foucault had been writing about the history of knowledge in the human sciences long before he ever explicitly raised questions about power. What had interested Foucault was not the specific bodies of knowledge compiled through disciplined investigation at various times. Instead, Foucault had written about the epistemic context within which those bodies of knowledge became intelligible and authoritative. He argued that particular investigations were structured by which concepts and statements were intelligible together, how those statements were organized thematically, which of those statements counted as "serious,"[1] who was authorized to speak seriously, and what questions and procedures were relevant to assess the credibility of those statements that were taken seriously.[2] These historically situated fields of knowledge (which Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [*AK*] called "discursive formations") also included the *objects* under discussion. Foucault was thus committed to a strong nominalism in the human sciences: The types of objects in their domains were not already demarcated, but came into existence only contemporaneous with the discursive formations that made it possible to talk about them.

What made Foucault's inquiry into the structure of such discursive formations interesting was the possibility that there might be significant changes in the organization of such a discursive field. Thus, it might be that what counts as a serious and important claim at one time will not (perhaps cannot) even be entertained as a candidate for truth at another. Statements can be dismissed (or never even

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

be considered) not because they are thought to be false, but because it is not clear what it would amount to for them to be either true or false.

Foucault's earlier studies were in fact directed toward significant changes in the "discursive formations" that governed the serious possibilities for talking about things. He proposed that there were important shifts in what counted as serious discussion of madness, disease, wealth, language, or life, shifts that were evident in the historical archives. His aim was not to explain those shifts, but rather to display the structural differences they embody, and to some extent to document the parallels between contemporary shifts in several discursive formations. Foucault was especially concerned to demonstrate the parallel shifts in several discursive fields in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through which the modern sciences of "man" replaced the classical tables of representation that displayed the order of things.

Discipline and Punish expanded the scope of Foucault's inquiries into this modern reconfiguration of knowledge. His earlier studies had often associated the reconfiguration of discursive fields with the organization of new institutions, for example, asylums, clinics, and hospitals. Nevertheless, his emphasis had always been the structure of *discourse*.[3] In *Discipline and Punish*, however, the eighteenth- to nineteenth-century transformation of the human sciences was explicitly set in the context of practices of discipline, surveillance, and constraint, which made possible new kinds of knowledge of human beings even as they created new forms of social control.

Perhaps the most important transformation that Foucault described was in the scale and continuity of the exercise of power, which also involved much greater knowledge of detail. Foucault was interested in the difference between massive but infrequent exercises of destructive force (public executions, military occupations, the violent suppression of insurrections) and the uninterrupted constraints imposed in practices of discipline and training:

> It was a question not of treating the body, en masse, 'wholesale,' as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it 'retail,' individually; of exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body. (*DP*, 136–137)

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Other ways of exercising force can only coerce or destroy their target. Discipline and training can reconstruct it to produce new gestures, actions, habits, and skills, and ultimately new kinds of people:

> The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. . . . It defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile" bodies. (*DP*, 138)

Often these practices of subjection worked indirectly, by reconstructing the spaces and reorganizing the timing within which people functioned. The enclosure, partitioning, and functional distribution of activities enabled an inconspicuous direction of activity:

> Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed. . . . Its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering, and using. (*DP*, 143)

> Similarly, schedules, programmed movements, and exercises correlated with developmental stages "served to economize the time of life, to accumulate it in a useful form and to exercise power over men through the mediation of time" (*DP*, 162).

These forms of detailed intervention also reversed the prevailing relationships between power and visibility or "audibility." Foucault documented a shift in political practice from the display of power as spectacle to the exercise of power through making its target more thoroughly visible and audible. There was a gradual development of techniques of surveillance, whose function was far more complex and subtle than massive and spectacular displays of force:

> Hierarchized, continuous and functional surveillance . . . was organized as a multiple, automatic, and anonymous power. . . . This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of supervising; and absolutely "discreet," for it functions permanently and largely in silence. (*DP*, 176–177)

Surveillance was often built into the physical structures of institutions that were organized to enhance visibility within them; here especially there was a new architecture of power ("stones can make people docile and knowable" [*DP*, 172]). Surveillance was also manifest in the creation or extension of rituals, such as the proliferating practices of examination: scholastic tests but also medical or psychiatric examinations and histories, employment interviews, prison musters, and military reviews (in which the commander no longer heads the procession, but instead stands aside to examine its passing).

Previously inconspicuous people became more audible as well as visible. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault extended his argument to show how

> We have become a singularly confessing society. . . . [The confession] plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites: one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell. . . . One confesses – or is forced to confess. (*HS*, 59)

What is thereby seen and heard is then documented as a resource for further examination and constraint:

> Among the fundamental conditions of a good medical "discipline," in both senses of the word, one must include the procedures of writing that made it possible to integrate individual data into cumulative systems in such a way that they were not lost; so to arrange things that an individual could be located in the general register and that, conversely, each datum of the individual examination might affect overall calculations. (*DP*, 190)

These practices of surveillance, elicitation, and documentation constrain behavior precisely by making it more thoroughly knowable or known. But these new forms of knowledge also presuppose new kinds of constraint, which make people's actions visible and constrain them to speak. It is in this sense primarily that Foucault spoke of "power/knowledge." A more extensive and finer-grained knowledge enables a more continuous and pervasive control of what people do, which in turn offers further possibilities for more intrusive inquiry and disclosure.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Foucault saw these techniques of power and knowledge as undergoing a two-stage development. They were instituted initially as means of control or neutralization of dangerous social elements and evolved into techniques for enhancing the utility and productivity of those subjected to them. They were also initially cultivated within isolated institutions (most notably prisons, hospitals, army camps, schools, and factories), but then were gradually adapted into techniques that could be applied in various other contexts. Foucault called this broadening of their scope of application the "swarming" of disciplinary mechanisms:

> the mechanisms [of the disciplinary establishments] have a certain tendency to become "de-institutionalized," to emerge from the closed fortresses in which they once functioned and to circulate in a "free" state; the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted. . . . One can [therefore] speak of the formation of a disciplinary society in this movement that stretches from the enclosed disciplines, a sort of social "quarantine," to an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of "panopticism." (*DP*, 211, 216)

Foucault did not see these new techniques as simply superimposed upon a preexisting social order. His nominalism remained prominent in his studies of power/knowledge, as he took these politico-epistemic practices to constitute new object domains for knowledge to be about: "biographical unities" (*DP*, 254) like delinquency, homosexuality, or hyperactivity; developmental structures such as reading-grade levels or appropriate age-group attainments; significant distributions, as in a family history of heart disease, a low-income household, or an "advanced maternal age pregnancy"; and signs of a condition of life, such as cholesterol level or T-cell counts. Ultimately, these practices produced new *kinds* of human subjects. But they also produced new forms of knowledge along with new objects to know and new modalities of power.

Foucault often spoke of the correlative constitution of two levels of knowledge through the politico-epistemic practices he had been describing. On the one hand, there was the emergence of a systematic knowledge of individuals, through connected practices of surveillance, confession, and documentation:

> the constitution of the individual as a describable, analyzable object, not in order to reduce him to "specific" features, as did the naturalists in relation

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to living beings, but in order to maintain him in his individual features, in his particular evolution, in his own aptitudes and abilities, under the gaze of a permanent corpus of knowledge. (*DP*, 190)

But Foucault thought that this individuating knowledge was connected in important ways to the

emergence of "population" as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as manpower or labor capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it commanded. Governments perceived that they were not dealing simply with subjects, or even with a "people," but with a "population," with its specific phenomena and its peculiar variables: birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation. (*HS*, 25)

What connected these two levels of epistemic analysis and political regulation was the practice of "normalizing judgment" and the construction of norms as a field of possible knowledge. Norms seem to have their place primarily in the knowledge of populations, since they demarcate distributions. We are all familiar with the "normal curve" as a representation of a distribution of traits around a mean. As Ian Hacking (1990) recently described,[4] this conception of a normal distribution has a nineteenth-century origin in the attempts to understand/impute statistical stability to the "avalanche of printed numbers" created by European statistical bureaus to survey their populations. Yet norms were also indispensable to the new knowledges of individuals. For how else was one to produce *knowledge* of individuals that did not simply subsume their individuality under a type? A normalizing distribution enables one to locate the individual within an epistemic field without reducing the individual to the typical. Foucault most often discussed normalization as a technique of power, but its epistemic implications emerged clearly in his account. Normalizing judgment produced

a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank. In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. (*DP*, 184)

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The stories Foucault told about the emergence together of these new forms of knowledge and power have an ironic side. They are intended as counterpoint to the familiar stories of the enlightened humanization of punishment and the liberation from sexual repression. Foucault's irony works by portraying the very practices of humane penal reform and sexual liberation as instead further enmeshing us in a "carceral society" and an enforced regimen of truth. Yet for many readers his irony is troubling.[5] The tone of Foucault's portrayal suggests that these new forms of power/knowledge ought to be resisted. Yet he resolutely rejects the idea that there is any ground or standpoint from which such a call to resistance could be legitimated. The connection he proposes between power and knowledge is not just a particular institutional *use* of knowledge as a means to domination. Foucault objects to the very idea of a knowledge or a truth outside of networks of power relations. The scope of his objection thus also encompasses the possibility of a critical knowledge that would speak the truth to power, exposing domination for what it is, and thereby enabling or encouraging effective resistance to it.

To see how Foucault's discussion of power/knowledge took him in this direction and what its consequences are for the political and epistemic positioning of his work, we need to consider his discussion of the problem of sovereignty. This in turn will enable us to assess the implications of his insistence on a situated dynamics of power and, I will argue, of knowledge as well.

POWER (AND KNOWLEDGE) WITHOUT SOVEREIGNTY

Foucault did not often explicitly address the relation between his discussions of power/knowledge and more traditional ways of conceptualizing knowledge. He had more to say about how his understanding of power differs from its treatment in mainstream political theories. Foucault repeatedly situated his reflections as an attempt to break free of the orientation of political thought toward questions of sovereign power and its legitimacy: "At bottom, despite the differences in epochs and objectives, the representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy. In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king" (*HS*, 88).

Hobbes's *Leviathan*, and the social contract tradition more generally, had posed the scope and the legitimacy of the power of the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

sovereign as the original and fundamental questions of politics. But Foucault argued that both the underlying conception of power as sovereign power and the questions of law and right with which it is engaged have a historical location in the formation of European monarchy:

> The great institutions of power that developed in the Middle Ages – monarchy, the state with its apparatus – rose up on the basis of a multiplicity of prior powers, and to a certain extent in opposition to them: dense, entangled, conflicting powers, powers tied to the direct or indirect dominion over the land, to the possession of arms, to serfdom, to bonds of suzerainty and vassalage. If these institutions were able to implant themselves, if, by profiting from a whole series of tactical alliances, they were able to gain acceptance, this was because they presented themselves as agencies of regulation, arbitration, and demarcation, as a way of introducing order in the midst of these powers, of establishing a principle that would temper them and distribute them according to boundaries and a fixed hierarchy. (*HS*, 86–87)

The conception of sovereignty that emerges from this historical moment has three crucial aspects for Foucault. First, sovereignty is a standpoint above or outside particular conflicts that resolves their competing claims into a *unified* and coherent system. Second, the dividing question in terms of which these claims are resolved is that of legitimacy (often framed in terms of law or rights): Which powers can be *rightfully* exercised, which actions are lawful, which regimes are *legitimate*? Together, these two points present the sovereign as the protector of peace in the war of all against all and the embodiment of justice in the settling of competing claims.

The third point concerns the specific conception of power entailed by this understanding of sovereignty as the embodiment of law or legitimacy. Although there are no limits to the scope of sovereign power (everyone and everything is, in principle, subject to the sovereign), the actual exercise of that power must always be discontinuous and negative. Sovereign power comes into play only at specific points where law or rights have been violated and can only act to punish or restrain the violation. Thus, Foucault suggested that "power in this instance was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself" (*HS*, 136). Sovereign power prohibits, confiscates, or destroys what sovereign judgment

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

pronounces illegitimate. Foucault therefore speaks interchangably of "sovereign power" and "juridical power."

Although Foucault claimed that this conception of sovereignty and of sovereign power arose in response to the consolidation of the European monarchies, it would be a mistake to equate sovereignty in his sense with the state, for two reasons. First, power is conceived and exercised in terms of sovereignty in other social locations, wherever power is deployed to restrain or punish what escapes the bounds of a unified scheme of what is right:

> Whether one attributes to it the form of the prince who formulates rights, of the father who forbids, of the censor who enforces silence, or of the master who states the law, in any case one schematizes power in a juridical form, and one defines its effects as obedience. (*HS*, 85)

Second, although sovereignty was conceived as a standpoint of judgment above all particular conflicts, no actual sovereign could realize this conception in practice. Thus, political theory increasingly deployed this conception of the sovereign's role against its nominal occupant:

> Criticism of the eighteenth-century monarchic institution in France was not directed against the juridico-monarchic sphere as such, but was made on behalf of a pure and rigorous juridical system to which all the mechanisms of power could conform, with no excesses or irregularities, as opposed to a monarchy which, notwithstanding its own assertions, continuously overstepped its legal framework and set itself above the laws. (*HS*, 88)

This separation of the principle of sovereignty from its embodiment in any actual sovereign is crucial to understanding Foucault's position. Sovereignty in this sense has been removed from any real political location, and is instead a theoretical construction with respect to which political practice is to be assessed. Foucault, however, suggested in several places that such assessments dangerously misconceive both their target and their own critical practices. Consequently, he objected to the very conception of a sovereign standpoint from which the legitimacy of particular political struggles could be ascertained. His criticism of this conception of sovereignty should therefore not be seen as another such attempt to hold a sovereign power to account to a higher principle of legitimacy.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

That political criticism invoking principles of sovereignty and right misunderstands its targets is a claim that Foucault took to follow from his account of the emergence of disciplinary and regulatory power relations. He claimed that although many of the political forms and practices of sovereign power remained in place, they were gradually taken over and ultimately sustained on the basis of power relations that functioned at a different location and scale. Increasingly, the sovereign apparatus (such as courts, prisons, the army) became both dependent upon and productive of disciplinary and regulatory power. These power relations were disseminated through more extensive social networks and did not transmit power in only one direction. They did not simply impose sanctions that might be amenable to a binary classification as legitimate or not. They were instrumental to the production or enhancement of various "goods," such as knowledge, health, wealth, or social cohesion. Thus, political theories of sovereignty failed to recognize the many ways in which power nominally deployed through the state apparatus (or, for Marxists, through the class ownership of capital) was more complexly mediated. Foucault concluded from this failure that the traditional concerns for rights and justice provided an inadequate framework for political criticism of the modern nexus of power/knowledge:

> When today one wants to object in some way to the disciplines and all the effects of power and knowledge that are linked to them, what is it that one does . . . if not precisely appeal to this canon of right, this famous, formal right, that is said to be bourgeois, and which in reality is the right of sovereignty? But I believe that we find ourselves here in a kind of blind alley: it is not through recourse to sovereignty against discipline that the effects of disciplinary power can be limited, because sovereignty and disciplinary mechanisms are two absolutely integral components of the general mechanism of power in our society. (*Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* [*PK*], 108)

But Foucault was more fundamentally concerned that political criticism in terms of sovereignty, right, and law dangerously misunderstands its own positioning. Here we find perhaps his most basic reason for juxtaposing knowledge and truth with power. It is one thing to articulate and take up a stance on the political struggles in the midst of which one finds oneself situated historically. It is another thing altogether to seek an epistemic standpoint outside

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

those ongoing conflicts from which that stance can be validated. The move to which Foucault objected is therefore that of identifying one's own political and epistemic position with the standpoint of sovereignty. In the French intellectual context especially, the aspiration for such a position of *epistemic* sovereignty was designated by the quest for the status of *science*. Foucault's response to that aspiration was withering:

> Which theoretical-political *avant garde* do you want to enthrone in order to isolate it from all the discontinuous forms of knowledge that circulate about it? When I see you straining to establish the scientificity of Marxism I do not really think that you are demonstrating once and for all that Marxism has a rational structure and that therefore its propositions are the outcome of verifiable procedures; for me you are doing something altogether different, you are investing Marxist discourses and those who uphold them with the effects of a power which the West since Medieval times has attributed to science and has reserved for those engaged in scientific discourse. (*PK*, 85)

Although Foucault does not use the term "epistemic sovereignty," it is not hard to see that there is a close parallel within epistemology to the preoccupation of political reflection with sovereignty as Foucault construes it. Recall the crucial constituents of political sovereignty: a unitary regime, representing legitimacy through law, established from an impartial standpoint above particular conflicts, and enforced through discontinuous interventions that aim to suppress illegitimacy. Just as a sovereign power stands above and adjudicates conflicts among its subject powers, epistemic sovereignty is the standpoint above disputes among competing truth-claims. Epistemic sovereignty constitutes knowledge as the unified (or consistently unifiable) network of truths that can be extracted from the circulation of conflicting statements. They are legitimated as truths by the precepts of rational method, the epistemic surrogate for law. Yet this legitimation does not *produce* knowledge, in the sense of producing new possibilities for truth. Rather, it allows truth to stand forth by suppressing error and irrationality, that is, those statements that do not conform to method and cohere with the regime it establishes. Foucault has the same dual objection to this conception of epistemic sovereignty as to that of political sovereignty. On the one hand, this conception of knowledge overlooks the micropractices through which particular candidates for knowledge and their

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

objects are produced (this network of micropractices is the parallel in Foucault's later work to what he had earlier called a "discursive formation"). Both knowing subjects and truths known are the product of relations of power and knowledge. On the other hand, it demarcates an aspiration to power, to the suppression of all conflicting voices and lives, which Foucault saw as one of the chief dangers confronting us.

Consequently, just as Foucault aimed to "break free . . . of the theoretical privilege of law and sovereignty" (*HS*, 90) in the analysis of power, his conception of a genealogical investigation

> should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from subjection [to the hierarchical order of power associated with science], to render them, that is, capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal, and scientific discourse. (*PK*, 85)

It is precisely this aim that has troubled many of Foucault's readers and critics. Charles Taylor and Richard Rorty have expressed this worry with particular cogency. Taylor concludes that on Foucault's account,

> There can be no such thing as a truth independent of its regime, unless it be that of another. So that liberation in the name of "truth" could only be the substitution of another system of power for this one.[6]

Foucault, according to Taylor, gives us no reason to think that the succeeding system of power will be any better than the present one, and hence no *justification* for a struggle to change it.

Rorty sees a resulting hopelessness in Foucault's vision,

> a remoteness which reminds one of the conservative who pours cold water on hopes for reform, who affects to look at the problems of his fellow citizens with the eye of the future historian . . . rather than suggest[ing] how our children might inhabit a better world in the future.[7]

Taylor's and Rorty's criticisms suggest a multiple incoherence in Foucault's rejection of any standpoint of political or epistemic sovereignty: He makes truth-claims while denying that they could have any claim upon us; he objects to domination while denying that there can be anything like liberation from it; and he portrays dangers (Taylor even uses the word "evils") while insisting that any attempt

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to avert or ameliorate them would inevitably reproduce them in new guise.

THE DYNAMICS OF POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

There is nevertheless something unsatisfying about these criticisms. Rorty's and Taylor's criticisms (and others' as well) depend upon crucial disjunctions: either a critique of power in the name of legitimacy, or an acceptance that power makes right; either the validation of one's claims from a standpoint of science/epistemic sovereignty, or an acceptance that all claims to truth are of equivalent standing. Yet these disjunctions themselves presuppose a standpoint of epistemic sovereignty, and to invoke them may beg the question. Even the positions that in the end are attributed to Foucault (epistemological relativism and/or a reduction of truth to domination and legitimacy to forced acceptance) are positions that claim sovereignty by standing outside epistemic and political conflicts to adjudicate the claims competing parties can legitimately make upon us. My point is not to dismiss these criticisms out of hand for question begging, but instead to pose a question. Foucault's critics take attempted rejection of the problematic of sovereignty to reduce to some position within that problematic, which suggests that they cannot (yet) conceive what power or knowledge without sovereignty could mean. So the question that needs to be posed is how Foucault thought his account might successfully go beyond sovereignty.

To this end, I will argue that Foucault accomplished this aim by conceiving of power dynamically. Although once again he did not discuss this explicitly, I believe that his account also requires a dynamical understanding of knowledge. Together, these accounts suggest an engaged political and epistemic criticism that does not project itself into either the standpoint of the sovereign who adjudicates all political struggles in the name of right or the standpoint of a science that would resolve disputes in the name of truth.

Foucault's more general understanding of power as dynamic begins with his rejection of any reification of power. He insists that "power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away" (*HS*, 94) or that "power is employed through a net-like organization" (*PK*, 98). Thomas Wartenberg's discussion of power as always mediated by

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

"social alignments" may help us make sense of Foucault's claim. As Wartenberg uses the term,

> A field of social agents can constitute an alignment in regard to a social agent if and only if, first of all, their actions in regard to that agent are coordinated in a specific manner. To be an alignment, however, the coordinated practices of these social agents need to be comprehensive enough that the social agent facing the alignment encounters that alignment as having control over certain things that she might either need or desire. . . . The concept of a social alignment thus provides a way of understanding the "field" that constitutes a situated power relationship as a power relationship.[8]

Wartenberg's point is that even in situations in which we might characteristically describe one person as having or exercising power over another, that power depends upon other persons or groups acting in concert with what the first person does. In Wartenberg's examples, when teachers grade students or employers discipline or fire employees, they exercise power only when others (the school admissions officers or possible future employers) act, or are prepared to act, in ways oriented by their own actions. Agents may thereby also exercise power unbeknownst to themselves, or even contrary to their intentions, if other agents orient their actions in response to what the first agents do.

It is in this context that we can understand Foucault's assertion that "power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (*HS*, 93). Power is not possessed by a dominant agent, nor located in that agent's relations to those dominated, but is instead distributed throughout complex social networks. The actions of the peripheral agents in these networks are often what establish or enforce the connections between what a dominant agent does and the fulfillment or frustration of a subordinate agent's desires. Certainly this must be true of a power exercised discreetly through surveillance and documentation. Such practices can embody power only as far as and insofar as a significant alignment of agents orients their actions to what is thereby disclosed and recorded. Indeed, Foucault would go on to emphasize the heterogeneity of the alignments (*dispositifs*) that distribute power. They include not just agents, but also the instruments of power (buildings, documents, tools, etc.) and the practices and rituals through which it is deployed.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

This sense of power as dispersed emphasizes the importance of what Foucault called the "swarming" of the disciplinary mechanisms; those mechanisms were thereby transformed from a local exercise of force within the confines of a particular institution into far-reaching relationships of power. Indeed, as Wartenberg pointed out, these practices exert power only to the extent that they reach far enough to affect the availability or absence of alternative access to the goods that the exercise of power would enable or prevent.[9]

These networks through which power is exercised are not static. Foucault speaks of power as "something that circulates" (*PK*, 98) and as being "produced from one moment to the next" (*HS*, 93). Wartenberg points out that such a dynamic account is inherent in the recognition that power is always mediated by social alignments. In exercising power through a coordinated social alignment,

> the present actions of a dominant agent count on the *future* actions of the aligned agents being similar to their *past* actions. But this faith in a future whose path can be charted entails that the dominant agent not act in a way that challenges the allegiance of his aligned agents, for only through their actions can that future be made actual.[10]

Power can thus never be simply present, as one action forcibly constraining or modifying another. Its constitution as a power relation depends upon its reenactment or reproduction over time as a sustained power *relationship*.

Foucault does not conceive of such relationships as being imposed from the top down. The configuration of power relations emerges instead from "the support which force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunction and contradictions which isolate them from one another" (*HS*, 92). Foucault therefore does not deny that there are large-scale structures of power. He claims only that they are the dynamic outcome of the ways in which "infinitesimal mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination" (*PK*, 99).

This conception of power as constituted by the reenactment or reproduction of social alignments explains why Foucault is drawn toward conceiving power in terms of war or struggle and its intelligibility in terms of strategy and tactics. Foucault makes two different contrasts when he says he wants to conceive of politics as

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

"war continued by other means" (*PK*, 90). On the one hand, the military metaphor is an alternative to "the great model of language and signs" (*PK*, 114). On the other hand, he sees it as perhaps the only alternative to an *economic* model of power, either as itself a form of exchange or contract, or as subordinate to the functioning of the economy (*PK*, 88–90).

The contrast between war and language may seem surprising at first, until one recalls the structuralist conception of language as a system of signs governed by rules. Foucault seems to be making two connected points in proposing to model power relations upon war. First, war is senseless. Likewise, the totality of power relations cannot be understood as a *meaningful* system (Foucault explicitly refers to Hegelian–Marxist dialectic and to semiotics as examples of what the model of war is opposed to). Without doubt, meaningful actions and situations do occur within specific alignments of power, but these have only local intelligibility, which Foucault understands as tactical. That is, they make sense only as responses to a particular configuration of forces within an ongoing conflict. Second, war is not governed by *rules*. Proponents of just-war theory have of course attempted to specify rules adjudicating when and how it is legitimate to wage war, but Foucault is not talking about such attempts to constrain war within the forms and strictures of constitutional politics. In practice war is governed only by the actual play of forces within an ongoing struggle (which may of course make some conformity to accepted norms of conduct strategically advisable).

It is in this context that we can understand Foucault's insistence on a close connection between power and resistance. Resistance cannot be external to power because power is not a system of domination with an inside or an outside. Here, once again, Wartenberg's conception of power as mediated by dynamic social alignments can help us understand Foucault. Power is exercised through an agent's actions only to the extent that other agents' actions remain appropriately aligned with them. The actions of dominant agents are therefore constrained by the need to sustain that alignment in the future; but, simultaneously, subordinate agents may seek ways of challenging or evading that alignment. Wartenberg concludes that a

> subordinate agent is never absolutely disempowered, but only relatively so. . . . just as the dominant agent's actions are subject to the problematic of maintaining power by maintaining the allegiance of the aligned agents,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the subordinate agent is always in the position of being able to challenge the aligned agents' complicity in her disempowerment.[11]

Foucault's conception of power relations in terms of war elevates this sense that resistance to specific alignments of power is always possible to a conception of power as itself the outcome of ongoing struggles to sustain or undermine networks of domination:

> the strictly relational character of power relationships [is such that t]heir existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. (*HS*, 95)

Power is not something possessed or wielded by powerful agents, because it is co-constituted by those who support and resist it. It is not a system of domination that imposes its rules upon all those it governs, because any such rule is always at issue in ongoing struggles.

The classic form in which power relations have been thought to be rule governed is that of the contract. Hobbes's war of all against all is constrained by the cession of power to the sovereign in exchange for protection of life and property. We have already seen that Foucault rejects Hobbes's project and its successors. But neither is Foucault's modeling of power relations upon war a return in theory to Hobbes's state of nature. Foucault pictures a *society* shaped by militant conflicts:

> one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves. . . . Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. (*HS*, 96)

In any case, we can now see the connection between Foucault's two contrasts to the model of war: The form in which politics has most typically been taken to be a rule-governed system is that of a system of economic relations. Even Marxism, which rejects the idea of a social contract, models power on the economy, which contemporary French Marxists in turn frequently model on structural linguistics. We now have a picture of Foucault's dynamics of power: Power is dispersed across complicated and heterogeneous social networks

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

marked by ongoing struggle. Power is not something present at specific locations within those networks, but is instead always at issue in ongoing attempts to (re)produce effective social alignments, and conversely to avoid or erode their effects, often by producing various counteralignments. But what could it mean to conceive similarly of a dynamics of knowledge? This notion may seem initially very strange because the conception of knowledge as a body of warranted true beliefs has such a strong hold upon us.

Foucault had taken a first step toward such a dynamic conception of knowledge even before *Discipline and Punish*, when he distinguished the formation of a discursive field of knowledge (*savoir*) from the specific statements held true at specific points within that field (*connaissances*). Knowledge (*savoir*) in this sense is dispersed across the entire field rather than located in particular statements or groups of statements. Foucault spoke in this way to indicate that the "seriousness," sense, and possible truth of any particular *connaissances* were determined by their place within a larger field. What was missing from this earlier conception, however, was a sense of the heterogeneity of epistemic fields and of their temporal dimension shaped by ongoing epistemic conflict.

Knowledge is established not only in relation to a field of statements, but also to objects, instruments, practices, research programs, skills, social networks, and institutions. Some elements of such an epistemic field reinforce and strengthen one another and are taken up, extended, and reproduced in other contexts; others remain isolated from, or conflict with, these emergent "strategies" and eventually become forgotten curiosities. The configuration of knowledge requires that these heterogeneous elements be adequately adapted to one another and that their mutual alignment be sustained over time.

The temporality of these epistemic fields is evident in the construction of such epistemic alignments and in the conflicts and resistances they engender. Taken by itself, a statement, a technique or skill, a practice, or a machine cannot count as knowledge. Only in the ways it is used, and thereby increasingly connected to other elements over time, does it become (and remain) epistemically significant. But these uses and alignments encounter snags and generate conflicts with other emerging epistemic practices. These conflicts have a particular configuration that arises historically from the development of competing epistemic alignments and from the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

specific respects in which they come into conflict. Such conflict, however, spurs further investigations, articulations, and technical refinements. Conflict thus becomes the locus for the continuing development and reorganization of knowledge. It is ironic that where knowledge does not encounter resistance, it is likely to receive little or no further articulation and to risk becoming isolated and inconsequential. Foucault used the term "strategies" for the multiple ways in which heterogeneous elements align or conflict with one another to constitute power relations. Once we recognize the complex and contested dynamics of knowledge production, we might say of knowledge as well as of power that "it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (*HS*, 93).

What relation between the strategical alignments that constitute knowledge and those that form a configuration of power is Foucault describing? Foucault noted that

> Relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter; they are the immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities, and disequilibriums which occur in the latter, and conversely they are the internal conditions of these differentiations. (*HS*, 94)

Foucault is thus not identifying knowledge and power, but he is recognizing that the strategic alignments that constitute each contain many of the same elements and relations. Indeed, their alignment as relationships of power is part of the makeup of an epistemic field, and vice versa. How knowledge and power come together is historically specific and may vary significantly in different domains. Foucault proposed these remarks about knowledge and power first and foremost as an interpretation of his particular historical studies. They were put forward to make sense of how the observation, documentation, and classification of individuals and populations contributed to newly emerging strategies of domination, which themselves were part of the complex social field within which those techniques and their applications came to constitute knowledge.

We can now approach the crucial question. Even supposing we grant everything I have said about Foucault's insistence upon the interrelated dynamics of knowledge and power, how would that respond to Taylor's or Rorty's concerns about the epistemic coherence

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and political significance of Foucault's work? Their worry was that Foucault could not coherently make truth-claims, criticize power, or offer hope for a better world. I suggest instead that Foucault has offered a different sense of what it is to make truth-claims, criticize power, or offer hope. Foucault's critics presuppose a conception of epistemic and political sovereignty: To claim truth or to criticize power is to try to stand outside an epistemic or political conflict in order to *settle* it. Truth and right are conceived as the unified structures from which conflict, struggle, and difference are banned, as all competing assertions and all conflicting agents receive their due.

Foucault suggests a different image in which conflict and struggle are always present and inescapable. To make truth-claims is to try to strengthen some epistemic alignments and to challenge, undermine, or evade others. To criticize power is to participate in counteralignments to resist or evade its effects. The question Foucault's critics insistently raise is, Why engage in *these* struggles rather than others? Why take *this* side rather than an opposing one? Their concern is that without some legitimating standpoint to provide reasons for them, these choices will always be arbitrary or dictated from "without." But Foucault was perfectly prepared to offer reasons for his choices of struggles and sides. He was equally prepared to offer reasons and evidence for the statements he made.

What Foucault was not prepared to do was to see these choices, statements, and reasons as more than a situated response to a particular political and epistemic configuration. Thus, he remarked in an interview that

> I am not looking for an alternative. . . . You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions, and that's the reason why I don't accept the word "alternative." I would like to do genealogy of problems, of *problematiques*. My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger.[12]

Presumably such a choice requires a considered and informed judgment, but cannot be further legitimated by any appeal to a science or a principle of right. Foucault was in any case suspicious of the charges of arbitrariness or "external" determination, which are often alleged

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to be the consequences of doing without such sovereign legitimation. Political criticism is not arbitrary if it can be historically situated as an intelligible response to specific institutions and practices:

> The theoretical and practical experience that we have of our [historical] limits and of the possibility of moving beyond them is always limited and determined; thus we are always in the position of beginning again. But that does not mean that no work can be done except in disorder and contingency.[13]

Rather, it means that such work must always be reflective about its historical limits and experimental in spirit.

That Foucault's refusal to adopt a standpoint of epistemic or political sovereignty does not disable our capacities to reason, to criticize or justify statements or actions in ways that are not arbitrary or "ungrounded" is usefully highlighted by comparison to Robert Brandom's defense of a thoroughly pragmatic and situated conception of language, thought, and knowledge. Brandom joins Foucault in rejecting a standpoint of sovereignty outside of ongoing contested practices of reasoning from which to assess their outcome:

> Sorting out who should be counted as correct, whose claims and applications of concepts should be treated as authoritative, is a messy retail business of assessing the comparative authority of competing evidential and inferential claims. . . . That issue is adjudicated differently from different points of view, and although these are not all of equal worth, there is no bird's-eye view above the fray of competing claims from which those that deserve to prevail can be identified, nor from which even necessary and sufficient conditions for such deserts can be formulated. The status of any such principles as probative is always itself at issue in the same way as the status of any particular factual claim.[14]

Foucault and Brandom would have offered rather different glosses upon reason and the normative accountability involved in its exercise, especially concerning what is at stake politically in this question (they would, for example, give quite different answers to Kant's question, "What is Enlightenment?"). Yet there is nothing in this crucial passage from Brandom that Foucault could not have endorsed.

Indeed, despite their substantial differences on other points, Brandom's expressivist conception of logical, semantic, pragmatic, and epistemic vocabularies also provides a useful analogue to Foucault's treatment of knowledge and power and his diverse uses

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of the concept of truth.[15] Brandom treats these vocabularies as enabling us to say what we would otherwise only be able to do (and thereby also enable us to *do* something new as well, for example, to reason for and against the performances and proprieties they articulate). Narrowly logical vocabulary enables us to articulate and discuss inferential practices and their proprieties; semantic vocabulary enables the articulation of what is done in asserting and naming or describing; intentional ascriptions make explicit speakers' attitudes toward semantic contents alongside the contents they express. Such expressive locutions do not identify new kinds of properties or relations, however. Thus, 'true' and 'refers' do not denote relations between linguistic and extra-linguistic items, but only enable new stances toward what is expressed in other assertions that do not employ semantic vocabulary. Similarly, for Brandom, 'beliefs' and 'desires' are not extant psychological states, but are normative statuses instituted by the practices of distinguishing attitudes from contents. The content of such expressive locutions then varies with the practices they articulate. Thus, Arthur Fine can claim on similar grounds that

> the concept of truth is open-ended, growing with the growth of science. . . . The significance of the answers to questions [about what is true and what are grounds for truth] is rooted in the practices and logic of truth judging, but that significance branches out beyond current practice along with the growing concept of truth.[16]

Such historicism about truth and truth conditions thereby commits no equivocation because the semantic role of the concept is consistent with diverse contexts and purposes of use, including shifts in the "styles of reasoning" that enable an utterance even to be a candidate for truth.[17]

Along similar lines, Foucault's invocation of 'power' does not describe a substantive property or capacity that agents or institutions possess or exercise, but instead enables him to express how actions "act upon . . . existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future" rather than upon agents directly, by affecting "a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions."[18] There can be various modalities of power (such as juridical power or bio-power), which are different modes of alignment through which the effect of actions upon other actions is distributed,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

just as there can be different styles of reasoning through which statements can bear on the truth or falsity of others. In neither case is power or knowledge invoked as a substantive constituent of the world over and above the actions and statements to which these concepts are applied. We can even understand Foucault's distinction between *savoir* and *connaissance* in these terms. The expressive role of *connaître* is to enable one to talk about which statements belonging to a field of intelligibly "serious" discourse are correctly assertable within that field. The expressive role of *savoir*, by contrast, articulates the ways statements, modes of reasoning, and various bodily activities, material arrangements, and institutional configurations can align to enable distinctive patterns of intelligibility. *Savoir*, that is, enables us to talk about the practical and inferential alignments that render judgments of *connaissance* intelligible and subject to normative constraint.

Similarly, the different "faces of truth" that C. G. Prado has insightfully discerned within Foucault's writings are consistent with assigning to Foucault a broadly expressivist account of that concept.[19] Foucault's perspectivism about truth and knowledge differs from Brandom's also explicitly perspectival account of the conceptual domain primarily by "keeping score" on discursive alignments that are rather more encompassing than the utterances and actions of individual speakers.[20] Although Brandom has reason to give special emphasis to the interpretation of individual speakers, there is nothing in his model (or in Donald Davidson's closely parallel conception of "radical interpretation"[21]) that prohibits keeping a collective interpretive score on a larger set of performances, such as those that comprise a Foucauldian discursive alignment. The only constraint upon such interpretive practices would be whether the outcome displays a sufficiently coherent pattern. Utter failures of interpretive "coherence" in either case would indicate that this pattern of utterance and action does not comprise, respectively, a speaker or a discursive alignment.[22] Indeed, Brandom's recognition of the importance of what he calls "interpersonal, intra-content inheritance of entitlements," the ways in which an utterance of *p* on one occasion can entitle (Foucault might have preferred "reinforce") utterances of *p* on other occasions, would parallel the ways in which Foucault identifies the gradual emergence of a discursive alignment from heterogeneous texts and performances.[23]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Taken together with an expressivist conception of truth, Foucault's dual concern to understand how utterances and performances can form discursive alignments much more extensive than just the attributable unity that comprises an individual speaker, and his concern to articulate how discursive performances act upon and with fields of power relations, is sufficient to generate the differences among what Prado calls Foucault's constructivist, perspectivist, experiential, and semi-objectivist faces of truth.[24] Indeed, the importance Foucault attributed to "limit experiences" and the resulting "experiential" face of truth emerges especially clearly in these terms: Given the pervasively enabling and constraining effects of discursive alignments, the concept of truth can be used here to express how

> major cognitive clashes [of discourse-dependent truths] and consequent changes in beliefs and attitudes perceived by subjects as hard-won achievements of insight occasioned by deeply disruptive intellectual trials . . . are considered epiphanies or deliverances by their subjects and exert a powerful grip over them.[25]

For Foucault, such cases are an especially revealing expression of how concepts and conceptually articulated claims have us in their grasp, and point toward his insistent reworking of the broadly Kantian connection between freedom and conceptual necessity.[26]

I now conclude with two brief critical reflections. The first concerns Foucault's frequent appeal to images of war, conflict, and resistance. I argued above that he explicitly proposed this martial imagery to emphasize the dynamics and nonsystematicity of power and knowledge. Yet feminist theorists have often reminded us of the epistemological and political dangers of building militarism and violence into our very tools of theoretical analysis and political criticism.[27] So one important question to be raised about Foucault's work is to what extent his sense of the dynamics of power and knowledge remains tied to his Nietzschean imagery of war and the related notions of strategy and tactics.

A second question concerns the scope of Foucault's argument. He repeatedly insisted that his arguments were of quite restricted generality, both historically and epistemologically. He wrote extensively about the interconnected disciplines of psychiatry, criminology, pedagogy, and clinical medicine, but was reluctant to extend his arguments beyond what he once called these "dubious" disciplines

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

(*PK*, 109). Yet his more general remarks about power and knowledge are more difficult to constrain in this fashion. I have argued elsewhere that the natural sciences offer important analogues to detailed aspects of Foucault's historical studies of power and knowledge.[28] Whether or not these analogies can be sustained, however, Foucault's insistence that power and knowledge be understood as dynamic relationships rather than things possessed must have more general import. There are undoubtedly important structural differences in the ways that alignments of power and of knowledge are organized and deployed in different fields and historical periods. Nor would one expect always to find the same patterns of interaction between knowledge and other kinds of relationship among us and the world. But if I am right in attributing to Foucault an account of the dynamics of knowledge, this should have important consequences still to be worked out for epistemology and the philosophy of science.

NOTES

1 Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 45–56, offer an extensive and useful discussion of what it means for a statement to be a "serious act" in Foucault's earlier work.

2 Undoubtedly the best discussion in English of Foucault's work in this period is Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

3 Gutting (*Foucault's Archaeology*) and Dreyfus and Rabinow (*Michel Foucault*) each provide a useful and interesting discussion of the nature and significance of this emphasis on discourse, although their accounts are not mutually consistent.

4 Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

5 Among the more prominent and sophisticated expressions of this concern are Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in David Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 69–102; Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); and Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987). For further discussion of criticisms reflecting these concerns, see Michael Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

6 Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," 94.
7 Richard Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity," in Richard Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 172.
8 Thomas Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 150.
9 Ibid., 149–161.
10 Ibid., 170.
11 Ibid., 173.
12 Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, rev. ed., 231–232.
13 Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984, Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 317.
14 Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 601.
15 For a more extensive discussion of Brandom's expressivist conception of logical, semantic, and pragmatic vocabulary, and its extension to a Foucauldian conception of power, see Joseph Rouse, *How Scientific Practices Matter: Reclaiming Philosophical Naturalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), chapters 5–7.
16 Arthur Fine, *The Shaky Game: Einstein, Realism, and the Quantum Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 149.
17 Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), invokes the notion of styles of reasoning as historically variant patterns and norms of reasoning that enable utterances to be assessed as true or false. Statements such as "there is a 20% chance of rain tomorrow" only become assessable in conjunction with the emergence of the practices of adjudication that collectively comprise a statistical style of reasoning.
18 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 220.
19 C. G. Prado, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 119–150.
20 Brandom, in *Making It Explicit*, models discursive practices as a mutual "keeping score" of the assertional and practical commitments and entitlements accrued by speakers who implicitly take one another to be fellow players of "the game of giving and asking for reasons."
21 Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
22 Foucault and Brandom would differ substantially in at least two respects concerning the significance of the individuated discursive scorekeeping

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

that Brandom models and takes to be implicit in ordinary talk. First, Foucault would presumably have taken such scorekeeping to be much more loosely applied and to result in rather more residual incoherence and resistance to rational discursive norms than Brandom's model seems to suggest. Second, Foucault would have been acutely sensitive to the power effects of this mode of subjectivation and of resistance to the enforcement of discursive normativity.

23 These distinctions are introduced in Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 169–170, 175–176.

24 Prado, *Starting with Foucault*, 121–145.

25 Ibid., 137.

26 See, for example, his explicitly Kantian evocation of "an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" (Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," 319.

27 Two excellent examples of such feminist reflection are Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), and Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in Donna Haraway, ed., *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, 1990), 183–201.

28 Joseph Rouse, *Knowledge and Power: Toward a Political Philosophy of Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), especially chapter 7, and "Foucault and the Natural Sciences," in J. Caputo and M. Yount, eds., *Institutions, Normalization, and Power* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 136–162.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

ARNOLD I. DAVIDSON

5 Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics, and Ancient Thought

In presenting the topic of Michel Foucault's significance as a writer of the history of ethics, I have two main goals. First, I hope to be able to elucidate Foucault's aims in shifting his attention, in his last writings, to what he called "ethics." These aims, in my opinion, have been widely misinterpreted and even more widely ignored, and the result has been a failure to come to terms with the conceptual and philosophical distinctiveness of Foucault's last works. Volumes 2 and 3 of *The History of Sexuality* are about sex in roughly the way that *Discipline and Punish* is about the prison. As the modern prison serves as a reference point for Foucault to work out his analytics of power, so ancient sex functions as the material around which Foucault elaborates his conception of ethics. Although the history of sex is, obviously, sexier than the history of ethics, it is this latter history that oriented Foucault's last writings. Foucault once remarked to me, as he had to others, that "sex is so boring." He used this remark in different ways on different occasions, but one thing he meant by it was that what made sex so interesting to him had little to do with sex itself. His focus on the history of ancient sex, its interest for him, was part of his interest in the history of ancient ethics.

Whatever one's disagreements with Foucault's interpretation of specific ancient texts, his conceptualization of ethics, the framework in which he placed these interpretations, is as potentially transformative for writing the history of ethics as, to take the strongest comparison I can think of, John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* is, in

Reprinted from *Foucault and the Writing of History*, edited by Jan Goldstein and published by Basil Blackwell, Oxford, U.K., and Cambridge, Mass., 1994. Reprinted with the permission of Basil Blackwell.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

its cultural context, for articulating the aims of political philosophy. But this transformative potential has been obscured for philosophy by a way of thinking about and writing the history of ethics that passes over the very domain that Foucault demarcated as ethics, as if, whatever Foucault wrote about in these works, it could not have been ethics. And this potential has been further darkened in the discussions of some classicists who, to give only a partial caricature, have been so taken with tired and tiresome debates about whether Foucault knew enough Greek and Latin to legitimize his readings of the texts of classical and late antiquity that they have lost sight of his most basic aims. By giving an interpretation of Foucault's work that attempts to clarify these aims, and to show how they affected his readings of particular texts, I hope to reorient discussions of his last works toward what I think is genuinely at stake in them – how to conceptualize ethics and how to write its history.

My second goal, not unrelated to my first, is to place Foucault's work in the context of writings by historians of ancient thought: Paul Veyne, Georges Dumézil, and especially Pierre Hadot, with whom Foucault was engaged in intense, if sometimes submerged, intellectual exchange. These writers, as well as others such as Jean-Pierre Vernant, in turn discussed Foucault's work in terms that help us to see how it can be elaborated and criticized in philosophically fruitful ways. The reception of Foucault's last writings by French ancient historians and philosophers is markedly disjoint from its Anglo-American reception, not, as some people seem to believe, because of the dynamics of French fads, but rather because the manner in which Foucault conceptualized issues showed clear resonances with work that had been and continues to be undertaken by the most significant historians of ancient thought in France. Setting the proper intellectual context will help us to understand better the contours and emplacement of Foucault's writing on ancient thought, and thus help us to see how his conceptualization of ethics relates to, derives from, and modifies a set of considerations that were not his alone.

One of my ultimate interests in Foucault's interpretation of ethics stems from the way in which I think it can be used to transform our understanding of texts and historical periods that he did not discuss. In other parts of this project to reassess Foucault's history of ethics, I will show how his *conceptualization* of ethics provides a

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

compelling interpretative framework for understanding the genre of early Christian virginity treatises. Less predictably, I also argue that Old Testament texts on abominations can be rethought, and certain long-standing problems resolved, by sifting these texts through the specific conception of ethics rooted in Foucault's work. But this interest in using Foucault requires a positioning of his thought centered around the history of ethics, and it is to this philosophical positioning, and to its concepts, its sources, and consequences, that I shall restrict myself here.

The first volume of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* was published in 1976. The back cover of that volume announced the titles of the five forthcoming volumes that would complete Foucault's project. Volume 2 was to be called *The Flesh and the Body* and would concern the prehistory of our modern experience of sexuality, concentrating on the problematization of sex in early Christianity. Volumes 3 through 5 were to focus on some of the major figures (of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) around which problems, themes, and questions of sex had come to circle. Volume 3, *The Children's Crusade*, would discuss the sexuality of children, especially the problem of childhood masturbation; volume 4, *Woman, Mother, Hysteric*, would discuss the specific ways in which sexuality had been invested in the female body; volume 5, *Perverts*, was planned to investigate exactly what the title named, the person of the pervert, an ever-present target of nineteenth-century thought. Finally, volume 6, *Population and Races*, was to examine the way in which treatises, both theoretical and practical, on the topics of population and race were linked to the history of what Foucault had called "biopolitics."[1]

In 1984, when volumes 2 and 3 of *The History of Sexuality* were finally published, some years after they had been expected, many of Foucault's readers must have been bewildered by their content, to say the least. This bewilderment was occasioned, most immediately, by the profound chronological reorientation of these two volumes. Volume 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, studied problems of sex in classical Greek thought, whereas volume 3, *The Care of the Self*, analyzed theses problems as they appeared in Greek and Latin texts of the first and second centuries A.D. Moreover, in the introduction to volume 2, which served as an introduction to his new project, Foucault reconceptualized the entire aim of his history of sexuality

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and introduced a set of concepts that had been absent from volume 1. The most significant philosophical consequence of this reorientation was Foucault's conceptualization of ethics, his theoretical elaboration of ethics as a framework for interpreting these Greek and Roman problematizations of sex. I shall leave aside here many of the general features of Foucault's conceptualization of ethics, since I have discussed them at length elsewhere.[2] But given the way this essay will proceed, I should remind you that Foucault thought of ethics as that component of morality that concerns the self's relationship to itself. Foucault argued that our histories of morality should not be exclusively focused on the history of codes of moral behavior, and that we must also pay careful attention to the history of the forms of moral subjectivation, to how we constitute ourselves as moral subjects of our own actions. Foucault thought of ethics proper, of the self's relationship to itself, as having four main aspects: the ethical substance, that part of oneself that is taken to be the relevant domain for ethical judgment; the mode of subjection, the way in which the individual establishes his or her relation to moral obligations and rules; the self-forming activity or ethical work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself into an ethical subject; and, finally, the *telos*, the mode of being at which one aims in behaving ethically.[3]

Another way of understanding Foucault's new concern with the self's relationship to itself is to think of it, as Foucault explicitly did in 1980–1981, as at the intersection of two themes that he had previously treated, namely, a history of subjectivity and an analysis of the forms of governmentality. Foucault claimed that he had undertaken to study the history of subjectivity by studying the divisions carried out in society in the name of madness, illness, and delinquency and by studying the effects of these divisions on the constitution of the subject. In addition, his history of subjectivity attempted to locate the "modes of objectivation" of the subject in scientific knowledge, for example, knowledge concerning language (linguistics), work (economics), and life (biology). As for the analysis of forms of "governmentality," a crucial concept for Foucault's work beginning around 1977, this analysis responded to a "double objective." On the one hand, Foucault wanted to criticize current conceptions of power that, in one way or another, perceived power as a unitary system, a critique undertaken most thoroughly in

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Discipline and Punish and volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality*. On the other hand, Foucault wanted to analyze power as a domain of strategic relations between individuals and groups, relations whose strategies were to govern the conduct of these individuals.[4] Thus Foucault's new concern with the self would be

> a way of doing the history of subjectivity: no longer, however, by way of the divisions between the mad and those who are not mad, the ill and those who are not ill, delinquents and those who are not delinquents; no longer by way of the constitution of the field of scientific objectivity giving rise to the living, speaking, working subject. But rather by the putting into place and the transformations, in our culture, of the "relations to oneself," with their technical armature and their effects of knowledge. And one could thus take up, under another aspect, the question of "governmentality": the government of the self by the self in its articulation with relations to others (as one finds it in pedagogy, advice for conduct, spiritual direction, the prescription of models of life, etc.).[5]

As I would interpret Foucault, ethics, or the self's relation to itself, is therefore part of both the history of subjectivity and the history of governmentality. Our "technologies of the self," the ways in which we relate ourselves to ourselves, contribute to the forms in which our subjectivity is constituted and experienced, as well as to the forms in which we govern our thought and conduct.[6] We relate to ourselves as specific kinds of subjects who govern themselves in particular ways. In response to the questions "What kinds of subjects should we be?" and "How should we govern ourselves?," Foucault offered his history of ethics.

In addition to the concepts I have already mentioned, Foucault's last works introduced other related notions, most prominent that of the esthetics of existence and styles of existence. These notions are, in my opinion, far more complex and multilayered than most commentators have acknowledged. One central aspect of these notions has been lucidly described by Paul Veyne:

> The idea of styles of existence played a major role in Foucault's conversations and doubtless in his inner life during the final months of a life that only he knew to be in danger. *Style* does not mean distinction here; the word is to be taken in the sense of the Greeks, for whom an artist was first of all an artisan and a work of art was first of all a work. Greek ethics is quite dead and Foucault judged it as undesirable as it would be impossible to resuscitate

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

this ethics; but he considered one of its elements, namely the idea of a work of the self on the self, to be capable of reacquiring a contemporary meaning, in the manner of one of those pagan temple columns that are occasionally reutilized in more recent structures. We can guess at what might emerge from this diagnosis: the self, taking itself as a work to be accomplished, could sustain an ethics that is no longer supported by either tradition or reason; as an artist of itself, the self would enjoy that autonomy that modernity can no longer do without. "Everything has disappeared," said Medea, "but I have one thing left: myself."[7]

This aspect of Foucault's idea of the esthetics of existence reaches its apogee in *The Care of the Self*, especially in the chapter entitled "The Cultivation of the Self." In this chapter, Foucault argues that in the texts of the first two centuries A.D.with which he is concerned, there is an "insistence on the attention that must be brought to bear on oneself," and that the added emphasis on sexual austerity in these texts should not be interpreted in terms of a tightening of the moral code and its prohibitions, but rather in terms of "an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as the subject of one's acts."[8] More specifically, he argues that the practices of the self in late antiquity are characterized by the general principle of conversion to self – *epistrophé eis heauton*.[9] This conversion to self requires that one change one's activities and shift one's attention so as to constantly take care of oneself. One result of this conversion, claims Foucault, is the "experience of a pleasure that one takes in oneself. The individual who has finally succeeded in gaining access to himself is, for himself, an object of pleasure."[10] And Foucault quotes Seneca:

> "*Disce gaudere*, learn how to feel joy," says Seneca to Lucilius: "I do not wish you ever to be deprived of gladness. I would have it born in your house; and it is born there, if only it is inside of you . . . for it will never fail you when once you have found its source. . . . look toward the true good, and rejoice only in that which comes from your own store [*de tuo*]. But what do I mean by 'your own store'? I mean your very self and the best part of you."[11]

These texts certainly appear to advocate an esthetics of existence, a cultivation of the self, that culminates, to quote Veyne's words again, in "that autonomy that modernity cannot do without," and that is symbolized by the pleasure that one takes in oneself, a pleasure of which one cannot be deprived. But, as Pierre Hadot has

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

convincingly argued, Seneca opposes pleasure and joy – *voluptas* and *gaudium* – and it is misleading for Foucault to speak of the joy described by Seneca as "a form of pleasure."[12] More important, as Hadot indicates, Seneca finds his joy not in his self per se, but in that "best part of the self" that Seneca identifies with perfect reason and, ultimately, with divine reason:

> The 'best part' of oneself, then, is ultimately a transcendent self. Seneca does not find his joy in "Seneca," but by transcending Seneca; by discovering that he has in him a reason that is part of universal Reason, that is within all human beings and within the cosmos itself.[13]

Hadot has argued that an essential element of the psychic content of the spiritual exercises of ancient philosophy is "the feeling of belonging to a Whole," what he often describes as a cosmic consciousness, a consciousness of being part of the cosmic whole.[14] This consciousness is summarized in Seneca's four words *Toti se inserens mundo* ("Plunging oneself into the totality of the world").[15] Adjacent to the cultivation of the self, that movement of interiorization in which "one seeks to be master of oneself, to possess oneself, to find one's happiness in freedom and inner independence," emphasized by Foucault, there is "another movement, in which one raises oneself to a higher psychic level . . . which consists in becoming aware of oneself as part of Nature, as a portion of universal Reason."[16] Indeed, I would claim, following Hadot, that one of the most distinctive features of that care of the self studied by Foucault in volume 3 of *The History of Sexuality* is its indissociable link with this cosmic consciousness; one philosophical aim of this care of the self is to transform oneself so that one places oneself in the perspective of the cosmic Whole. The care of the self receives its distinctive philosophical tint in late antiquity through those practices that raise the self to a universal level, that place the self within a cosmic dimension that at the same time transforms the self, even to the point, as Hadot writes, of surpassing the self:

> In Platonism, but in Epicureanism and Stoicism as well, freedom from anxiety is thus achieved by a movement in which one passes from individual and impassioned subjectivity to the objectivity of the universal perspective. It is a question, not of a construction of a self as a work of art, but, on the contrary, of a surpassing of the self, or, at the least, of an exercise by which

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the self situates itself in the totality and experiences itself as part of this totality.[17]

As Foucault made clear in his 1981–1982 course at the Collège de France, the care of the self has a very long history.[18] In trying to recapture the different forms in which the care of the self has appeared, it is essential to understand not only the ways in which the self became an object of concern, but also the ways in which one went beyond oneself, relating the self to something grander than itself. The spiritual exercises of ancient philosophy, that philosophical *askésis* so central to Foucault's last works, could, at one and the same time, result in an intense preoccupation with the self and in a sort of dilation of the self that realized the true magnitude of the soul.[19] Hadot is concerned that by focusing too exclusively on the cultivation of the self and by linking his ethical model too closely to an aesthetics of existence, Foucault was suggesting "a culture of the self that is too purely aesthetic."[20] In other words, writes Hadot, "I fear a new form of dandyism, a version for the end of the twentieth century."[21] Without taking up Foucault's discussion, in his essay "What Is Enlightenment?," of dandyism in Baudelaire,[22] I do think that there is a use of the concept of styles of existence to be found in Foucault's last works that can and ought to be preserved, one, moreover, that aligns Foucault's writings more closely with Hadot's interpretation of ancient thought. Although I believe that Foucault's interpretation of the culture of the self in late antiquity is sometimes too narrow and therefore misleading, I think that this is *a defect of interpretation, not of conceptualization*.[23] Foucault's conceptualization of ethics as the self's relationship to itself provides us with a framework of enormous depth and subtlety, and it is this framework – of ethical substance, mode of subjection, self-forming activity, and telos – that allows us to grasp aspects of ancient thought that would otherwise remain occluded. I have argued elsewhere that Foucault's conception of ethics is, in fact, indebted to Hadot's work in *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, to Hadot's history of ancient philosophy as a history of spiritual exercises.[24] Nevertheless, by giving detailed conceptual content to the idea of the self's relationship to itself, by analyzing this relationship in terms of four distinct components, Foucault makes it possible for us to see precisely how to write a history of ethics that will not collapse into a

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

history of moral codes. Furthermore, his conceptualization allows us to examine the connections, the kinds of dependence and independence, among these four aspects of ethics, thus showing us the various ways in which continuities, modifications, and ruptures can occur in one or more of these four dimensions of our relation to ourselves. In some historical periods, for example, the ethical substance may remain constant, whereas the mode of subjection gradually alters; or the telos may stay continuous, whereas the self-forming activity is modified. In other periods, the ethical substance, mode of subjection, self-forming activity, and telos may be so inextricably intertwined that they undergo change together, thereby resulting in an entirely new form of the self's relationship to itself.

Pierre Hadot has brilliantly shown that one of the fundamental aspects of philosophy in the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman eras is that philosophy "is a way of life, which does not mean only that it is a certain moral conduct . . . but that it is a way of existing in the world, which should be practiced at each instant and which should transform all of life."[25] A sense of philosophy as a way of life is also expressed by Foucault when he explains his motivation in writing the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. After claiming that for him philosophical activity consists in "the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently,"[26] Foucault writes,

> The "essay" – which should be understood as the assay or test by which, in the game of truth, one undergoes changes, and not as the simplistic appropriation of others for the purpose of communication – is the living substance of philosophy, at least if we assume that philosophy is still what it was in times past, i.e., an ascesis, *askésis*, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought.[27]

For Foucault philosophy was a spiritual exercise, an exercise of oneself in which one submitted oneself to modifications and tests, underwent changes, in order to learn to think differently. This idea of philosophy as a way of life and, I shall argue, of ethics as proposing styles of life is one of the most forceful and provocative directions of Foucault's later thought.

In approaching these ideas, I want first to distinguish between the notions of a way of life and a style of life.[28] In the ancient world *philosophy itself* was a way of life, a way of life that was distinct from

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

everyday life, and that was perceived as strange and even dangerous. In conveying this fact about philosophy, I can do no better here than to quote Hadot's marvelous description:

> to be a philosopher implies a rupture with what the skeptics called *bios*, that is, daily life. . . .
>
> This very rupture between the philosopher and the conduct of everyday life is strongly felt by nonphilosophers . . . philosophers are strange, a race apart. Strange indeed are those Epicureans, who lead a frugal life, practicing a total equality between the men and the women inside their philosophical circle – and even between married women and courtesans; strange, too, those Roman Stoics who disinterestedly administer the provinces of the Empire entrusted to them and are the only ones to take seriously the laws promulgated against excess; strange as well this Roman Platonist, the Senator Rogatianus, a disciple of Plotinus, who on the very day he is to assume his functions as praetor gives up his possessions, frees his slaves, and eats only every other day. Strange indeed all those philosophers whose behavior, without being inspired by religion, nonetheless completely breaks with the customs and habits of most mortals.
>
> By the time of the Platonic dialogues Socrates was called *atopos*, that is, "unclassifiable". What makes him *atopos* is precisely the fact that he is a "philo-sopher" in the etymological sense of the word; that is, he is in love with wisdom. For wisdom, says Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*, is not a human state, it is a state of perfection of being and knowledge that can only be divine. It is the love of this wisdom, which is foreign to the world, that makes the philosopher a stranger in it.[29]

Stoics, Epicureans, Platonists, Cynics, and even Skeptics each embodied the philosophical *way of life*, a way of life whose peculiarity, whatever its particular guises, was everywhere recognized. And early Christianity, itself conceived of as a way of life, namely living in conformity with the divine Logos, was also presented as a philosophy.[30] Socrates attempted to convert his interlocutors from the unexamined way of life to the philosophical way of life. It was this experience of philosophy as a way of life, and not simply as a theoretical doctrine, that brought Socrates into deadly conflict with the authorities.

Given this basic characteristic of philosophy itself as a way of life, there were, of course, different philosophies, what I shall call different *styles of life*, different styles of living philosophically. Each philosophical school – Stoic, Epicurean, Platonist, and so on – represented a style of life that had a corresponding fundamental inner attitude.[31]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

As Hadot says, "In this period, to philosophize is to choose a school, convert to its way of life, and accept its dogmas."[32] I propose that we take each particular conceptual combination of ethical substance, mode of subjection, self-forming activity, and telos as representing a style of life. One's style of life, as specified by a determinate content and mesh of each of these four components, gives expression to the self's relationship to itself. To indicate what part of oneself one judges, how one relates oneself to moral obligations, what one does to transform oneself into an ethical subject, and what mode of being one aims to realize is to indicate how one lives, is to characterize one's style of life. Although Foucault does not explicitly use the notion of style of life in exactly this way, this usage is, I believe, consistent with his interpretation of ancient philosophy. As we read the last volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, it is evident that the idea of the care of the self is part of a broader conceptual matrix, and that a history of the care of the self must be written in terms of a history of ethics.[33] In every historical period the care of the self is expressed in particular relationships of the self to itself, particular styles of life. As the self's relationship to itself undergoes modification, as the way in which one cares for oneself changes, one's style of life will change. And when Foucault says that the problem of an ethics is the problem of "a form [I would say "style" here] to be given to one's conduct and one's life," he does in fact link the notions of ethics and style of life in a conceptually intimate way.[34]

Some of Foucault's most suggestive, and philosophically revealing, invocations of the notions of *askésis* and style of life can be found in his discussions of his attitude to homosexuality. Foucault claims that one goal of homosexuality today is "to advance into a homosexual *askésis* that would make us work on ourselves and invent, I do not say discover, a manner of being that is still improbable."[35] Let me underline, in this quotation, the connection between *askésis* and manner of being, a connection that is, I would claim, also to be uncovered in Foucault's discussion of ancient male/male sexual practices. He insists that the notion of a homosexual mode or style of life, with its new forms of relationship, is what is most significant about contemporary gay practices:

> Is it possible to create a homosexual mode of life? This notion of mode of life seems important to me. . . . It seems to me that a way of life can yield

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

a culture and an ethics. To be "gay", I think, is not to identify with the psychological traits and the visible marks of the homosexual, but to try to define and develop a way of life.[36]

Just as Foucault argued that ancient thought was not primarily concerned with the morphology of the sexual act,[37] so he, too, was interested not in the nature of the sexual act itself, its morphology or shape, but in the style of life, and the corresponding art of life, of which these sexual acts are part.[38] Even in his most explicit discussion of gay male sexual practices – "*les pratiques physiques de type fist-fucking*" – Foucault insists on relating these practices to a style of life that expresses a new sense of masculinity, a sense that is devirilised, even desexualised ("*devirilisées, voire désexuées*").[39] So it is these "new forms of relationship, new forms of love, new forms of creation" that most captured Foucault's attention and interest.[40] Foucault believed that "what most bothers those who are not gay about gayness is the gay lifestyle, not sex acts themselves."[41] As strange as it may sound at first, Foucault pointed to homosexuality as one resource for answering the question of how to practice spiritual exercises in the twentieth century. Ultimately, for Foucault, one link between the ancient practices of self-mastery and contemporary homosexuality is that both require an ethics or ascetics of the self tied to a particular, and particularly threatening, way of life. I know it would have given Foucault genuine pleasure to think that the threat to everyday life posed by ancient philosophy had a contemporary analogue in the fears and disturbances that derive from the self-formation and style of life of being gay.[42]

Although Foucault's famous declaration that he is interested in writing the history of the present[43] must certainly be acknowledged as at play in his interpretation of ancient texts and in the linkages that can be found in his emphases on ancient philosophical *askesis* and contemporary homosexual *askésis*, such a concern with the history of the present, which I share with Foucault, need not, and should not, lead us to transform the ancient intensification of the relation to the self into the modern estheticization of the self. The ancient experience of the self ought to retain its distinctiveness, not simply for reasons of historical accuracy, but especially if it is to provide a philosophical standpoint from which we can begin to learn how to think differently. In "The Individual within the City-State,"

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Jean-Pierre Vernant reminds us how conceptually specific is the ancient notion of *psuché* and how distinct it is from the modern intimacy of the self. Vernant makes analytically useful distinctions between the individual, the subject, and the ego. The history of the individual, in the strict sense, concerns "his place and role in his group or groups; the value accorded him; the margin of movement left to him; his relative autonomy with respect to his institutional framework."[44] Vernant marks out the subject as appearing "when the individual uses the first person to express himself and, speaking in his own name, enunciates certain features that make him a unique being."[45] Finally, the ego is

> the ensemble of psychological practices and attitudes that give an interior dimension and a sense of wholeness to the subject. These practices and attitudes constitute him within himself as a unique being, real and original, whose authentic nature resides entirely in the secrecy of his interior life. It resides at the very heart of an intimacy to which no one except him can have access because it is defined as self-consciousness.[46]

Vernant compares these three levels to three literary genres: the individual corresponds to biography, a genre based on the life of a single character, in contrast to epic or historical narrative; the subject corresponds to autobiography or memoirs, where the individual tells his life story; and the ego corresponds to confessions or a diary "in which the inner life, the unique subject of a private life – in all its psychological complexity and richness, and its relative opacity or incommunicability – provides the material for what is written."[47] Following Arnaldo Momigliano and others, Vernant stresses that, although the Greeks produced some forms of biography and autobiography, both the classical and Hellenistic periods lacked confessions and diaries; moreover, "the characterization of the individual in Greek autobiography allows no 'intimacy of the self.'" [48]

After charting the evolution from the Homeric to the Platonic conceptions of *psuché*, a transformation that takes us from the soul as "a ghostly double of the body" to the body "as a ghostly reflection of the soul,"[49] Vernant insists on the importance of the fact that the Platonic *psuché* is "a *daimón* in us, a divine being, a supernatural force whose place and function in the universe goes beyond our single person."[50] This *psuché*, as impersonal or superpersonal force, is "*the* soul in me and not *my* soul."[51] Thus Vernant claims that the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Greek experience of the self could not have given rise to a *cogito ergo sum*, since my *psuché* is not my psychological ego. Citing Bernard Groethuysen's formula, he maintains that the ancient consciousness of self consists in the apprehension of the self in a *he*, and not yet in an *I*. There is no Cartesian, or even Augustinian, self-consciousness in the ancient preoccupation with the self.[52]

Can we reconcile Foucault's emphasis on the ancient care of the self with Vernant's historically nuanced argument that this *psuché* is a *superpersonal* force? How is the Greek and Roman "intensity of the relations to self" to be placed alongside the fact that this self is but a "simulacrum of the divine"?[53] The philosophical ideal that allows us to put together the care of the self and the *psuché* as *daimón* is the figure of the sage or wise man. The figure of the sage is notably absent from Foucault's writings on ancient philosophy, and it is precisely this absence that sometimes permits him to pass too smoothly from ancient to modern experiences of the self. By anchoring the ideal of the sage at the basis of ancient ethics, we can better see the abyss that separates *psuché* from any possible estheticization of the self.

The figure of the wise man, although described in different terms in different philosophical schools, was, according to Hadot, the "transcendent model that inspired all of philosophy" and that, moreover, was the basis for constructing the two other regulative models of ancient thought, the figure of the ideal king and the idea of God.[54] Of the many aspects of this figure that were crucial to ancient thought, I want to focus on what Hadot, in his brilliant essay "La figure du sage dans l'Antiquité gréco-latine," describes as a "fundamental theme": "wisdom is the state in which man is at the same time essentially man and beyond man, as if the essence of man consisted in being beyond himself."[55] Or, as Paul Veyne puts a similar, if more specific, claim, in his introduction to the French translation of Seneca's *De Tranquillitate animi*, Stoic eudamonianism is an "ethics of the ideal" that aims to imitate the figure of the sage, "a dream situated beyond human capacities."[56] Michelet differently stressed this aspect of the ideal in his formulation, "Greek religion culminated with its true God: the sage."[57]

Despite their contrasting concrete ideals of wisdom, all of the ancient philosophical schools conceived of philosophy and the philosopher as oriented toward this "transcendent and almost inaccessible ideal."[58] Even if, as Cicero claimed, the true sage is born perhaps

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

once every 500 years, nevertheless, the philosopher can attain at least a certain relative perfection. He can hope to become, if not the ideal and divine sage, "a sage among men, conscious of the distance that separates him from the gods," a relative sage.[59] But this achievement can only be attained through the arduous path of spiritual exercises that require nothing less than a transformation of one's way of life. It is this self-transforming, life-transforming *askésis* that makes Socrates, and every other true philosopher, *atopos*.

In his interpretation of Seneca, Hadot draws out a series of equivalences that takes one from the true good to the best part of the self to perfect or divine reason. Thus, on this reading, as I have already indicated, Seneca's true good, which is the best part of his self, is also a transcendent self; it is the sage or *daimón* in Seneca.[60] So in Letter 23 when Seneca urges the turning of one's attention toward the true good, he is urging a conversion to self that is at the same time a conversion to the *deus in* each one of us.[61] To be a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, is to exert a constant care of the self that, proceeding by way of spiritual exercises, culminates in the surpassing of the self, brings one to an identification with universal Reason, the god, the sage that both is and is beyond one's self. The joy obtained when one achieves this identification requires struggle and combat with oneself, since we are "too readily satisfied with ourselves," substituting pleasurable delights for real joy.[62] Real joy, writes Seneca, "is a stern matter" (*verum gaudium severa est*), and it demands that we go "deep below the surface" in order to take up the perspective of the god that is within us.[63] We can acquire this real joy from within ourselves, provided that we surpass ourselves, transforming ourselves. The ancient spiritual progress that aims at wisdom, the life of the sage, confronts the apparent paradox, as formulated again by Hadot, that "man appears, in that which is most his own, as something that is more than man, or, to speak more precisely, the true self of each individual transcends each individual."[64]

Foucault is absolutely correct to emphasize the ancient care of the self, for conversion to self is a precondition of the spiritual transformation that constitutes philosophy. Such a conversion is, however, not to be confused with the kind of psychologization or estheticization that shrinks the world to the size of oneself. Rather, this conversion, dilating the self beyond itself, brings about that cosmic consciousness in which one sees the human world "from above."[65] The

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

care of the self does not take the form of a pose or posture, of the fashioning of oneself into a dramatic character. To invoke Plotinus's formulation, it is, instead, the sculpting of oneself as a statue, the scraping away of what is superfluous and extraneous to oneself. The art of living required by the realization of the self is not compared, by Plotinus, to painting, which was considered an art of addition, but rather to sculpture, an art of taking away. Since the statue already exists in the block of marble, it is sufficient to take away what is superfluous in order to make the statue appear. So when Plotinus tells us that if we do not yet see our own beauty we should sculpt our own beautiful statue of ourselves, far from urging any estheticization of the self, he is enjoining a purification, an exercise that liberates us from our passions and that returns us to our self, ultimately identified by Plotinus with the One.[66] The beauty of this sculpting is not independent from the reality of the Good[67]; it is not an estheticization of morality, but a spiritual transfiguration in which we scrape away at ourselves, identifying with the Good beyond ourselves so that we can see our own beauty, that is, so that the "divine glory of virtue" will shine upon us.[68] So, as Plotinus maintains, "it is right to say that the soul's becoming something good and beautiful is its being made like to God."[69]

Although underlining the cosmic consciousness of the ancient sage, Hadot does acknowledge that the figure of the sage in ancient thought corresponds to a more acute consciousness of the self, of the personality, of interiority.[70] But the internal freedom recognized by all the philosophical schools, "this inexpungible core of the personality," is located in the faculty of judgment, not in some psychologically thick form of introspection.[71] When Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius distinguish between the things themselves and the judgments we form of those things, they are insisting on the fundamental distinction between that which depends on us (our judgments) and that which does not depend on us (the things themselves) in order to make us conscious of the power we have to be independent, to choose the judgments and representations we will have of things and not to be concerned with the things themselves.[72] Internal freedom of judgment leads to *autarkeia*, self-sufficiency, which assures the sage *ataraxia*, tranquility of the soul. The dimension of interiority in ancient thought, constituted by vigilance and attention to the self, by self-examination, and exertions of the will, memory, imagination

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and reason, is in service of a freedom to judge that will guarantee one the independence of wisdom.[73] It is an internal life ultimately concentrated around the sage or *daimón* in one, therefore allowing the philosopher to separate himself from passions and desires that do not depend on him. This is a kind of interiorization that aims at transcendence, and if Foucault's interpretation of ancient ethics seems sometimes to border on an estheticization of the self, Hadot's interpretation insists on the divinization of the self.

This is not the occasion on which to sketch further the history of ethics as the history of the self's relationship to itself, the history of ethics as ascetics. Foucault pointed to homosexual *askésis* and the homosexual style of life as exemplifications of this history. Hadot indicated that certain experiences of the modern artist partake of the cosmic consciousness of the ancient sage; as Klee wrote,

> His progress in the observation and the vision of nature makes him accede little by little to a philosophical vision of the universe that allows him freely to create abstract forms. . . . The artist thus creates works, or participates in the creation of works that are in the image of the work of God.[74]

If most of modern moral philosophy finds the idea of ethics as a spiritual exercise, to say the least, strange, it would be false to conclude that these ethical problematizations disappear from the history of philosophy after the ancients. The thematics that Stanley Cavell identifies as moral perfectionism constitutes one continuation of this history of ethics. When Cavell portrays Emersonian self-reliance as "the mode of the self's relation to itself"[75] or when he describes Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* as exhibiting, "as purely as any work I know, philosophizing as a spiritual struggle,"[76] he is working toward a conceptualization of ethics that shares with Foucault and Hadot the idea that what is at issue is not only a code of good conduct, but also a way of being that involves every aspect of one's soul.[77] And as Cavell follows out Emerson's remark in "History" ("So all that is said of the wise man by stoic or oriental or modern essayist, describes to each man his own idea, describes his unattained but attainable self"), he is pursuing the ancient conception of the sage or *daimón* in us, that self-reliance both within and beyond one's self.[78]

Paul Veyne described the Nietzschean *Übermensch* as the modernized version of the ancient sage.[79] If the *Übermensch* is such a

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

modernized version, obviously it is not identical with the ancient figure. But there are points of comparison so startling that it would be perverse to overlook them. Hadot's interpretation of ancient philosophy lays great emphasis on the representation of philosophy as an exercise and training for death and as a meditation upon death.[80] In his 1981–1982 course at the Collège de France, Foucault devoted detailed descriptions to those ancient "exercises of thought" known as *praemeditatio malorum*, meditation on future evils, and *melete thanatou*, meditation on or exercise for death.[81] He interpreted the latter as "a way of rendering death present in life," an exercise by which the sage effects spiritual transformation.[82] Such a dimension seems to me to capture precisely the force of Nietzche's introduction of the idea of the eternal recurrence in section 341 of *The Gay Science*. I quote this section in full:

> What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sign and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!"
>
> Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine." If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?[83]

How could one fail to see that this is a modern meditation that effects spiritual transformation; that is, problematizes one's way of life through a series of questions with ancient reverberations? This is from Seneca's fifty-ninth Letter:

> I shall now show you how you may know that you are not wise. The wise man is joyful, happy and calm, unshaken; he lives on a plane with the gods.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Now go, question yourself; if you are never downcast, if your mind is not harassed by any apprehension, through anticipations of what is to come, if day and night your soul keeps on its even and unswerving course, upright and content with itself, then you have attained to the greatest good that mortals can possess.[84]

If this thought gained possession of you, so Seneca believed, it would change you as you are.

In concentrating on questions of interpretation of ancient texts, I hope to have shown, first, that Foucault's conceptualization of ethics as the self's relation to itself does *not depend on* any modern understanding of subjectivity. Writing this history of ethics is part of writing a history of the self. Second, Foucault's conceptualization does not entail a narrowing of the domain of ethics, as if this history were threatened with a collapse into a history of the varieties of egoism. The demarcation of the self's relation to itself as the central arena of ethical problematization is inextricably tied to the theme of the proper way of life. The self's relation to itself manifests one's style of life, and the philosophical way of life forces a transformed relation to oneself. In his extraordinary interpretation of the *Apology, Crito*, and *Phaedo* in his last lectures at the Collège de France, as well as in his 1983 seminar at the University of California at Berkeley, Foucault argued that Socratic *parrhésia*, the Socratic practice of truth-telling, is a specifically ethical practice and is distinguished from other kinds of truth-telling, and especially from political truth-telling, by its objective – to incite each person to occupy himself with himself. Thus the essential theme of ethical *parrhésia* is the care of the self.[85] It is evident when one listens to these lectures that Foucault wanted to link the theme of the care of the self to that of the peculiarly philosophical way of life, a link that, although perhaps not explicit, is present in his discussion of Socrates's last words in the *Phaedo*. Taking up Georges Dumézil's remarkable "Divertissement sur les dernières paroles de Socrate," Foucault follows Dumézil in arguing that one cannot interpret Socrates' last words – "Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius" – as acknowledging a debt to Asclepius (the god to whom the Greeks offered a sacrifice when a cure was at issue) for having cured Socrates of the illness that is life.[86] Despite this traditional and often-repeated interpretation, Dumézil and Foucault attempt to show that it is completely at odds with Socratic teaching

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to impute to Socrates the claim that life is an illness and that death thus cures us of life. But Asclepius is the god one thanks for a cure, and so, following a complicated philological and philosophical path that I will not attempt to reconstruct here, Dumézil and Foucault argue that the illness that Socrates is cured of is that corruption of the soul that results from following the general, ordinary opinion of mankind. Socrates is not concerned with the opinion of the masses, appealed to in the *Crito* in an attempt to convince him to escape from prison; he is rather concerned with himself and with his own relation to truth, and he has courageously learned to free himself from the soul-sickness of common opinion.[87] Socrates' ethical *parrhésia*, divorced from the opinion of the public, is his style of life. It is this style of life that he ceaselessly presents to others, for which others put him to death. Foucault says that it is the principle of concerning oneself with oneself that Socrates bequeaths to others[88]; he might have equally underscored the figure of Socrates that endures for us as a constantly irritating and inspiring reminder of the philosophical way of life. Socrates reminds us of nothing less than the fact that, for the practitioners of ancient philosophy, philosophy itself was a way of life.[89] Ethical problems were not resolved by producing a list of required, permitted, and forbidden actions, but were centered around one's attitude to oneself, and so to others and the world – one's style of living.

In his last writings Foucault expressed concern that the ancient principle "Know thyself" had obscured, at least for us moderns, the similarly ancient requirement that we occupy ourselves with ourselves, that we care for ourselves. He insisted that we not forget that the demand to know oneself was "regularly associated with the theme of the care of the self."[90] It is in this spirit that I have urged that the care of the self must itself be placed in the context of a style of life, that in order to make sense of the care of the self we must widen our vision to include the style of life that gives form and direction to the self's relation to itself. Classical Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman thought, early Christianity, and even the Old Testament[91] all prescribe the care of the self; but the styles of life in which this care is embedded are so different that it affects the notion of care, the notion of the self, and the notions of how and why we are to bear this relation of care to ourselves. One of the great virtues of ancient

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

thought is that knowledge of oneself, care of oneself, and one's style of life are everywhere so woven together that one cannot, without distortion, isolate any of these issues from the entire philosophical thematics of which they form part. If we ignore these dimensions of the moral life, we shall be able to do justice to neither history nor philosophy. And, without doubt worse, we shall not be able to take account of ourselves, of who we have become, of how we might become different.

NOTES

1 My understanding of these unpublished volumes is derived both from remarks made by Foucault in volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality* and from conversations with him in 1976 just after the publication of that volume.
2 Arnold I. Davidson, "Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 221–234.
3 Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 26–32. See also "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 340–372.
4 Michel Foucault, "Subjectivité et verité, 1980–81," in *Résumé des cours, 1970–1982* (Paris: Julliard, 1989), 134–135.
5 Ibid., 135–136.
6 The quoted phrase is from Foucault, "Subjectivité," 134.
7 Paul Veyne, "The Final Foucault and His Ethics," *Critical Inquiry* 20:1 (Autumn 1993), 7.
8 Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 41.
9 Ibid., 64.
10 Ibid., 66.
11 Ibid., 66–67. The quotation from Seneca is from "Epistle XXIII," in Seneca, *The Epistles of Seneca* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1917).
12 Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 66. Pierre Hadot, "Refléxions sur la notion de 'culture de soi'," in *Michel Foucault, Philosophe* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), 262.
13 Hadot, *Michel Foucault*, 262.
14 Hadot, *Michel Foucault*, 263, and Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique, Deuxième édition revue et augmentée* (Paris: Êtudes Augustiniennes, 1987), 218–219, 231.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

15 Hadot, "Refléxions," 263. See also Pierre Hadot, "Le Sage et le monde," in *Le Temps de la refléxion*, vol. X (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 176–177.
16 Hadot, "Refléxions," 267.
17 Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, 232.
18 Michel Foucault, "L'herméneutique du sujet, 1981–82'," in *Résumé des cours, 1970–1982* (Paris: Julliard, 1989), 145–149.
19 On the notion of the dilation of the self, see Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, 231.
20 Hadot, "Refléxions," 267. See also Hadot, "Le Sage et le monde," 176.
21 Ibid., 267.
22 For Foucault's discussion of Baudelaire and dandyism, see "What Is Enlightenment?," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 39–42.
23 I do think that Hadot's interpretation of these ancient texts is the historically accurate interpretation. Foucault's interpretations are, I believe, motivated, at least in part, by his specific interest in the history of the present, by, for example, his interest in the notion of homosexual *askésis* (which I discuss later in this essay) and by his insistence, in discussing dandyism in "What Is Enlightenment?" (41–42), on linking the ascetic and the aesthetic. For Hadot the relation between beauty and moral value, or the good, is quite different (*Exercices spirituels*, 231). As Hadot recognizes, what is ultimately at stake is not just differences of interpretation but basic philosophical choices ("Refléxions," 261).
24 Arnold I. Davidson, "Spiritual Exercises and Ancient Philosophy: An Introduction to Pierre Hadot," *Critical Inquiry* 16:3 (Spring 1990).
25 Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, 218. For more discussion, see my "Spiritual Exercises."
26 Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 9.
27 Ibid.
28 In what follows, I say nothing about the Wittgensteinian idea (which is distinct from that of a way of life and a style of life) of forms of life. My understanding of the latter idea follows Stanley Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Living Batch Press, 1989), 40–52.
29 Pierre Hadot, "Forms of Life and Forms of Discourse in Ancient Philosophy," *Critical Inquiry* 16:3 (Spring 1990), 491–492.
30 Hadot, *Exercices spirituel*s, chapter 2.
31 Ibid., 51–52, 57, 225. For more discussion of this point, see my "Spiritual Exercises," 477–478.
32 Hadot, "Forms of Life," 495.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

33 Foucault, "L'herméneutique du sujet," 148–149.
34 Michel Foucault, "The Concern for Truth," in *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966–84)* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 302.
35 Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," in *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966–84)* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 206.
36 Ibid., 206–207.
37 Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 50.
38 Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," 205–207; "Sexual Choice, Sexual Act," in *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966–84)* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 228; and "Michel Foucault. An Interview: Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity," *Advocate*, August 7, 1984, 27.
39 Michel Foucault, "Michel Foucault. Le gai savoir," in *Mec Magazine* (June 1988), 34. See also "Michel Foucault. An Interview."
40 Foucault, "Michel Foucault. An Interview."
41 Foucault, "Sexual Choice, Sexual Act," 228.
42 Discussions with Pierre Hadot have made it clear to me that my claims here depend on the view, which I believe was Foucault's view, that homosexuality, as he wanted to understand it, could involve a style of life in the sense of a philosophical ethics. It is such an understanding that allows one to link ancient philosophical *askésis* and contemporary homosexual *askésis*.
43 The notion of the history of the present appears at the end of chapter 1 of Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
44 Jean-Pierre Vernant, "The Individual within the City-State," in *Mortals and Immortals, Collected Essays*, Froma I. Zeitlin, ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 321.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 332. See Arnaldo Momigliano, "Marcel Mauss e il problema della persona nella biografia greca," in *Ottavo contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1987). For related issues, see Paul Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
49 Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Psuché: Simulacrum of the Body or Image of the Divine," in Froma I. Zeitlin, ed., *Mortals and Immortals, Collected Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991). The quotation is from 190.
50 Vernant, "Individual within the City-State," 330.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 328–329, 332.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

53 The first quotation is from Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 42. The second quotation is from Vernant, "Psuché," 192.
54 Pierre Hadot, *Titres et Travaux de Pierre Hadot* (Paris: Collège de France), 28.
55 Pierre Hadot, "Le figure du sage dans l'Antiquité gréco-latine," in Gilbert Gadoffre, ed., *Les sagesses du monde* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1991), 13.
56 Paul Veyne, "La medication interminable," in Seneca, *De la tranquilité de l'âme* (Paris: Editions Rivages, 1988), 56.
57 Cited by Hadot in "La figure du sage," 13.
58 Ibid., 11.
59 Ibid., 18, 12.
60 I shall not take up here the complicated question of the precise relation between the ideas of the *daimón* and the sage. Each of them corresponds, in a certain way, to a transcendent norm. But the *daimón*, which derives from religious psychology, is perceived as an active presence in the soul, whereas the sage is conceived of as an almost inaccessible ideal that orients and guides one's life. I am indebted to Pierre Hadot for discussion on this point. See Hadot, "*Exercices spirituels*," 102–103, 105–106; *La Citadelle intérieure Introduction aux "Pensées" de Marc Aurèle* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 92–93, 139–141, 176–177; and "La figure du sage," especially 20.
61 See also Seneca, "Epistle XLI" and "Epistle CXXIV," in *The Epistles of Seneca*.
62 Seneca, "Epistle LIX," in *The Epistles of Seneca*. The quotation is from 417.
63 The first quotation is from "Epistle XXIII," in *The Epistles of Seneca*, 161; the second quotation is from "Epistle LIX," in *The Epistles of Seneca*, 417. See also "Epistle XLI," in *The Epistles of Seneca*.
64 Hadot, "La figure du sage," 20.
65 See Pierre Hadot, "La terre vue d'en haut et le voyage cosmique. Le point de vue du poète, du philosophe et de l'historien," in J. Schneider and M. Léger-Orine, eds., *Frontiers and Space Conquest* (Netherlands: Kluwer, 1988); "Histoire de la pensée hellenistique et romaine: La physique comme exercise spirituel et le regard d'en haut," in *Annuaire du Collège de France, 1987–1988: Resumé des cours et travaux* (Paris: Collège de France, 1988); and *La Citadelle intérieure*, 188–193.
66 Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, 46–47, 48–49. The relevant text of Plotinus is *Ennead* I, 6, 9. I discuss this passage and Hadot's interpretation of it at length in my introduction to Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). See also Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Psuché," 192.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

67 Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, 231.
68 Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966); *Ennead*, I, 6, 9, 259.
69 Plotinus, *Ennead*, I, 6, 6, 251.
70 Hadot, "La figure du sage," 19–20.
71 Ibid., p. 19. See also Pierre Hadot, "Histoire de la pensée hellenistique et romaine: Interiorité et liberté chez Marc Aurèle," in *Annuaire du Collège de France, 1989–90: Resumé des cours et travaux* (Paris: Collège de France, 1990).
72 See, for example, Epictetus, *Manual*, 5, and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, XI, 16.
73 Hadot, "La figure du sage," 19–20.
74 Hadot, "Le sage et le monde," 181.
75 Stanley Cavell, "Thinking of Emerson," in *The Senses of Walden* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981), 134.
76 Stanley Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America*, 37.
77 Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 28–32; Hadot, *Exercices spirituals*, 13–14, 59–60. I bring together Cavell's and Hadot's work in "La découverte de Thoreau et d'Emerson par Stanley Cavell ou les exercices spirituels de la philosophie," in *Lire Cavell*, Sandra Laugier, ed. (Paris: Éditions de l'éclat, forthcoming).
78 Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome. The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 8–10.
79 Paul Veyne, "La medication interminable," 27.
80 Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, 37–47; "Forms of Life," 494–495.
81 Foucault, "L'herméneutique du sujet," 160–166.
82 Ibid., 164.
83 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage, 1974), 273–274. I am indebted to Jim Conant for discussion of this point.
84 Seneca, "Epistle LIX," in *Epistles of Seneca*, 419.
85 Foucault's seminar at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1983 was on the theme of *parrhésia*. His 1984 lectures at the Collège de France were also on this theme. In my characterization here, I follow Foucault's lecture of February 15, 1984, at the Collège de France.
86 Georges Dumézil, "Divertissement sur les dernières paroles de Socrate," in "*. . . Le Moyne noir en gris dedans Varennes*" (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 00–00; Foucault, Lecture of February 15, 1984, Collège de France. See also Eliane Allo's conversation with Dumézil, "Entretien avec Georges Dumézil à propos de l'interprétation de Michel Foucault, juin 1985," in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 61 (March 1986). The text from Plato's *Phaedo* occurs at 118.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

87 For a brief statement of Dumézil's interpretation, see Eliane Allo, "Entretien avec Georges Dumézil," 87. Foucault discusses the relevant texts at length in his lectures of February 15, February 22, and February 29, 1984, Collège de France.
88 This remark occurs at the end of Foucault's lecture, February 15, 1984, Collège de France.
89 On this topic, see Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, chapter 3.
90 Foucault, "L'herméneutique du sujet," 145. On the history of the theme "know thyself," see Pierre Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même; de Socrate à saint Bernard* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974–1975).
91 Among the Old Testament texts I have in mind is Deuteronomy 4:9.

I am indebted to Diane Brentari, Stanley Cavell, Jim Conant, Jan Goldstein, Pierre Hadot, and David Halperin for comments on and discussions of earlier versions of this paper. This essay is dedicated to Pierre Hadot on his seventieth birthday.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

6 Michel Foucault's Ethical Imagination

An ethics textbook aimed at university-level students, in listing the presuppositions of any ethical system, begins, "Singular moral judgments are never merely singular." By their very nature moral judgments are implicitly universalizable, and only "a peculiar kind of irrationality" that "has come to infect contemporary thinking" could allow one to dispute this self-evident truth.[1] Aristotle was mystified by those who claimed that a characteristic function could be found for an eye, a hand, a foot, a carpenter, or a tanner, but that none could be found for human beings in general. An ethical principle, according to Kant, must be universally applicable if it is to be considered as having any validity whatsoever.

Foucault, however, disconcerts. By claiming that there are no universally applicable principles, no normative standards, "no order of human life, or way we are, or human nature, that one can appeal to in order to judge or evaluate between ways of life," Foucault, according to Charles Taylor, relinquishes any critical power that his historical analyses might have.[2] Without such a "normative yardstick," according to Jürgen Habermas, Foucault's historical analyses cannot be genuinely critical.[3] Indeed, Foucault's skepticism with regard to the notions of universal human nature or universal rationality is clear. He associates universal human nature with the Enlightenment doctrine of humanism, which provides a vision of the human essence with which men and women are expected to conform, thus offering a universal criterion of moral judgment. Humanism, however, has been so diverse in history that it fails to provide such a universal, or even a coherent, doctrine for philosophical analysis: Christianity, the critique of Christianity, science, anti-science, Marxism, existentialism, personalism, National Socialism, and Stalinism have each worn

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the label "humanism" for a time. Enlightenment humanism borrows its conception of the human from religion, science, or politics, and imposes it upon all men and women, but this conception is tainted by the parochialism of its source. Foucault offers no alternative and refuses any surrogate, as Ian Hacking ironically phrased it, "for whatever it is that springs eternal in the human breast."[4] Each of these "humanisms," moreover, was intertwined with a distinctive type of rationality. "[I]t was on the basis of the flamboyant rationality of social Darwinism," for example, "that racism was formulated, becoming one of the most enduring and powerful ingredients of Nazism. This was, of course, an irrationality, but an irrationality that was at the same time, after all, a certain form of rationality."[5] Although he recognizes the necessity and indispensability of rationality, Foucault, with Kant, wants to analyze its limits, dangers, and historical effects: "How can we exist as rational beings, fortunately committed to practicing a rationality that is unfortunately crisscrossed by intrinsic dangers?" In opposition to any universal system of ethics founded on humanism or a monolithic conception of rationality, Foucault boldly proclaims that the quest for a morality to which everyone must submit would be "catastrophic."[6] But even though he questions humanism and rationality, Foucault never abandons ethical inquiry. Only through such an inquiry can we appreciate the contingency and inadequacy of our modern moral identity. Only through such an inquiry will the emancipatory resources of our specific historical situation be excavated.

The explicit ethical voice that sounds in Foucault's last writings possesses new accents, but his moral interest is certainly not novel.[7] In one of his earliest works, a meditation on the psychoanalytic theory of Ludwig Binswanger, Foucault claimed that dreams reveal "radical liberty" as the human essence, the matrix within which self and world, subject and object, appear. This experience of the dream is inseparable from its ethical content, "not because it may release the whole flock of instincts," but because it "restores the movement of freedom in its authentic meaning, showing how it establishes itself or alienates itself, how it constitutes itself as radical responsibility in the world, or how it forgets itself and abandons itself to its plunge into causality."[8] Psychology's proper goal, according to Foucault, is the person's victory over whatever alienates him or her from the reality of liberty, which the human person is essentially, over whatever

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

alienates him or her from the historical drama that is the stage for human fulfillment.[9] In the light of his later examination of power–knowledge relations, Foucault corrected his description of the human person as radical liberty because a person "does not begin with liberty but with the limit."[10] A recognition of the limit, however, need not entail the abandonment of ethics; the encounter with the limit creates the opportunity for its transgression.

It would have to be a very critical transgression, for Foucault's ensuing work is a fierce criticism of the modern myths of and routes for the achievement of freedom: the liberation of the mentally ill in the asylum, the march of enlightenment in the human sciences, the reform of the imprisoned in the penitentiary, the liberation of the self in the overcoming of sexual repressions. In each of these movements of emancipation, Foucault discovered a process that he came to call "normalization," a narrowing and impoverishment of human possibilities. Although a primary effect of the institutions he analyzed throughout his writings is the social exclusion of certain individuals in asylums, prisons, and categories of deviance, the primary end of these institutions is to bind men and women to an apparatus of normalization.[11] The purpose of Foucault's genealogical analyses was to reveal that, despite their apparent necessity and naturalness, these institutions arose from quite contingent historical circumstances. He showed that they are not the only possible ways of dealing with social conflict, and opened the possibility of new modes of human interaction.

Although Foucault's passion for freedom in his last works, then, is not novel, it does speak with a new accent. In these last works on the history of sexuality he probes a new axis of intellectual responsibility: in addition to the domains of power–knowledge relations, he excavates a specific axis of the relationship to oneself, the ways we fashion our subjectivity. He recognizes techniques for an even deeper penetration of normalization and greater possibilities for transgression of these limits. This axis of subjectivity refers to the set of practices we perform on ourselves, and for Foucault ethics is essentially a mode of self-formation, the way we fashion our freedom. Ethics is the

> process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself.[12]

Within this dense formulation is Foucault's vision of ethical practice and its contrast with any ethics that would define itself as an abstract normative code or customary conduct. This view led him to ask new questions of himself and of the cultures he studied. How have individuals been invited or incited to apply techniques to themselves that enable them to recognize themselves as ethical subjects? What aspect of oneself or one's behavior is relevant for ethical attention and judgment (the ethical substance)? Under what rule of conduct do people subject themselves, and how do they establish their relationship with this rule (the mode of subjection)? In what type of activities do people engage in order to form themselves, to moderate their behavior, to decipher what they are, to eradicate their desires (the ascetics)? What type of being is one attempting to become by means of these ascetical practices (the telos)?[13]

Two moments are operative in Foucault's genealogies. The first critical moment is a historical questioning of our existence, a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. Second, genealogy separates out, from the contingent circumstances that have made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. Corresponding to these two genealogical moments, this essay has two specific objectives: first, to understand how Foucault's exploration of the ethical aimed to undermine contemporary power–knowledge–subjectivity relations and why it aspired to be a political ethic; second, to appreciate the fundamental structure of his positive ethic of self-formation. Before turning to these, however, we will examine the immediate context for Foucault's turn to the subject and ethical life.

The specific focus of Foucault's ethical concern is comprehensible only in the context of his project for the history of sexuality, but he was also motivated by two events in the political realm. The first was the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979. When he was criticized for his initial sympathetic analysis of the revolution, Foucault refused to dismiss the moral achievement of those who made the revolution

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

when it resulted in new political repression. He spoke of his ethics as "anti-strategic," as irreducible to the question of political success.[14] This acknowledgment of the specifically ethical was strengthened by his support of the Solidarity movement in Poland, where he had lived in 1958. When the movement was temporarily suppressed in 1982, Foucault was critical of the passive response made by Western governments. Although he recognized that military action was unacceptable, Foucault called for a clear attitude of protest, of ethical rejection that could itself become a political force.[15]

This orientation to an explicitly ethical perspective was decisively determined by his study of the Christian experience of sexuality, which he took up as part of his history of sexuality. Foucault's original 1976 plan for the series of additional volumes that was to make up the history opened with a volume, *Flesh and Body*, that was to present the establishment in Christianity of a sexuality centered on the notion of "flesh" as opposed to the modem understanding of the body. Although he never published the volume on Christian sexuality, the interpretation of Christian experience, as he worked it out in his courses, lectures, and articles, led him to a close interrogation of subjectivity.[16] Early Christian writers put forward a program that embraced not only relations of power and knowledge, but also subtle relations of oneself to oneself. Since desires became the ethical substance for the Christian, that dimension of the self most relevant for ethical concern, the Christian was required to decipher these desires, to exercise a "permanent hermeneutics of oneself" demanding "very strict truth obligations."[17] More than merely knowing the truth of the moral life, the Christian needed to scrutinize himself or herself constantly as a desiring subject. In the monasteries of the fourth and fifth centuries, rigorous techniques of self-examination had been invented in response to this need: "Detailed techniques were elaborated for use in seminaries and monasteries, techniques of discursive rendition of daily life, of self-examination, confession, direction of conscience and regulation of the relationship between director and directed."[18] This self-surveillance, once reserved for monks, permeated Christian society as a whole by the sixteenth century. The importance Christianity accorded to this "pastoral power," this permanent concern with the total well-being of religious subjects, emphasized obedience as a paramount virtue and, thus, generated a struggle with one's desires, with oneself. This obedience

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

was pledged, however, on the basis of a pastoral knowledge of oneself that was made up of each person's specific truths. Christianity encouraged a search for the truth of one's self, and this search was served by sophisticated practices of examination of conscience and confession.

These practices produced a unique form of subjectivization in the human being. The self is constituted as a hermeneutical reality, as an obscure text requiring permanent decipherment. Paradoxically, however, the purpose of the hermeneutic was to facilitate the renunciation of the self who had been deciphered. At the heart of religious life was the spirit of mortification, a unique ascetical relation to the self. Foucault's reading of the Christian experience of subjectivity and its embeddedness in power–knowledge relations prepared him for the realization that, in the modern period, no political issue is more significant than how the person is defined and how one's relationship to one's self is organized.

FOUCAULT'S POLITICAL ETHIC

Foucault planned his multivolume history of sexuality as an investigation of modern bio-politics, which he designated as those forces that "brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge–power an agent of transformation of human life."[19] Sexuality was the crucial field of operation for this bio-politics because it was located at the pivot of the two axes along which Foucault saw the power over life developing: access to both the individual and the social bodies. The most striking example he gives of how this power operated on an individual's life was Herculine Barbin, a nineteenth-century hermaphrodite. Born and baptized in 1838, Barbin was raised and lived as a girl for the next twenty years. Because of the development in her time of new and precise categories of a single, true sexual identity, a civil court intervened in her life and declared a change of gender status and name: On June 22, 1860, Mademoiselle Herculine became Monsieur Abel. Her neighbors were shocked by the transformation of their schoolmistress, and local newspapers published sensational reports; but in general people sympathized with Barbin, for, as the newspapers pointed out, she had "lived piously and modestly until today in ignorance of herself."[20] The sympathy failed to sustain Barbin.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Eight years later he/she committed suicide, the victim, according to Foucault, of a new passion for the truth of sexual identity.

This passion presented a modern transformation of the Christian experience. Political treatises of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries tended to emphasize the immanence of the art of government; that is, governing political society is a pastoral matter, analogous to and continuous with the caring for "a household, souls, children, a province, a convent, a religious order, or a family."[21] This pastoral power

> is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce oeconomy, that is the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children and servants) and of making it thrive – how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father toward his family, into the management of the State.[22]

Later, in the eighteenth century, Rousseau advises introducing techniques for governing families into the art of state government, establishing "a form of surveillance, of control, which is as watchful as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods."[23]

Although pastoral power's aims may have become secular, the effect of its modern version is to fashion a type of individuality with which one's desire is incited to identify. Foucault articulates a political ethic in response to this modern operation. In addition to resistance against forms of domination and exploitation, a political ethic necessarily entails combat with a pastoral power that "categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize," and that "makes individuals subjects." Because of the pastoral functioning of state power, present political struggles must

> revolve around the question: Who are we? They are a refusal of these abstractions, of economic and ideological state violence that ignores who we are individually, and also a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is.

If one side of this resistance is to "refuse what we are," the other side is to invent, not discover, who we are by promoting "new forms of subjectivity."[24]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

As a result of this conception of the political struggle as a "politics of ourselves," the ethical perspective becomes central to Foucault's last work: How should one develop a form of subjectivity that could be the source of effective resistance to a widespread type of power? This is why he is able to speak of his final concerns in terms of "politics as an ethics."[25] The practice of a politically effective ethics requires as its prelude a defamiliarization of the "desiring man" who lies at the root of our willingness to identify with the form of subjectivity constructed for us in the modern period. This requires a genealogy of the modern subject, a historical analysis of the emergence of this form of subjectivity, in order to achieve a critical distance from our sedimented self-understanding. Genealogy reveals the contingency, even arbitrariness, of our apparently natural and necessary understanding of ourselves. A central enterprise of the second and third volumes in Foucault's history of sexuality, then, is to "investigate how individuals were led to practice, on themselves and on others, a hermeneutics of desire."[26] Such a genealogy constitutes a "historical ontology of ourselves," an investigation of how we have been fashioned and have fashioned ourselves as ethical subjects. Although ethics is the domain of such an analysis, its aim is to provoke and sustain a form of resistance to newly recognized political forces.[27]

The significance and form of Foucault's genealogy of the subject of desire are best grasped if understood as a contribution to his "archaeology of psychoanalysis," the objective of which is to undermine modern anthropology and the notion of the self that is one of its firmest supports and expressions.[28] Freud offers the model of this notion of the self and thus is the principal target of Foucault's attempt to render the self freshly problematic. Taking Foucault's consideration of Sophocles's *Oedipus* as a clue, we can see how his history of the subject of desire is the last campaign in his subversion of the psychoanalytic vision of the person.

Freud's interpretation of the tragedy of Oedipus is familiar, Oedipus's search for the truth "can be likened to the work of a psychoanalysis." He relentlessly pursues the truth of his identity, which is hidden far from his conscious awareness and shows itself tied to the dimension of desire and sexuality. The story possesses perennial appeal because we recognize ourselves in Oedipus. As Freud points out, "His destiny moves us – because the oracle laid the same curse

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

upon us before our birth as upon him."[29] Perhaps the story attracted Foucault's attention because it portrays the major concerns of his own work: an examination of the branches of knowledge that constitute us as knowable beings and that offer us routes in our quest for self-knowledge; an analysis of the power relations generated by these branches of knowledge and the systems of dependence to which we subject ourselves in our search for the truth about ourselves; a study of how our subjectivity became intertwined with sexuality, how the truth of our sexuality became the hallmark of our true selves. In Foucault's earlier writings, especially *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things*, the archaeology of psychoanalysis involved an identification of its power–knowledge relations, especially its dependence upon a medical model and its notion of the unconscious. In the first volume of his history of sexuality, the archaeology of psychoanalysis entailed a critique of the role psychoanalysis plays in the modern deployment of sexuality. Foucault's genealogy of the subject of desire, finally, excavates Freudian thought and the types of relationships of the self to the self operative there.

The Oedipal triangle of father–mother–son, according to Freud, is the dominant metaphor for understanding oneself and is, according to Foucault, the psychoanalyst's key instrument for governing individuals. The story of Oedipus, for Foucault, is not essentially a deep truth about ourselves, "but an instrument of limitation and compulsion that psychoanalysts, since Freud, utilize in order to calculate desire and to make it enter into a familial structure which our society defined at a determined moment." Rather than the deeply hidden content of the unconscious, as Freud would have it, Oedipus is "the form of compulsion which psychoanalysis wants to impose on our desire and our unconscious." Rather than the fundamental structure of human existence, as Freud maintains, Oedipus is an instrument of power, "a certain type of constraint, a relation of power which society, the family, political power establishes over individuals."[30] This is not a distortion of the psychiatric establishment's role; from the very beginning, psychiatry's "true vocation," "its climate," "its horizon of birth," "its fundamental project," has been to be "a permanent function of social order."[31] Rooted in early Christian confessional practices, psychoanalysis is our modern theory and practice, and continues to fortify the priority of the subject established in Western thought since Descartes.[32]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The logic of sex is the key to personal identity in our time. Our sexuality reveals us to ourselves, and our desire to have this secret self-knowledge revealed drives us to engage in discourse on our sexuality. How else can we explain the fact that modern men and women "would purchase so dearly the bi-weekly right to laboriously formulate the truth of their desire, and to wait patiently for the benefits of the interpretation?"[33] An immense strategy for producing truth has been constituted around sexuality: "We demand that sex speak the truth . . . and we demand that it tell us our truth, or rather, the deeply buried truth of that truth about ourselves which we think we possess in our immediate consciousness."[34] Two ideas intersect in our time, according to Foucault: "that we must not deceive ourselves concerning our sex, and that our sex harbors what is most true in ourselves"; and at this intersection "psychoanalysis has rooted its cultural vigor."[35]

The greatest support for the psychoanalytic project as a normative discipline is the notion that sexuality is the index of one's subjectivity, of one's true self. The capacity of sexual desire to become the most revealing sign of our truest, deepest selves depends upon a long historical formation through which we were constituted as subjects in a special relation to truth and sex. Traditional Christian confessional practices were reconstituted in scientific terms. Psychoanalysis developed from the institutionalized confessional procedures of the time of the Inquisition and brought about a "medicalisation of sexuality . . . , as though it were an area of particular pathological fragility in human existence."[36] Postulated as the cause of numerous maladies, sex was subjected to interrogation whose full truth required authoritative interpretation: "Spoken in time, to the proper party, and by the person who was both the bearer of it and the one responsible for it, the truth healed."[37] This modern medical management of sexuality resides "at the heart of the society of normalization."[38]

Whereas the historical fusion of subjectivity, sexuality, and truth is a legacy of Christian experience, that experience was the last of three moments in early Western culture's constitution of this kinship. Foucault's final two volumes in the history of sexuality study the first two moments in the constitution of Western subjectivity, the cultures of Classical Greece and the later Graeco-Roman period. The initial interrogation of the subject of desire grew from

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the soil of Greek ethics. The central problematic of this pre-Platonic ethic was the proper use of pleasures so that one could achieve the mastery over oneself that made one fit to be a free citizen worthy to exercise authority over others. Plato's examination of this question turned it into an ontological consideration of desire itself and its objects, and thus opened an inquiry into desiring man that would lead in time to the Christian hermeneutics of the self. Foucault briefly examines the transition to the latter in the third volume, discussing the formation of a culture of the self in the reflections of the moralists, philosophers, and doctors in the first two centuries of our era. Christianity brought this culture of the self to an integration that then became a partial model for the modern quest for self-knowledge.

Freud's interpretation of the Oedipus myth exemplifies this model of self-knowledge. Although he solved the riddle of the Sphinx with the answer "man," Oedipus remained ignorant of his own identity. This ignorance could be erased, however, for a knowledge exists that could reveal him to himself once he took responsibility to seek his secret self and to become subject to a master of truth. In our modern culture the program for self-knowledge, embraced as a vehicle for discovering one's uniqueness, merely reenacts power–knowledge–subjectivity relations. The quest for freedom is diverted into a series of illusory liberations from repression. Along with its appropriation of an earlier technology of the self that includes rigorous self-examination and confession, the modern age also fundamentally changed the relation to the subject that that earlier age produced. For Christians the truth of the self was always precarious because it always depended on the soul's continual struggle with the evil within it. There could be no firm allegiance to a positive self because there was no truth about the self that could not be used as a device for misleading the soul. Modern knowledge and technologies of the self aim, however, to foster the emergence of a positive self; one recognizes and attaches oneself to a self presented through the normative categories of psychological and psychoanalytic science and through the normative disciplines consistent with them. Thus, like Oedipus, we become victims of our own self-knowledge. For Foucault, this is an event of supreme political importance because this victimization fashions the potentially transgressive dimension of the person into yet another element of the disciplinary matrix that *Discipline and Punish* described as the carceral archipelago. If the struggle with this

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

modern power–knowledge–subjectivity formation is a politics of our selves, the key campaign in that struggle will be a new mode of fashioning an ethical way of being a self.

FOUCAULT'S ETHICS OF FREEDOM FROM THE MODERN SELF

The task of self-formation that Foucault proposes has a specificity that reflects his commitments as an intellectual. He seeks to develop not a normative ethics applicable to all, but a particular style that emerges from his personal history of freedom and thought.[39] Even though his ethics extracts significant elements from both classical and Christian moralities, this recourse represents neither an idealization nor a return to the premodern. The elements he derives from earlier periods are integrated into a uniquely personal context, Foucault's effort to articulate himself as a moral thinker. Foucault's ethics is the practice of an intellectual freedom that is transgressive of modern knowledge–power–subjectivity relations. He embraced Kant's definition of Enlightenment as an *Ausgang*, an exit or way out, because it corresponded to the central concern of his own work, the need to escape those prisons of thought and action that shape our politics, our ethics, our relations to ourselves.[40] Embracing a transgressive experiment beyond Kant, his last writings declare the need to escape our inherited relation to the self, a declaration that complements and intensifies his earlier announcement of the "death of man." "What can be the ethic of an intellectual – I accept the title of intellectual which seems at present to nauseate some people – if not that: to render oneself permanently capable of getting free of oneself?" A special curiosity motivates his final works, the curiosity that "enables one to get free of oneself."[41] How is this desire to be understood?

It emerges largely as Foucault's response to reading Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot. Both saw that Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God did not provide a "mandate for a redefinition of man," but rather revealed the absence of absolute boundaries. A morality after the death of God, according to Bataille, is one

> not centered on the guarantee of social and individual life given us by the "main precepts" but on mystical passion leading man to die to himself

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

in order to inherit eternal life. What it condemns is the dragging weight of attachment to the self, in the guise of pride and mediocrity and self-satisfaction.[42]

"The man-subject, the subject of his own freedom, conscious of his own freedom, is at bottom a sort of image correlative to God," Foucault argued in an exchange with Jean-Paul Sartre. "There has been a sort of theologization of man, the redescent of God on earth which in some fashion made the man of the nineteenth century theologized."[43] The death of man calls forth a similar mystical passion, a transgression of the self that seeks to establish itself as the ultimate reality in place of an Absent Absolute. Sartre tried to avoid reliance upon any positive conception of the self, but by introducing the notion of authenticity with its moral connotations, he affirmed the requirement to conform with some notion of the true self. In place of Sartre's moral notion of authenticity, Foucault proposes the practice of creativity: "we have to create ourselves as a work of art."[44] Not to be confused with absolute emancipation, Foucault's ethics is thoroughly historically rooted; he subverts any otherworldly ideal of contemplative self-possession and insists that one's relation with the self be defined in terms of its movement within history. His ethics invites a series of critiques in the context of one's concrete historical circumstances and experimental transgressions of the self as these circumstances present it. The force of resistance, of revolt against modern power–knowledge–subjectivity relations, expresses Foucaultian spirituality:

It is through revolt that subjectivity (not that of great men but that of whomever) introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life. A delinquent puts his life into the balance against absurd punishments; a madman can no longer accept confinement and the forfeiture of his rights; a people refuses the regime which oppresses it.[45]

This breath of life manifests the human capacity to transcend any product of history that claims necessity.

To create oneself as a work of art requires an esthetics of existence, a task of stylization. Such expressions have been the source of grave misunderstandings of Foucault's ethics, misunderstandings that perceive him as railing for a return to a morality modeled on that of the ancient Greeks or, worse, as an invitation to an amoral

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

estheticism. Having elevated the quest for beauty over all other virtues, it is claimed, the "self rather than the world and its inhabitants becomes the central focus of aesthetic enhancement" for Foucault. Thus, "Foucault's standpoint favors either an attitude of narcissistic self-absorption or one of outwardly directed, aggressive self-aggrandizement."[46] The notion of stylization does remove ethics from the quest for universal standards of behavior that legislate conformity and normalization, reducing men and women to a mode of existence in accordance with a least common denominator. It focuses upon the dimension of freedom distinctive of an individual's place or role in life. The liberty to transgress modern power–knowledge–subjectivity relations differs for the philosopher, the head of state, and the bureaucrat, and an ethics of stylization invites one to engage in struggle according to one's unique rootedness in the world and history. Rather than promoting self-absorption, moreover, Foucault deprives the self of the illusion that it can separate itself from the world. Medical, economic, political, and erotic dimensions of life shape the moral experience of the self, as his last works show; thus, Foucault always presents his notion of self-formation as a struggle for freedom within the confines of a historical situation. The subject for Foucault is an "agonism," a "permanent provocation" to the knowledge–power–subjectivity relations presented to us.[47] This agonistic self is "not the decontextualized self of inwardness, but a self that becomes autonomous through a stylization of the concrete possibilities that present themselves to us."[48] Foucault's ethics is an invitation to a practice of liberty, to struggle and transgression, which seeks to open possibilities for new relations to self and events in the world.

What is the necessity of these new relations? What are the stakes? The crucial but overlooked final section of Foucault's first volume on the history of sexuality, "Right of Death and Power over Life," reveals how high the stakes are: "wars were never as bloody as they have been since the nineteenth century, and all things being equal, never did regimes visit such holocausts on their own populations." The motivating force behind Foucault's attempt to subvert the Freudian linkage of truth–sexuality–subjectivity is the prevalence of the corresponding Freudian tendency to understand human existence as a struggle of life against death, eros against thanatos. Our souls have been fashioned as mirrors of our modern political terrain in which

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

massacres are vital, in which there is a right to kill those who are perceived as representing a biological danger, in which political choice is governed by the sole option between survival or suicide.[49] Ethics for Foucault is a stylization, a mode of self-formation, that struggles against this perverse relation between life and death. In praise of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Foucault calls their work "a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time," and by ethics he means a stylization, "a life style, a way of thinking and living." The distinctiveness of Deleuze and Guattari's ethics of stylization at our peculiar juncture in history is to incite us to struggle against fascism – certainly fascism of the historical variety which so successfully moved so many, "but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us." As the Christian was provoked to drive sin from the soul, our distinctive task, our modern ethical task, is to "ferret out the fascism."[50] *Discipline and Punish* shows that philosophical thought must struggle with the power–knowledge relations that would transform the human soul and existence into a mechanism; Foucault's history of sexuality points to the ethical task of detaching ourselves from those forces that would subordinate human existence (the Greek *bios*, which Foucault employs) to biological life (the Greek *zoe*). An "esthetics of existence" resists a "science of life." To think human existence in esthetic categories releases it from the realm of scientific knowledge. It liberates us from endless self-decipherment and from subjecting ourselves to psychological norms. If psychology obliges human beings to decipher our truth in our sexuality, it is because psychology is rooted in biology and its identification of sexuality with life itself, thus binding us to the struggle with death. Modern biology's articulation of life in terms of the murderous laws of evolution engages our identity with our destiny of death. Human existence and civilization, since Freud, is essentially the contest of life against death (*Eros und Tod, Lebenstrieb und Destruktionstrieb*). Foucault's genealogy of the desiring subject is an act of transgression against the life and death struggle that bio-power has made the horizon of human existence.

Foucault's ethics, then, is not Nietzsche's "beyond good and evil," but is beyond life and death. Nor does it constitute a Nietzschean leap beyond common morality into a splendid isolation cut off from

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

ethical and political solidarity.[51] Foucault committed himself to the cause of human rights, to the transformation of the plight of prisoners, mental patients, and other victims in both his theory and his practice.[52] He identified with Pierre Rivière and Herculine Barbin, in whose memoirs "one feels, under words polished like stone, the relentlessness and the ruin."[53] His thought moved toward an ever-expanding embrace of otherness, the condition for any community of moral action. Foucault's last writings put forward an ethical interrogation, an impatience for liberty, for a freedom that does not surrender to the pursuit of some messianic future but is an engagement with the numberless potential transgressions of those forces that war against our self-creation. The commitment to that task will inaugurate new experiences of self and human solidarity, experiences that will renounce the ambition of any abstract principle to name itself the human essence.

FOUCAULT'S INTERROGATION OF RELIGION

Scholars in religious studies and theology are now among the most engaged in current discussion of Foucault's writings.[54] This religious interest in Foucault will only increase as his lectures at the Collège de France continue to be published and there is greater appreciation of his considerations of religious practices. Very diverse currents in his work have generated the interest theologians are showing. Jeremy Carrrette's *Foucault and Religion* is the most extensive effort both to identify sources for Foucault's notion of religion as well as to imagine what Foucault's texts do to traditional religious forms.[55] Those consequences are asserted in the volume's subtitle: *Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality*. In Carrette's reading, Foucault's theological effect is to subvert the traditional dualism between spirit and body and to reinsert the very practice of religion into the political field where the question of how people are to be governed is the perspective from which to examine particular religions. Another important study is J. Joyce Schuld's *Foucault, Augustine and the Hermeneutics of Fragility*.[56] According to Schuld, Foucault's anti-utopian critique of modern institutions and their vaunted benevolence is prefigured by Augustine's moral scrutiny of Roman historical experience and its ideology of imperial glory. Augustine and Foucault become partners in appreciating the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

consequences of human imperfection and the omnipresence of power relations. Their analyses of religion undermine any uncritical moral self-confidence and promote a far more humble form of political activism.

Thomas Flynn and Edward McGushin are fascinated by Foucault's discussion of spiritual practices in relationship to the theme of care of the self. They have studied Foucault's final portrayal of philosophy as a way of life that is, in fact, a caring for the self. This stress on the self-transformative function of philosophy is closer to a style of spiritual direction and thus quite alien to most current practices of philosophy in the academy.[57] Both John Caputo and Tom Beaudoin assert the richness of Foucault's critique of subjectivity for a spiritual existence that embraces finitude and self-renunciation.[58] Finally, it would be difficult to envision any academic group, let alone a theological one, appropriating Foucault while ignoring his writings on sexuality. Foucault certainly provides much challenging material for them. Quite apart from his series on the history of sexuality, the new project of publishing his course lectures at the Collège de France is revealing his examination of what he spoke of as Christianity's "moral physiology of the flesh" and its "making the body guilty through the flesh."[59] Mark Jordan has exhibited great creativity in utilizing Foucault. His focus is on the continuing power of religious rhetorics to script sexual identities – Virgin, Witch, Husband, Wife, Sodomite – on the very space of a discourse of modern sexuality. Could it be the case that the modern, presumably objective reading of sexual identities is, in fact, encoiled in a punishing web of sin and evil? That, for example, the identity "homosexual" might still carry the burden of a Biblical sodomite?[60]

Religion is not marginal to Foucault's work. Inasmuch as his project was a "history of the present," he is necessarily engaged in a religious analysis because the forms of knowledge, power, and subjectivity that he saw as animating our culture are often constructed in decisive ways in argument with religious practices and concerns. This mandated Foucault's scrutiny of religious writers and customs. In a 1975 lecture he mentioned the insight that would greatly shape his studies of the next decade: He indicated that what he wanted to consider is "what took place starting in the sixteenth century, that is to say, in a period that is not characterized by the beginning of de-Christianization, but rather, as a number of historians have

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

shown, by a phase of in-depth Christianization."[61] One of the most significant decisions Foucault took, and a major source of his thought's contemporary relevance for religion, was its double refusal: First, he rejected what he called the "blackmail of the Enlightenment," that either–or acceptance of it as some new rationality, liberated from the supposed superstitions of a religious past; second, he refused to regard modernity as an epoch that had supposedly and definitively moved beyond some dark age.[62] His history of the present came to ignore the customary epochal divisions and concluded that, between different historical eras, the "typography of the parting of the waters is hard to pin down."[63] He maintained that early modernity was not a tale of growing religious disbelief but, rather, saw the emergence of an energy that drove both the global missionary activities of European Christianity as well as a vast religious colonization of interior life. This colonization is what Foucault refers to in 1975 as a "Christianization-in-depth" or a "new Christianization"; the effect of this missionary effort was the "vast interiorization" of a Christian experience. The Foucauldian challenge to theology and religious studies is a more adequate mapping of that interiorization. Let us take one example, that of confessional practices, a theme that was so important for Foucault.

Some students of Foucault have been taken with his examination of confessional practice and how it might bring special insight to recent documentation emerging from the archives of the former Soviet Union, particularly on its relationship to some practices in Eastern Christianity. Central to that utilization is the distinction that Foucault stresses between two forms of Christian confession: first was *exomologesis*, which was a public confession of oneself as sinner. This was a status, "a mode of life," symbolic and theatrical; it was Christianity's ontological confession, and it had the "function of showing the truth of the state of being of the sinner." The second form is *exagoreusis*, the verbal confession in which the individual explores his or her interior geography of thoughts and desires in the presence of a director to whom obedience is owed. This is Christianity's epistemological confession, its hermeneutics of the self. Despite their differences, these two forms of confession possess an important trait in common: "The theme of self-renunciation is very important. Throughout Christianity there is a correlation between disclosure of the self, dramatic or verbalized, and the reunciation of the self."[64]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

It is claimed that there was a Soviet hermeneutics of the self in which confession and public penance were defining technologies. But Communist self-interrogation and self-fashioning were mutations of Eastern Christianity's practices, which were quite distinct from those of the West. For example, it has been shown that the Central Control Commissions of the Communist Party, which were so important for preserving its order and orthodoxy, imitated the functions of the ecclesiastical courts in the Russian Orthodox Church. These Commissions did not wish to punish but, rather, come to know the defendant and have the individual reveal his or her wrongdoing so that admonition and encouragement of a change of conduct would take place. If the wrong-doing continued, the court or commission would excommunicate from the Church or expel from the Party.[65] As a result of the show trials of the 1930s, the confessions of some of the non-Stalinist Bolsheviks may be among the most vivid of the memories that we still carry of Communism. For example, there was the plea for mercy of Nikolai Bukharin:

> The old Bukharin is dead; he no longer walks the earth. . . . What endure in me are my knowledge and my capabilities – the machine called my mind. The activity of this machine used to be criminal, but its mechanism is now wound the other way. . . . The sole justification for this request for forgiveness is my possible use to the Revolution. Give the new Bukharin, a second Bukharin, a chance to grow. Call the new Bukharin Petrov if you like; but know that this new man will be the exact antithesis of the man who is already dead. The new Bukharin is already born; allow him to work.[66]

Communism's project of creating new men, of becoming the best one could be, demanded membership in the Party. As part of the application to enter, it was usual to submit an autobiographical statement, and these had common features inasmuch as they were often guided by official questionnaires. The prospective member renounced the superstitions of a religious consciousness and denounced clerical exploitation of the poor.[67] There was also consideration of sexual conduct, for sexuality could show the antisocial side of men, especially among university students and urban dwellers. The perceived sexual "excess in the sprawling cities was a channeling of precious energies away from social work." It was bourgeois.[68] The most important element of these autobiographies was the conversion experience, the applicant's account of how the old bourgeois self was put aside

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and how one's Communist soul came to be fashioned and embraced. Among the terms for describing this conversion were "transformation," "transition," "remolding," "spiritual break," and "reversal in worldview."[69]

After 1936, however, the Soviet hermeneutics of the self had a new political context, with the result that there was a significant change in the form of self-presentation. It was in that year that Stalin promulgated a constitution that declared that the "foundation for classless society has already been laid" and that a new stage in the Soviet state's development had begun.[70] Because one now lived in a Socialist state, the point of autobiographical statements was to show that one had always been a Communist, a revolutionary from birth. Conversion stories fall away from personal accounts. "Whereas in the past autobiographers had drawn on a range of model selves, now there were two basic types: the good soul and the wicked soul."[71] Stalin's ideology determined which. This might be regarded as the ontological phase, to use Foucault's term, in the Communist hermeneutics of the self, and it certainly resembles Christianity's penitential form as distinct from the epistemological form of confession. Indeed, in Eastern Christianity, the experience of religious confession was very much subordinated to the penitential expression where the emphasis is on deeds and not an accounting of one's interior life.

The prominence of the penitential emerges from Russian monasticism's strong commitment to constant, mutual surveillance of the monks by the monks. Fraternal love is demonstrated by the monk's careful observance of his brothers, and Saint Basil the Great even compared those who refuse to denounce sinning brothers as equivalent to "fratricides." Eastern Orthodoxy's practice of horizontal surveillance among peers contrasts with the "hierarchial surveillance of subordinates by superiors that characterized the West."[72] It was this horizontal technology of the self that Soviet culture embraced and that gave birth to the special role of Kollectivs in that culture. The self-knowing that is privileged as a result of this disciplinary matrix is not the confession of one's desires and movements of soul but rather the clarity of grasping how one is regarded in the eyes of others. The Soviet individual did not take shape through analysis of private desire but rather by "submitting to consideration by the relevant group that reviewed his or her morality."[73]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

That individual's visibility is an inversion of the Panopticon's goal, for now the individual is seen by all, and these may see in every direction. "United together around the victim, single persons disappear; they become part of a physically invisible yet terrifying kollectiv. . . . There's nowhere to look for help, there's nowhere to run."[74] And once the Christian conviction that the sinner can always sincerely seek forgiveness is eliminated from this penitential form, then there is created the practices that defined Stalin's regime, a "technology of no mercy."[75]

In his very last lecture at the Collège de France, Foucault examined historical forms of Christian parrhesia, of speaking frankly, that would be antidotes to confessional speech. Although it was arguably less influential in the institutional history of Christianity than the ascetic tradition, Foucault appreciated that a parrhesiastic mystical pole has operated with power: It is the strength of a "confidence in God" that has subsisted, not without pain, in the margins of Christianity, as a resistance to that forced, ascetic self-disclosure in "obedience to, and in fear and trembling before God."[76] The little Foucault says of the mystical parrhesiastic pole is suggestive. He appreciated how parrhesia took on a unique feature in Christianity: not the political and moral virtues of the ancient pagan world, but rather the power of a courageous openness to mystery. This courage, especially as exhibited in the boldness of the preacher or martyr, was linked to the Christian conviction of God's decisive and full revelation in Jesus of Nazareth and the absolute security of faith in one's personal redemption. This radical openness, parrhesia as exposure to God and mystery, is unique to religion and never finds expression in secular Greek: "in the only passage in Isocrates where parrhesia appears in connection with the gods, it is given the unfavourable meaning of 'blasphemy.'"[77] As Foucault appreciated, mystical parrhesia's courage flows from a confidence not in ideas, but in the love of a Creator who will give special proof of that love on the day of judgment.[78] Mystical parrhesia is a form of communication that is rooted in a love that builds personal community. In reminding religion of this form of speech, Foucault put in a negative light the confessional discourse that demands obedience and that preaches crusades. His last lecture, therefore, had as one of its aims an ethical critique of religion.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

NOTES

1 Robert B. Ashmore, *Building a Moral System* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1987), 155.
2 Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, David Couzens Hoy, ed. (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 93.
3 Jurgen Habermas, "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 108.
4 Ian Hacking, "The Archaeology of Foucault," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 40.
5 Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," in James D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3, Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 358.
6 Foucault, "Final Interview," *Raritan* 5:1 (Summer 1985), 12.
7 The major texts for an understanding of Foucault's ethics are the three published volumes in the history of sexuality series: *The History of Sexuality I: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), *The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), and *The Care of the Self* (New York: Pantheon, 1986). In addition to these are his scattered publications on Christian sexuality (see note 16).
8 Michel Foucault, "Dream, Imagination, and Existence," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 19:1 (1984–1985), 51–52.
9 Michel Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), 109–110.
10 Michel Foucult, "La folie, l'absence d'oeuvre" (1964), published as appendix to the 1972 edition of *Histoire de la folie 'a l'age classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 578.
11 Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms," in James D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3, Power* (New York: New Press, 2000).
12 Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 28.
13 Ibid., 26–28.
14 Michel Foucault, "Useless to Revolt?," in James D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3, Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 453.
15 "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," interview with Foucault, in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 373–380. For Foucault's viewpoint on Poland and the crisis generated by Solidarity, see "En Abandonnant les Polonais, nous renoncons à part de nous-mêmes," *Le Nouvel Observateur* 935 (October 9, 1982), 36.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

16 See Foucault's summary of his 1980 course "On the Government of the Living," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 1, Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 81–85. Also "Omnes et Singulatim": Toward a Critique of Political Reason," in James D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3, Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 298–325; "Sexuality and Solitude," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 1, Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 175–184; "The Battle for Chastity," Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 1, Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 185–197; "Self Writing," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 1, Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 207–222. In addition, there are several discussions: "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 1, Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 253–280; "The Regard for Truth," *Art and Text* 16 (Summer 1984), 320–321; "The Confession of the Flesh," in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 194–228; and "Final Interview," *Raritan* 5:1 (Summer 1985), 1–13.

17 Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude,"182.

18 Foucault, "Confession of the Flesh,"200.

19 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 143.

20 Michel Foucault, *Herculine Barbin, Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century Hermaphrodite* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 144. See also Foucault's introduction to the English translation of this book, vii–xvii.

21 Foucault, "Governmentality," in James D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3, Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 205.

22 Ibid., 207.

23 Ibid., 207.

24 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in James D. Faubion, ed. *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3, Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 336.

25 The expression "politics of ourselves" comes from the lecture "Christianity and Confession" that Foucault delivered at Dartmouth College in November 1980; "politics as an ethics" comes from the interview "Politics and Ethics," 375.

26 Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 5.

27 Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 1, Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 318.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

28 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 130.
29 Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms," 16–32.
30 Ibid.
31 Michel Foucault, "Confinement, Psychiatry, Prison," in Lawrence Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, and Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 180–181, translation modified: "C'est la vraie vocation de la psychiatrie. Et c'est son climat, et c'est son horizon de naissance."
32 Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms."
33 Michel Foucault, "The West and the Truth of Sex," transl. Lawrence Winters, Sub-Stance 20 (1978), 7.
34 Foucault, *History of Sexuality* I, 69.
35 Ibid., and "Introduction" to *Herculine Barbin*, x.
36 Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality," an interview with Lucette Finas, in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 191. See also Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 211.
37 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 67.
38 Michel Foucault, "L'extension sociale de la norme," interview with P. Werner, Politique Hebdo, 212 (4 March 1976), 14–16.
39 Foucault, "Final Interview," 12.
40 Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," 305.
41 Foucault, "Regard for Truth," 29; *Use of Pleasure*, 8.
42 Allan Stoekl, *Politics, Writing, Mutilation* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1985), 109; Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality* (New York: Walker and Company, 1962), 229–230.
43 Foucault, "Foucault repond à Sartre," *La Quinzaine Litteraire* 46 (March 1–15, 1968), 20.
44 Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 262.
45 Foucault, "Useless to Revolt?," 452.
46 Richard Wolin, "Foucault's Aesthetic Decisionism," *Telos* 67 (Spring 1986): 84, 85.
47 Foucault, "Subject and Power," 342.
48 Reiner Schurmann, "What Can I Do? in an Archaeological-Genealogical History," *Journal of Philosophy* 82, 10 (October 1985): 545.
49 For an important statement on this theme, see the last lecture of Foucault's 1976 course, in Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended" Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976* (New York: Picador, 2003), 239–263. For general discussions of the theme, see Maurice Blanchot, "Michel Foucault as I Imagine Him," in J. Mehlman, ed., *Foucault/Blanchot* (New York: Zone Books, 1987; and James Bernauer,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

"Beyond Life and Death: On Foucault's Post-Auschwitz Ethic," *Philosophy Today* 32:2 (Summer 1988), 128–142.

50 Foucault, "Preface" to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), xiii. Reprinted in James D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3, Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 108.

51 For an example of this view, see Stephen White, "Foucault's Challenge to Critical Theory," *American Political Science Review* 80:21 (June 1986): 428–430.

52 For accounts of Foucault's political work, see Claude Mauriac, *Le temps immobile 3: Et comme l'esperance est violente* (Paris: Grasset, 1988), especially 261–591; Bernard Kouchmer, "Un vrai samourai," in *Michel Foucault: Une histoire de la vérité* (Paris: Syros, 1985), 85–89; and Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989).

53 Michel Foucult, "Lives of Infamous Men," in James D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 3, Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 158.

54 Jeremy Carrette collected a significant number of the shorter pieces where religion and Christianity are discussed by Foucault: *Religion and Culture, Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 1999). A wide-ranging collection of essays on Foucault and theological concerns is James Bernauer and Jeremy Carrette, eds., *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004). Henrique Pinto published *Foucault, Christianity and Interfaith Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 2003). The growing German literature on Foucault and religion may be sampled in the collection edited by C. Bauer and M. Hölzl, *Gottes und des Menschen Tod? Die Theologie vor der Herausforderung Michel Foucaults* (Mainz, Germany: Grünewald, 2003). A very helpful introduction to theological issues in Foucault is John McSweeney's "Theology 'after' Foucault? Approaches and Challenges," *Milltown Studies* 52 (Winter, 2003), 117–151.

55 Jeremy R. Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

56 J. Joyce Schuld, *Foucault, Augustine and the Hermeneutics of Fragility* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

57 Thomas Flynn, "The Religious (Re)turn in Recent French Philosophy," presentation at the Meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Philadelphia, December 27, 2002. Edward McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis: A Genealogy of Philosophical Practices* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming).

58 John Caputo, "On Not Knowing Who We Are: Madness, Hermeneutics, and the Night of Truth in Foucault," in James Bernauer and Jeremy Carrette, eds., *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Experience (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004), 117–139; Tom Beaudoin, "I Was Imprisoned by Subjectivity and You Visited Me: Bonhoeffer and Foucault on the Way to a Postmodern Christian Self," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 29:5 (October 2002), 341–361.

59 Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974–1975* (New York: Picador, 2003), 193, 202.

60 See Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), *The Ethics of Sex* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), and "Sodomites and Churchmen: The Theological Invention of Sodomy," in James Bernauer and Jeremy Carrette, eds., *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004), 233–244.

61 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 177.

62 Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," 310–313.

63 Foucault, "Battle for Chastity," 196.

64 "Technologies of the Self," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, Volume 1, Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 243–245, 249.

65 Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 35–74.

66 *Izvestiia*, September 2, 1992. Cited in Igal Halfin's *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 280–281.

67 Halfin, *Terror in My Soul*, 56, 49–50, 91.

68 Ibid., 104, 29–30, 131–139, 168, 197–198, 208.

69 Ibid., 51.

70 Ibid., 33.

71 Ibid., 262.

72 Kharkhordin, *Collective and the Individual*, 121, 355.

73 Ibid., 114, 356.

74 Ibid., 114.

75 Ibid., 75–122.

76 Michel Foucault, Lecture of March 28, 1984.

77 W. C. Van Unnik, "The Semitic Background of Parrhesia in the New Testament," in *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. Van Unnik*, part 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 290. For his approach to parrhesia Foucault cites two secondary sources: H. Schlier, "Parrhesia," in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), 871–886, and S. Marrow, "Parrhesia and the New Testament," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44:3 (July 1982), 431–446.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

78 Michel Foucault, Lecture of March 28, 1984. Two recent studies have taken Foucault's ethics as their theme: Timothy O'Leary, *Foucault: The Art of Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2002), and Wilhelm Schmid, *Auf der Suche nach einer neuen Lebenskunst: die Frage nach dem Grund und die Neubegründung der Ethik bei Foucault* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 2000).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

BÉATRICE HAN
TRANSLATED BY EDWARD PILE

7 The Analytic of Finitude and the History of Subjectivity

In one of his last texts, Foucault defined his philosophical enterprise as an "analysis of the conditions in which certain relations between subject and object are formed or modified, insofar as they are constitutive of a possible knowledge,"[1] or again as "the manner in which the emergence of games of truth constituted, for a particular time and place and certain individuals, the historical a priori of a possible experience."[2] Despite its eclipse during the genealogical period, the notion of the historical a priori is thus reaffirmed as central by later Foucault. There is, however, an essential modification with respect to its archaeological problematisation: In *The Order of Things*, the various historical a priori were characterized by specific relations between being and language, relations in which the subject of knowledge did not always or necessarily have a place. The Renaissance episteme was defined by the homogeneity of words and things, and its Classical counterpart by the transparent distance between being and representation, which excluded any positioning for the subject (the missing "place of the king"). Within the archaeological configuration, only the *contemporary* historical a priori was characterized by the invention of a new position for the subject of knowledge, that of Man, which according to Foucault generated the Analytic of Finitude and ultimately resulted in the "anthropological sleep" criticised at the end of *The Order of Things*. So although later Foucault refocuses his work around the notion of the historical a priori, he gives the notion a considerable twist whereby the conditions of truth saying are no longer referred back to an implicit connection between being and language, but to the various relations historically established between "modes of subjectivation"[3] and "modes of objectification."[4] Correspondingly, these relations are not to be

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

analysed from discourse, as in archaeology, nor from the constituting structures of subjectivity, as in phenomenology, but genealogically, that is, through practices which, "understood as ways of both of acting and thinking . . . give the key to understanding the correlative constitution of the subject and object."[5]

The central idea behind these changes is that objectification and subjectivation are mutually dependent, both for their existence and to be understood: The

> rejection of the philosophical recourse to a constituting subject aims at revealing the processes which are specific to an experience in which subject and object "form themselves in transforming each other," both in relation to each other and in function of each other.[6]

According to this new problematisation, an entity or an epistemological domain can only appear as an object to be known if it is discovered through a specific positioning of the subject of knowledge. For example, the self and its secret desires only became objects of knowledge because of the birth of the subject of the Christian hermeneutic of desire. Conversely, the appearance of new forms of objectification, such as the Cartesian realm of physical objects, engendered fundamental modifications as much in the understanding of the subject (as a detached observer with universal access to truth) as in the form of knowledge (the transition from Antique "meditation" to the Cartesian method). This mutual relativity of the subject of knowledge and what it knows is thus revealed as the only focal point from which a "history of truth" can begin. As Foucault says,

> it is their mutual development and their reciprocal relation which gives birth to what we call the "games of truth"; that is to say not the discovery of true things, but of rules according to which, in relation to certain things, what a subject can say about specific things becomes assessable as true or false.[7]

This is exactly the definition of the historical a priori formerly given in *The Order of Discourse*.[8]

But if the history of truth becomes inseparable from the history of subjectivity,[9] several questions arise. What are the modes of subjectivation and objectification that would correspond to the periods that *The Order of Things* had defined exclusively through the relation between being and language? Conversely, how can Kant's

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

invention of the transcendental, and more specifically of Man as an empirico-transcendental double, be incorporated into the history of subjectivity, and how does it modify it? What are the successive conceptions of truth presupposed by these different stages? Finally, and crucially, can Foucault's pessimistic assessment of modernity as caught within the aporiae of the Analytic of Finitude be modified by this recontextualisation of the Analytic within the wider history of the modes of subjectivation and objectification?

The publication of the course given by Foucault at the Collège de France in 1982, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, can help us to answer these questions by filling out the notion of a history of subjectivity. As is often the case in later Foucault, the presentation is not systematic. The history of the modes of subjectivation and objectification has to be first deciphered from scattered clues in the margins of much more detailed analyses of Greek and Roman Antiquity, then critically reconstituted. According to Foucault, this history began when Socrates referred the Greek care of the self to the necessity of self-knowledge. Subsequently, the progressive subordination of the *epimeleia heautou* to the *gnôthi seauton* formed the background against which alone can be understood the birth of the Cartesian claim that knowledge, not only of oneself but also of the world, can and indeed must be independent of the care of the self.[10] Correspondingly, the relation between knowledge and care of the self is reinterpreted in the light of the interlacing and then progressive separation of "philosophy" (as "the form of thought that wonders, of course not about what is true or false, but about what makes it possible for things to be true or false"[11]) and "spirituality" (as "the research, practice, and experience by which the subject performs the transformations necessary to gain access to the truth"[12]).

However, *L'herméneutique du sujet* gives very few indications about the status of contemporary thought. Consequently, I have two aims in this essay. Firstly, I will use the only text that presents a detailed diagnosis of philosophical modernity, that is, *The Order of Things*, to reconstitute the final stage of the history of subjectivity. For Foucault, the structure of objectivation/subjectivation that characterises it is Man, as "anthropology constitutes . . . the fundamental disposition that has governed and controlled the path of philosophical thought since Kant until our own day."[13] I shall start by analyzing this structure in its Kantian form to demonstrate that,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

according to Foucault, it commands the *whole* of modernity's philosophical development, and not only the phenomenological configuration criticised by the study of the three "doubles" in *The Order of Things*. Secondly and correspondingly, I shall attempt to reconstitute the prior stages of the history of subjectivity (and the understandings of truth corresponding to them) in order to re-contextualise the redefined Analytic of Finitude within the larger history of the relation between philosophy and spirituality, or the "relations between subject and truth."[14] I hope to find within this recontextualisation some elements for a solution to the "anthropological sleep" previously diagnosed by Foucault, and perhaps a path leading beyond the aporiae of the Analytic of Finitude.

THE ANALYTIC OF FINITUDE I: KANT'S *ANTHROPOLOGY*

In *The Order of Things*, "Man's mode of being" is identified "simply [as] that historical a priori which, since the nineteenth century, has served as an almost self-evident ground for our thought."[15] The main characteristic of Man as an historical a priori is that he is "the foundation of all positivities present . . . in the element of empirical things."[16] Indeed, positivities require the transcendental organisation of human faculties in order to be given and understood as such: Although the *existence* of life, work, or language does not depend on that of Man, their uncovering *as positivities* is governed by the transcendental opening of human experience. However, Man is equally "present in the element of empirical things" because he is inserted as an empirical object (in so much as he lives, works or talks) within the field he himself has opened as transcendental subject. The anthropological structure specific to modernity is thus defined from the beginning by this doubling of the transcendental subject as an object of empirical knowledge: In later Foucault's terms, the form of subjectivation particular to Man is such that he cannot become a subject of knowledge without being inscribed within the horizon of his own experience, and thus without appearing to himself as an object of knowledge.

Such a structure, however, is clearly ambiguous: The distinction between subject and object of knowledge, being grounded in the same being (Man), can easily become erased, or at least confused.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

This is exactly, according to Foucault, what happened in Kant's work, where the recentering of the three critical questions on that of man in the *Logic*[17] determined and prefigured the philosophical destiny of modernity.[18] The clear distinction between the empirical and the transcendental established in the *Critique*[19] was rapidly obscured in the *Anthropology*,[20] which introduced a new concept, the "originary": Thus

> what is, from the point of view of the *Critique*, the a priori *of knowledge* is not immediately transposed by anthropological reflection into an a priori *of existence*, but appears in the density of a becoming where a sudden emergence infallibly in retrospection takes on the sense of the already there [and thus of an originary].[21]

How to understand such a "transposition"? The *Critique* excluded its very possibility by suggesting two models for thinking time (either as a pure form of sensibility[22] or as uniting a priori the order of succession of phenomena[23]) and two definitions of the subject (as transcendental subject or as empirical ego). In this context, that an entity should appear as temporal meant that it was transcendentally perceived under the form of time and chronologically synthesized following the laws of the understanding. Correspondingly, the transcendental subject, being itself the condition of intelligibility for time, could not appear within time as such: Only the empirical ego could become the object of an internal apperception within the form of time.

But in the *Anthropology*, the idea of a passage from the "a priori of knowledge" to an "a priori of experience" fuses the two elements carefully distinguished by the *Critique*: The conditions of possibility of experience (the transcendental organization of subjectivity) are referred back to the empirical existence of the subject, which in turn invalidates the very possibility of a pure transcendental determination. By placing the transcendental subject itself (and not only the empirical ego) within the chronology of empirical objects, the *Anthropology* reveals transcendental determination as somehow preexisting itself in a past analogical to the "primitivity" highlighted by Derrida in the work of Husserl.[24] Thus the transcendental subject experiences itself as "already there," in a sort of empirical "prehistory":

> the relation of the given and of the a priori takes a reverse structure in the *Anthropology* to that revealed in the *Critique*. The a priori in the order of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

knowledge, becomes in the order of concrete existence an *originary* which is not chronologically first but which, as soon as it appears . . . reveals itself as already there.[25]

As a result, transcendental determination cannot function anymore as the clear starting point required by the *Critique*, but only as a perpetually retreating origin: The subject cannot recapture the moment of its emergence as a thinking subject without retrojecting it into the paradoxical past of the originary. As a consequence of this impossibility of the subject accounting for the conditions of its own genesis, a new opacity was born at the heart of knowledge. In the terms of the history of subjectivity, the second characteristic of the anthropological *episteme* is thus that subjectivation and objectification are not merely coextensive with each other, but also destined to exchange roles in an infinite oscillation between the empirical and transcendental aspects of Man, which invalidates the critical project of giving knowledge limits and a secure foundation.

THE ANALYTIC OF FINITUDE II: THE "METAPHYSICS OF THE OBJECT" AND POSITIVISM

Having brought out the ambivalence of the Copernican turn, Foucault endeavours to show that it determined the evolution of the *whole* of modernity, not only of transcendental idealism. Thus

> the thought that is contemporaneous with us, and with which, willy-nilly, we think, is still largely dominated by the impossibility, brought to light towards the end of the Eighteenth century, of basing syntheses on the space of representation, and by the correlative obligation . . . *to open up the transcendental field of subjectivity, and to constitute inversely, beyond the object, what for us are the 'quasi-transcendentals' of Life, Labour, Language*.[26]

From the Kantian doubling of the subject, nineteeth-century philosophical reflections thus split along two axes: on the one hand, the explicit and systematic exploration of transcendental determination ("the transcendental field of subjectivity"), a movement that according to Foucault begins with Fichte[27] and continues with Husserl[28]; and on the other, a series of enquiries focused on objectivation and empirical finitude ("life, labour, language"), which took two consecutive forms: firstly, the "metaphysics of the object,"

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

which attempted to overcome the major limit of transcendental determination (the impossibility of knowing the thing-in-itself) by establishing a hypothetically direct access to the object; secondly, the parallel attempts of Marxism and Positivism to bypass the very idea of transcendental determination and to analyse the empirical exclusively from itself. Finally, during the twentieth century, these two major tendencies reconnected in the analysis of "lived experience [*vécu*],"[29] resulting in the phenomenological impasses criticised in the analysis of the "doubles" in *The Order of Things*. As these have already been powerfully illuminated elsewhere,[30] I shall concentrate exclusively on the stages that preceded them.

On the empirical side of the anthropological division, the first phase consisted in the post-Kantians' "metaphysics of the object," which, starting from and working against Kant's conclusions, sought to bypass the dependence of experience on its transcendental conditions. Thus

> Criticism . . . opens up at the same time the possibility of another metaphysics; one whose purpose will be to question, outside of representation, all that is the source and origin of representation; it makes possible those philosophies of Life, of the Will, and of the Word, that the nineteenth century is to deploy in the wake of criticism.[31]

The objective "source and origin" of representations is the noumenon considered as the condition of possibility of their synthesis. The main characteristic of such philosophies is thus that they attempt by various means to open a direct access to the thing-in-itself,[32] a possibility that was previously denied by the Kantian distinction between thought and knowledge. For example, the experience of the life of consciousness culminates for Hegel in absolute knowledge. Or again, for Schopenhauer, the limitations of representational knowledge (as described in book one of *The World as Will and Representation*) are overcome by the direct intuition of the will in the internal movements of the body, which allows the identification of the will with the noumenon (in book two). The common ground of these approaches is that they question

> the conditions of a relation between representations from the point of view of the being itself that is represented: what is indicated, on the horizon of all actual representations, as the foundation of their unity, is

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

found to be those *never objectifiable objects*, those never representable representations, . . . *those realities that are removed from reality to the degree to which they are the foundation of what is given to us and reaches us*.[33]

However, the problem with such metaphysics is that, in their attempts to reach the in-itself (the "realities that are removed from reality"), they regress beyond the critical perspective they originally presupposed, and look for the conditions of possibility of experience, not within transcendental constitution, but in the noumenon itself. This movement is particularly clear in the analysis of causality in the first book of *The World as Will and Representation*, where the noumenon is understood as the cause of our phenomenal representations and thus as the point at which they can synthesize themselves. More generally, the mistake of the metaphysics of the object is to forget that any access to the empirical is only possible if it is mediated by the transcendental opening. This is the reason why

> despite their post-Kantian chronology, [these metaphysics] appear as "precritical": they . . . move away from the analysis of the conditions of possibility of knowledge as they may be revealed at the level of transcendental subjectivity; but . . . develop on the basis of objective transcendentals (the Word of God, Will, Life).[34]

These "objective transcendentals" are also characterised as "quasi-transcendentals"[35]: transcendentals, because they are held to function as the objective analogon of transcendental determination by operating in advance the synthesis of objects of knowledge, but *quasi*-transcendentals because such an access to the in-self is structurally impossible: Since they "have the same archaeological subsoil as Criticism itself,"[36] these metaphysics must be "measured by human finitude."[37]

Whereas the metaphysics of the object sought to overcome the Kantian inheritance, but also retained a sharp awareness of the role attributed to transcendental finitude by Kant, the next stage of the exploration of the objective side of the anthropological structure is characterized by the acceptance of the impossibility of knowing things-in-themselves. Yet instead of resulting in a description of the structures of phenomenal experience (such as we find in

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the other major branch of the philosophical development of modernity, Husserlian phenomenology), this paradoxically resulted in the forgetting of the dependence of experience on transcendental determination. This explains for Foucault

> the appearance of a 'positivism': there is a whole layer of phenomena given to experience whose rationality and interconnection rest upon an objective foundation which it is not possible to bring to light; it is possible to know phenomena, but not substances; laws, but not essences; regularities, but not the beings that obey them.[38]

Faced with the impasse of post-Kantian metaphysics in their search to identify the in-itself, positivism deliberately renounced the search for the ontological foundations of human representations and encouraged the infinite development of a purely empirical knowledge, whose model is given by the sciences. To "metaphysics of that never objectifiable depth from which objects rise up towards our superficial knowledge" are thus opposed "philosophies that set themselves no other task than the observation of precisely that which is given to positive knowledge."[39] This observation rests on an understanding of truth as adequation to an empirical object (fidelity to "facts"), considered independently both from transcendental determination or from any relation to the in-itself. The object or the facts, posited as absolute, thus become the norm from which the truth of positivist discourse is measured:

> this true discourse finds its foundation and model in the empirical truth whose genesis in nature and in history it retraces, so that one has an analysis of the positivistic type (the truth of the object determines the truth of the discourse that describes its formation).[40]

However, for Foucault, the error of positivism consists precisely in this absolutisation of the phenomenal realm, considered independently of the transcendental conditions that alone can disclose it as such. It is thus the reverse correlate of the metaphysics of the object: Whereas the latter accepted but tried to bypass the dependence of experience on transcendental conditions by reaching, beyond objects, towards noumena, positivism ends up forgetting about this dependence altogether and treating phenomena as things-in-themselves.[41]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

THE ANALYTIC OF FINITUDE III: TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY

The other major direction taken by philosophical thought after Kant, that is, the subjective branch, explored, not the empirical forms of human finitude, but the structure of transcendental constitution itself. This current is represented by the axis that runs from Fichte to Husserl. This time, the error consisted, not in the negation or forgetting of the transcendental, but rather in its absolutisation (Fichte and the first Husserl), or in the impossibility of thinking its relation to the empirical in a noncontradictory manner (the second Husserl, who for Foucault repeats the confusion between the empirical and the transcendental of the Kantian originary). The Fichtean enterprise, chronologically contemporary with the first metaphysics of the object (Hegel, then Schopenhauer), is the most radical. It is characterized by the attempt "to deduce genetically the totality of the transcendental domain from the pure, universal and empty laws of thought,"[42] and thus by a purification of transcendental finitude, a reinforcement of the critical perspective against the forms of the originary that haunt the *Anthropology*. However, the Fichtean project to "reduce all transcendental reflection to the analysis of formalisms"[43] fails, probably precisely because of its too abstract character.[44]

The second stage in the analysis of the transcendental side of Man is Husserl, who tried "to anchor the rights and limitations of a formal logic in a reflection of the transcendental type."[45] To this ambition, which corresponds best to the project of the early Husserl, is added an attempt to "link transcendental subjectivity to the implicit horizon of empirical contents . . . by means of infinite explications,"[46] probably a reference to the later works such as *Experience and Judgment* or the *Crisis*. But in both cases Foucault's judgment is the same:

> it is probably impossible to give empirical contents transcendental value, or to displace them in the direction of a constituent subjectivity, without giving rise, at least silently, to an anthropology – that is to a mode of thought in which the rightful limitations of knowledge (and consequently all empirical knowledge) are at the same time the concrete forms of existence, precisely as they are given in that same empirical knowledge.[47]

Foucault gives no further explanation for the failure of the Husserlian project, which makes his diagnosis difficult to evaluate.[48] His

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

overriding aim is to reveal, beyond the particular case represented by Husserl, the "closely knit . . . network" that

> links thoughts of the positivist or eschatological type . . . and reflections inspired by phenomenology. . . . At the level of archaeological configurations they were both necessary from the moment the anthropological postulate was constituted, that is from the moment that man appeared as an empirico-transcendental doublet.[49]

The point where the two axes of post-Kantian thought – empirical and objective, and transcendental and subjective – intersected is the "the analysis of lived experience [*vécu*]".[50] Against positivism, it "tried to restore the forgotten dimension of the transcendental"[51] by defining lived experience as "the space in which all empirical contents are given to experience."[52] But against pure transcendentalism, the analysis of lived experience began from "the original experience which emerges through the body."[53] The analysis of lived experience, at the end of the Analytic of Finitude, is thus doubly interesting: Firstly, it gathers the two trajectories born of the Copernican turn by questioning human finitude under both its empirical and transcendental aspects; secondly, it seeks to articulate them in such a way as to escape the traps in which the previous forms of thought were caught (the bypassing and forgetting of the transcendental, or hyper-transcendentalism). However, Foucault's conclusion yet again takes the form of a condemnation: The analysis of lived experience, like other phenomenological developments, fails because it once again repeats the anthropological confusion between the empirical and the transcendental. The problem is that it must,

> in showing that Man is [empirically] determined, show that the foundation of those determinations is Man's very being in its radical limitations [transcendental finitude]; it must also show that the contents of experience are already their own conditions [because they are reflected at the transcendental level by the movement of the originary], that thought, from the very beginning haunts the unthought that eludes them, and that it is always striving to recover.[54]

Thus from the point of view of existence, Man is finite in the sense that he depends on empirical determinations that he does not master. The Copernican turn was supposed to counteract this empirical dependence by turning the a priori analysis of the faculties of the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

knowing subject into the condition of possibility of knowing experience itself. Thus "each of these positive forms [life (the body), labour, language] in which man can learn that he is [empirically] finite *is given to him only against the background of its own [transcendental] finitude*."[55] However labour, language, and life are not only objects for knowledge, given as such against the founding background of man's transcendental finitude, but also "conditions of knowledge."[56] Man can only know the world, and himself, from his point of view as a living, working. and talking being – that is, in so much as he "already" exists. So

> as soon as he thinks, [Man] merely unveils himself to his own eyes in the form of a being who is *already*, in a necessary subjacent density, *in an irreducible anteriority*, a living being, an instrument of production, a vehicle for words which exist before him.[57]

As suggested by the recurrence of temporal paradoxes ("as soon as," "already"), this new reinsertion of the transcendental subject at the heart of the empirical repeats *de facto* the anthropological structure of the originary and destroys the founding power of transcendental finitude by producing a logical contradiction: The a priori must now appear at the heart of the element of which it is the epistemic condition of possibility. Thus chapter nine of *The Order of Things* concludes that, although it tried to vary the analysis of lived experience according to the successive figures of the doubles of Man, the Analytic of Finitude is prevented by its very structure from freeing itself from the anthropological a priori.

THE HISTORY OF SUBJECTIVITY I: PHILOSOPHY, SPIRITUALITY, AND TRUTH IN GREEK ANTIQUITY

I shall now turn to the course of 1982 to put this first reading of the Analytic of Finitude into perspective by reconstructing the whole of the history of subjectivity. As previously said, the latter studies the relation between modes of subjectivation and objectification within the context of the relation between spirituality and philosophy. In Antiquity, spirituality (as the injunction to care for oneself) constituted the necessary background for philosophy. From this premise, Foucault's central thesis is that the history of subjectivity as a whole reveals a dynamic in which philosophy and spirituality, indissociable

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

from Plato to the first centuries of the Christian era, then began to separate. From the perspective of philosophy gradually appeared the idea of a detached knowing subject, with a corresponding domain of objectively representable and knowable objects. Thus, "by taking Descartes as reference point . . . , there came a moment when the subject as such became capable of truth."[58] Having abandoned its original spiritual conditions, philosophy became epistemology, a tendency that culminated in "Kant's extra turn of the screw [*tour de spire*],"[59] and subsequently in the Analytic of Finitude itself. Correlatively, spirituality's demand for self-transformation was progressively annexed by Christian thought, whereas a new mode of subjectivation appeared, that of the hermeneutic of desire, associated with a new field of objects (the subject's desiring interiority). The history of objectification and subjectivation in the West thus developed along two increasingly divergent lines: On the one hand, the knowing subject emancipated itself from spiritual demands, first though the framework of Cartesianism, then through Kantian philosophy. On the other, the idea of a necessary transformation of the self through a relation to the truth was first taken up by Christian pastoralism, then by the disciplines (following the movement analysed by *Discipline and Punish* and mostly by *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*), and finally by the internalisation of techniques of subjectivation particular to bio-power.[60] Therefore, to the growing epistemologisation of philosophy chronologically corresponds the progressive disciplinarisation of the constitution of the self. I shall begin by detailing the stages of the history of the self preceding the Kantian moment, while identifying the forms of relation to the truth that belong to them. I will then use this reconstruction to reevaluate the situation of contemporary thought, and in particular the definition of the anthropological structure as the historical a priori of modernity.

As indicated above, the first moment of the history of subjectivity, Greek and Roman antiquity,[61] was characterized by the impossibility of separating philosophy and spirituality:

> since Plato, since *Alcibiades*, which in the eyes of the Platonic tradition founded all philosophy, the following question is asked: at what price can I have access to the truth? . . . How should I shape myself, what is the modification of being that I must make to be able to have access to the truth?[62]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The mode of subjectivation specific to Antiquity thus presents a double characteristic. Firstly, the idea of an a-temporal and detached subject of knowledge, capable of objective and decontextualised knowledge, does not exist. Correspondingly, the subject as such is not an object of knowledge: The "self-knowledge" that Socrates encourages is not a knowledge of the subject in its empirical determinations. This self-knowledge is of a totally different kind, being the metaphysical knowledge of the intelligible within the sensible, the soul in the body: "knowledge of the divine is the condition of self-knowledge."[63] It is never a question of knowing the individual in its idiosyncratic particularities:

> I believe that, purely spontaneously, we ask the question of the relation between subject and knowledge in the following form: is the objectification of the subject possible? . . . In the culture of the self of the Hellenistic and Roman epochs, when one asks the question of the relation between subject and knowledge, *one never asks the question of whether the subject is objectifiable*, whether one could apply to the subject the same mode of knowing that one applies to things in the world.[64]

The second characteristic of Antique subjectivation is the claim that there must be a circularity between the transformation of the self and access to the truth, by which the correlation between spirituality and philosophy is defined. Because the individual in his natural state is not qualified to be a subject of knowledge, he must transform himself to be worthy of the truth.[65] But inversely, this self-transformation is facilitated and accelerated by the revelation of the truth. For example, the Platonic sage must purify himself through ascetic practices in order to attain truth. He will attain contemplation of the intelligible world and have the intuition of his true nature as a soul (by opposition to the prison of his body). This revelation in turn will justify the ascetic practices he used and renders them easier to apply, further facilitating contemplation. As Foucault says, "this is the Platonic circle . . . : in knowing myself, I attain a being that is the truth, and thus the truth transforms the being that I am."[66] Knowledge of the truth is not understood in a purely gnoseological way, but rather as operative in the transformation of the self. Conversely, only the subject who transforms himself can attain the truth:

> what the Greeks and Romans wonder about . . . is to what extent knowing the truth, saying the truth, practicing and exercising the truth can allow the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

subject not only to act as he should act, but also to be what he should be and as he wants to be.[67]

Correlatively, the Antique structure of subjectivation rests on a radically different understanding of truth than that of modernity: Truth is neither adequation to the object nor the transcendental opening of a field of experience. It has two main meanings, one ontological and the other dialogical. According to the first, truth is the intelligible world, through the contemplation of which the subject obtains a revelation of his true nature and finds himself transformed:

> to have access to the truth, is to have access to being itself, an access which is such that the being to which one has access is at the same time, and in return, the agent of transformation of him who has access to it.[68]

The relation to truth is thus a solitary, intuitive one, in which the "eyes of the soul" are filled by "the divine element."[69] The second definition of the truth rests on the first but is played out in the field of discourse, for the primordial connection between truth and being just evoked is the foundation of *askesis* as "a practice of truth"[70] and more generally of *parrhesia*. The transformation of the subject's *ethos* by the intuition of intelligible truth has the consequence of making him able, not only to see the truth, but also to hold a discourse the veracity of which can be vouchsafed in the perfect homogeneity of his words and actions. The parrhesiast is thus characterized by the adequation between his way of being and the contents of his discourse. Such an adequation demonstrates that he has suitably constituted himself as a subject of knowledge and spirituality, that is, in such a way that his ethical substance reflects the knowledge of his intelligible nature he has acquired. Thus, "the ground of *parrhesia*, I think, is this *adaequatio* between, on the one hand, the subject that speaks and who speaks the truth and, on the other, the subject who behaves, and who behaves in accord with this truth."[71] This is certainly an adequationist conception of truth; but in contrast to what will happen in Descartes's conception, adequation does not function from discourse to the real, but from discourse to the speaker. Thus,

> what guarantees that I am saying the truth to you, is that I am effectively, as subject of my behaviour, absolutely, integrally and wholly identical to the subject of speech that I am, when I say what I say to you.[72]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

More generally, the circularity between the ontological and dialogical understandings of truth reflects the fundamental connection between spirituality and philosophy in Antique thought: Access to ontological truth transforms the individual into a knowing subject, and inversely this transformation allows him to speak the truth and gives his discourse its legitimacy and power.[73] Thus, "in Greek and Roman philosophy, [the subject] is present in a coincidence between the subject of speech and the subject of his own acts. The truth that I say to you, you see it in me."[74]

THE HISTORY OF SUBJECTIVITY II: THE PROGRESSIVE DIVORCE BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND SPIRITUALITY (CHRISTIANITY AND CARTESIANISM)

The second stage of the history of subjectivity is characterised by the progressive dissolution of the Antique association between spirituality and philosophy. Whereas the injunction to care for the self is taken up by Christian practices, little by little a new position for the subject emerges, that of the detached and universal subject of knowledge. To the first corresponds the appearance of the Christian hermeneutic of desire, and to the second the Cartesian turn, itself paradoxically prepared for (according to Foucault) by the development of theology. I will examine these moments in turn. The "Christian," or rather "ascetic-monastic"[75] model, which appeared from the third and fourth centuries BC,[76] developed the connection between self-transformation and self-knowledge, but in increasing exteriority to philosophy. *Prima facie*, the Christian form of subjectivation seems very close to the Antique paradigm, for two main reasons. Firstly, it is equally defined by the circularity between access to truth and self-transformation. Thus

> knowledge of the self is demanded, implied by the fact that the heart should be purified to understand the Word; and it can only be purified through self-knowledge; and it is necessary that the word be received for the purification of the heart to be undertaken to lead to self-knowledge. There is therefore a circular relation between self-knowledge, knowledge of the truth and the care of the self.[77]

Secondly, the Christian model takes up the idea that truth is given in a revelation in which the subject becomes worthy of knowledge.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Although the source of the revelation changes (no longer the contemplation of the intelligible but the biblical "text"[78]), its operation remains the same (conversion and salvation).

Nevertheless the two models present two fundamental differences. Firstly, the development of Christianity generates the appearance of a new mode of subjectivation/objectification, in which for the first time the psychological interiority of the subject becomes a possible object of knowledge. This modification is made particularly visible by Foucault's study of the contrast between the analysis of representations by Marcus Aurelius and that of a Christian thinker like Cassian. The first was concerned with analyzing the objective content of representations and with accepting only those that appeared plausible. For the second, however, it is the psychical reality of representation that is the true object of the examination:

> The problem for Cassian is not at all to know the nature of the object represented. The problem is to know the degree of purity of the representation itself . . . , to know if it is mixed with concupiscence or not. . . . Does the idea that I have in my mind come from God. . . . ? Does it come from Satan?[79]

This refocusing of the analysis, no longer on the represented, but on the nature and origin of representation as a psychic object, reflects back doubly on the self-understanding of the knowing subject. On the one hand he himself becomes an object of knowledge in as much as he is the point at which representations are born; on the other, he occupies an unstable position, being dedicated to an unceasing interrogation of the mechanisms giving birth to his representations. In contrast to the Platonic subject, whose relation to the self and to truth was a limpid relation of mastery, the subject of the hermeneutic of desire is fundamentally opaque and always virtually destitute, as he withdraws from himself in the mysterious dynamic of his interior "desires, passions and illnesses."[80]

The second major modification introduced by the Christian model pertains to the relation of the subject to truth. Whereas the idea of a subject-transforming revelation remains from Antique subjectivation, and so with it an ontological understanding of the truth, the parrhesiastic understanding of truth slowly disappears: In Christianity

> one knows well that truth does not come from the one who guides the soul, but that truth is given in another mode (revelation, text, book etc.). . . . Greek

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and Roman psychology . . . obeyed the same general structure, namely that the master commands the discourse of truth. But Christianity separates psychagogy and pedagogy by requiring the psychogised, guided, soul to articulate a truth.[81]

For the idea of an universal truth incarnated in the *ethos* of the master, which then served as a proof, is now substituted that of a truth particular to each individual, which only he can articulate. The modality of truth-speaking changes fundamentally: It is no longer a matter of transforming oneself to become a subject capable of seeing and speaking a general truth, but of being able to "speak the truth about oneself."[82] The subject is now constrained to "objectify himself in a true discourse,"[83] one highly particularized, whose condition of possibility is the mode of subjectivation/objectification newly introduced by the hermeneutic of desire, according to which the truth of the subject is that of his hidden desires. The type of discourse in which this form of individualization of the truth is expressed is the confession, in which henceforth "the subject of the enunciation must be the referent of the statement."[84]

With Christian thought, the demands of spirituality are thus doubly inflected. On the one hand the latter begins to separate from philosophy, and on the other it takes the form of a new mode of subjectivation/objectification whereby the subject becomes the object of an individual knowledge, the centre of his own discourse, an ungraspable entity whose truth must be revealed in the ceaselessly renewed movement of the examination of consciousness, then of confession. Interestingly, the Christian mode of subjectivation somehow anticipates that of Man in the Analytic of Finitude in condemning the subject to seek to recapture himself in an impossible originary (the point at which our desires are born, the "*arcana conscientiae*,"[85] the secrets of the conscience). Just as for Man, the Christian subject is structurally destined both to seek self-transparency and to withdraw from himself.[86] However, the main difference between the Christian structure of subjectivation and that of modernity is that whereas the first remains grounded on the idea that spiritual transformation is necessary for access to the truth, in the Analytic of Finitude both the position of Man as empirico-transcendental doublet and that of truth itself are understood as purely epistemological.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Parallel to the development of Christian spirituality, the second tendency to emerge from the Antique model is the progressive eclipse of the care of the self from the philosophical realm, itself more and more taken over by the idea of objective knowledge with a correspondingly universal and detached position for the subject of knowledge. For Foucault, this mutation was paradoxically facilitated by the development of theology in the fifth to the twelfth centuries[87]:

> the correspondence between an all knowing God, and subjects that are all capable of knowing (provided of course that they have faith), is doubtless one of the main elements which caused Western thought, and in particular philosophical thought, to disengage, emancipate and separate itself from the conditions of spirituality which had accompanied it so far, and whose most general formulation was the *epimeleia heautou*.[88]

The refocusing by theologians on the rational nature of man, a nature universally shared and always already present as divine gift, anticipates the Cartesian idea of the universally knowing subject. Nevertheless the crucial step is the birth of Cartesianism[89]: "the reason why this precept of the care of the self was forgotten . . . this reason that I will call the "Cartesian moment" . . . had a double effect: by qualifying *gnôthi seauton* and by disqualifying *epimeleia heautou*."[90] What disqualifies the care of the self is the idea that "it is sufficient for the subject to be what he is to have, through knowledge, an access to truth that is opened to him by his own subjective structure."[91] This structure is defined by the possibility of knowing a priori and evidently certain representations (innate ideas), without any spiritual transformation being necessary. Thus "the Cartesian procedure . . . placed at the origin, at the point of departure of the philosophical procedure, evidence – evidence such as it appears, that is such as is given to consciousness, without any possible doubt."[92] The privileged point of the manifestation of such evidence is the Cartesian *cogito*, in which the subject finds an irrefutable proof of his own existence and of his identity as a thinking thing. In opposition to the Antique and Christian modes of subjectivation, the Cartesian position thus excludes the spiritual demand originally carried by the *epimeleia heautou*. It shares with the hermeneutic of desire the idea that the subject can be the object of a specific knowledge, but in contrast with the opacity of Christian interiority, the "self" of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

philosophical knowledge is immediately captured within the clarity of self-consciousness understood as *res cogitans*. The foundation of the Cartesian structure of subjectivation is this transparency of the soul to itself (the latter being "easier to know than the body," as the *Meditations* indicate): "in placing the evidence of the subject's own existence at the very principle of the access to being, it really was this knowledge of oneself . . . which made the "know thine own self" a fundamental access to the truth."[93]

For Foucault, the birth of the Cartesian structure of subjectivation has three main consequences. Firstly, it redefines philosophical methodology, henceforth dominated by "the model of scientific practice."[94] "The subject as such has become capable of truth"[95]; nevertheless, each individual's potential for accessing the truth, in order to be actualised, requires an ordering of the internal flux of representations, through which the universality of the knowledge is guaranteed. This ordering is the method,[96] carefully distinguished by Foucault from the Antique or Christian "spiritual exercise." Whereas the latter consisted of the careful observation of the free play of representations, the Cartesian method seeks to impose on it a systematic and rational law of succession, through which the sequence of representations is fixed in a logical and universally identifiable form. Thus

> the method is a form of reflexivity which allows the certitude which could serve as a criterion for all possible truth to be fixed and which, from there, from this fixed point, will lead from truth to truth until the organization and systematization of an objective knowledge is achieved.[97]

The conditions of access to the truth are no longer tied to spirituality, but to the structure of the act of knowing itself as defined by the method. Secondly, there appears with the method a new mode of objectification by which a uniform and infinite domain is opened, that of the objects represented by the subject of knowledge, and which can be examined, decomposed and recomposed by the mind with certainty and universality. By contrast, the idea of a systematic exploration of representations by a universally knowing subject was absent from the two preceding phases of the history of subjectivity – from Antiquity because the idea of such a subject didn't exist, and from the hermeneutic of the subject because the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

analysis of representations focused on their origin, and not on their content.

The last modification introduced by Cartesianism is the appearance of a new conception of truth:

> I believe that the Modern age of the history of truth . . . begins from the moment . . . the philosopher becomes capable of recognizing the truth in himself and by his acts of knowledge alone, and can have access to it.[98]

As we have seen, Antiquity as much as early Christianity was founded on an ontological conception of truth as a revelation transforming the ethical substance of the subject. With the Cartesian emancipation of philosophy from spirituality, this conception disappears:

> it is clear that knowledge of the Cartesian type could not be defined as access to the truth: but rather as knowledge of a domain of objects. So there, if you like, the notion of knowledge of the object has just replaced the notion of access to the truth.[99]

To know the truth is no longer to be illuminated by the intelligible or by divine revelation; neither is it any more to be led by the discourse of the parrhesiast, nor to bring to light one's own truth as an individual subject through the play of the examination of conscience and of confession. Access to truth now takes the form of objective knowledge, regulated by the method, whose criteria are the internal coherence of discourse and the adequation of representation to the real. Knowledge of the world becomes knowledge of physical causes[100]: Philosophy becomes epistemology. In front of it, an infinite field is opened (that of the objects represented), in which the progress of knowledge seems both unlimited and autonomous: "access to the truth, which henceforth no longer has any other condition than knowledge, will find in knowledge, as recompense and as accomplishment, nothing but the indefinite progress of knowledge."[101] Conversion as the ultimate horizon of the philosophical enterprise disappears: "such as it is, truth can no longer save the subject,"[102] for the good reason that the subject, now master of his representations, no longer needs saving.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

THE HISTORY OF SUBJECTIVITY III: THE KANTIAN MOMENT OR THE REINFORCING OF CARTESIANISM – RE-READING THE ANALYTIC OF FINITUDE

The formation of the 'Cartesian theatre' thus represents for Foucault the first triumph of philosophy as epistemology. It guarantees for all individuals a universal and a priori access to the truth. It has none of the obscurities characteristic equally (for different reasons) of the hermeneutic of desire and of the Analytic of Finitude: Everything in it can be observed and grasped by the mind, whereas conversely the knowing subject is postulated as transparent to itself.[103] However, it is precisely this transparency that the next stage of the history of subjectivity, the Kantian moment, will cloud. *The Hermeneutic of the Subject* alludes to Kant's influence in terms that evoke the earlier, archaeological analysis of the Copernican turn[104]:

> Descartes said: philosophy is sufficient alone for knowledge, and . . . Kant completed it by saying: if knowledge has limits, they are wholly contained within the very structure of the knowing subject, i.e. within the very thing that makes knowledge possible.[105]

The question of the limits of representation was thus displaced from the analysis of representations to that of the faculties of the knowing subject, which corresponds exactly to the analyses of chapter seven of *The Order of Things*. Another passage underlines the subsequent anthropological derailing of transcendental idealism as follows:

> by taking Descartes as reference point, . . . [one has] with Kant the extra turn of the screw [*tour de spire*], which consists in saying: what we are not capable of knowing is the very structure of the knowing subject, *which makes it impossible for us to know it*.[106]

This "extra turn of the screw" is the transition from the transcendental subject to Man, and the corresponding retreat of the later from the space of his own knowledge examined above. Between the idea that the limits of knowledge are contained within the very structure of the knowing subject and the claim that the "very structure of the knowing subject makes it impossible for us to know it" stretches the wide distance that separates the *Critique* and the *Anthropology*. As we have seen, the reason why the knowing subject is structurally

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

unknowable is the instability of Man as an empirico-transcendental doublet.

At this stage of the reconstruction of the history of subjectivity, Foucault's description of Kant's position thus seems very close to that of *The Order of Things*. But it differs on two essential points. Firstly, Kant is now considered as a *continuer* of Cartesianism, and not as the initiator of a new mode of discursivity. The fundamental epistemic rupture that initiates modernity thus dates back not to Kant, but to Descartes's invention of the universal knowing subject and of truth as the representation of the real. To be sure, transcendental idealism doubly complicated this picture: The critical movement redefined the position of the knowing subject (as transcendental subject) and showed that the adequationalist conception of truth is itself dependent on transcendental conditions, which alone can open up the realm of experience.[107] Moreover, the anthropological reinterpretation of Man as an empirico-transcendental doublet introduced an added weight of complexity by showing the impossibility of the self-transparency on which the Cartesian theatre rested, and thus by destroying the possibility of giving knowledge a sure foundation (since its limits are destined to dissolve in the different figures of the originary engendered by the Analytic of Finitude). It remains nonetheless that the Kantian heritage rests on the same archaeological presuppositions as Cartesianism, that is, the definition of philosophy as epistemology and of the knowing subject as autonomous and endowed by its nature alone with the power to know. The aporiae of the Analytic of Finitude now appear as the long-term consequence of the epistemologisation of philosophy to the detriment of its spiritual dimension.

However, this first modification in the interpretation of modernity's philosophical situation is particularly important as it may suggest a way out of the Analytic of Finitude. Indeed, if the main reason for the impossible position of philosophy comes from the mode of subjectivation/objectification introduced by Descartes, and so from the divorce between knowledge and spirituality, couldn't the solution to the anthropological dilemma, if it exists, lie in the definition of a new position for the subject, which would reincorporate the demand for the transformation of the self? This is where the second significant difference between the readings of modernity presented by *The Order of Things* and *The Hermeneutic of the Subject* comes into

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

play. The first showed the development of nineteenth and twentieth century thought as fully governed by the empirico-transcendental doubling, with the variations studied previously. But the lecture course of 1982 introduces an important modification in this picture by questioning the epistemic hegemony of Man. Thus, "if one goes to the other side, from Kant on, I believe that there again, one will see that *the structures of spirituality have not disappeared*, neither from philosophical reflection nor perhaps from knowledge."[108] Foucault mentions as examples Hegel, Schelling, Nietzsche, the Husserl of the *Crisis*, and Heidegger. Yet although Nietzsche's inclusion is not surprising, as he had already been identified in *The Order of Things* as one of the few thinkers to thwart the anthropological sleep,[109] Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Husserl were previously all placed under the aegis of the Analytic of Finitude! By contrast, they now occupy an ambiguous position. On the one hand, they reaffirm the primacy of the epistemological perspective issued from the Cartesian turn (although for different reasons, the first two being metaphysicians of the object and the last a pioneer of the failed explorations of the transcendental), and are thus well lodged "within a philosophy that, since Cartesianism, in any case since the philosophy of the seventeenth century, one attempted to move away from these same [spiritual] structures."[110] Yet on the other hand these authors are out of step with the anthropological episteme because "in all these philosophies, a certain structure of spirituality tries to connect knowledge, the act of knowing, the conditions of this act and its effects, to a transformation in the being of the subject."[111] The idea that a necessary transformation of the subject's being is necessary to attain the truth was excluded by the Kantian definition of Man as an empirico-transcendental doublet, which attributed a position to the subject that was very ambiguous, but purely epistemological (as condition of possibility of knowledge); moreover, it was *immutable in its very instability*, which is the reason why the empirico-transcendental duality was found to be unsurpassable (hence the Analytic of Finitude).

Foucault's renewed interest in Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Heidegger can thus be attributed to the fact that he now sees that these authors also attempted to recontextualise epistemology and to tie the acquisition of knowledge to the idea of self-transformation. For Hegel consciousness must transform itself

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

dialectically to achieve absolute knowledge; for Schopenhauer, the acquisition of wisdom is conditional on the will's ethical self-renunciation[112]; for Nietzsche, only the Overman is able to bear the "the heaviest weight" mentioned by *The Gay Science*, and thus of asserting the supreme truth – the Eternal Return; finally, for Heidegger the possibility of going beyond epistemology and of establishing an enriched relation to the everyday depends on the ethical transformation of the subject described in division two of *Being and Time*. According to Foucault, what was implicitly at stake in all these philosophies is a return of the *epimeleia heautou* by which the *gnôthi seauton* was put into perspective, both in its imperative character (knowledge not being per se an end) and in its conditions of possibility (as knowledge can only be truly acquired, that is, become capable of introducing changes in practices, if the subject becomes authentic). Conversely, the reason why Foucault criticizes Marxism in the lecture course of 1982 is not only that it is an eschatological form of forgetfulness of the transcendental, as the *Order of Things* suggested, but also that, although

> it takes up on its own account the demands, the questions . . . of the *epimeleia heautou* and thus of spirituality as condition of access to the truth . . . , it tried to mask these conditions of spirituality . . . within a certain number of social forms – the idea of a class position, the effects of the Party, of belonging to a group.[113]

Marxism is thus guilty of having presupposed, but without problematising it, the question of the subject's relation to the truth, and of having surreptitiously displaced the connection between philosophy and spirituality from the ethical domain towards positivism, and thus of giving a deterministic version of the *epimeleia heautou*.

A HOPE FOR MODERNITY? THE RETURN OF SPIRITUALITY AND ITS DIFFICULTIES

To the end of his life, Foucault remained faithful to the idea that with and since Kant the evolution of thought has been dominated by the historical a priori of Man as empirico-transcendental doublet. But in the 1982 lecture course, our philosophical inheritance is now presented as divided against itself. On the one hand, the main philosophical currents of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries maintained

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the primacy of epistemology; yet on the other hand, some of these thinkers sought to overcome the Cartesian perspective they inherited by recontextualising the desire to know, and by reestablishing the spiritual self-transformation of the subject as the end and condition of possibility of knowledge. This recontextualisation affected the epistemological level itself by producing definitions of the subject that contested the fusion and confusion maintained in Man between the transcendental and the empirical. Thus the ethical transformations proposed by Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche can be interpreted as examples of such an overcoming of the anthropological structure: Once consciousness has reached the level of "Reason," it is able to see beyond the "bad infinity" of the understanding, for which alone the empirico-transcendental distinction remains fixed; the Schopenhauerian ascetic, in renouncing himself, is able to reconcile noumena and phenomena in a common pacification; finally, one of the conditions of the transmutation of Nietzsche's Overman is that the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental be recognized as an mistake caused by the forms of schematisation belonging to the will to truth.[114]

The vicious circle of the Analytic of Finitude is thus opposed, at least schematically, by a renaissance of the neo-Platonic virtuous circle. In contrast with Man, an ambiguous but fixed structure, the spiritual subject is engaged in a perpetual self-transfiguration through which the more he is transformed by his knowledge, the more he becomes suited to know. However, this renaissance presupposes the abandonment of the impossible demand for an absolute foundation for philosophical knowledge as well as of the scientific model of truth. As Foucault urgently states, it is highly desirable to emancipate philosophical knowledge from the scientific model, and to

> constitute an ethics of the self . . . , an urgent, fundamental, politically indispensable task, . . . if it is true after all that there is no more primary and ultimate point of resistance to political power than in the relationship with the self.[115]

I have indicated elsewhere the reasons why only the ethic of self can form the heart of resistance to power[116] and the ways in which it renews the Antique connection between knowledge and self-transformation. Instead, I would like to question here the presuppositions and possible consequences of the idea that only a return

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to philosophy's original spiritual vocation can save it from the Analytic of Finitude, by taking as an example the evolution of Foucault's thought itself.

As a philosophical method, archaeology did belong to the purely epistemological trend criticised by later Foucault, in that it sought to think the conditions of possibility of knowledge solely in reference to the discursive level, independently of any specific positioning for the subject (with the exception, we have seen, of modernity). At this stage of Foucault's work, the adequationist conception of truth was implicitly maintained but bracketed by the archaeologist's neutrality, and referred to its epistemic conditions, that is, the historical a priori as what defines the acceptability of discourses. After, and no doubt thanks to, the attention newly brought by genealogy to non-discursive practices and their rooting at the political level, Foucault returned to the question of the conditions of possibility of knowledge in the terms that we have just looked at, which subordinate the epistemic perspective of archaeology to the horizon of the ethical transformation of the subject. Correspondingly, the position occupied by Foucault himself as subject of his own discourse changed. In his last texts he is no longer the detached observer of the modifications in the conditions of possibility of human knowledge: His discourse has acquired a performative vocation, and is now meant to generate within his readers the very kind of ethical transformation it describes – an emancipating awareness of their historical and political situation, of the relations of subjectivation/objectification that they are inscribed within, and of the mechanisms of subjection to which they are submitted by bio-power. Foucault's analysis of Antique spirituality has implicitly acquired a unity of form and meaning in which the description of the aesthetic of existence becomes the operator of ethical transformations. Strikingly, this brings to mind another characteristic of Antiquity, namely the parrhesiastic understanding of the truth.[117] Later Foucault spoke in his own name and addressed his readers as a parrhesiast, whose life, personal engagement, and even the manner in which he handled the coming of his own death testified to its authenticity.

Although the power and seduction of such a model are evident, it nonetheless presents two problems. Firstly, the parrhesiastic conception of truth examined above is not, and never was, *self-standing*.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Originally, it depended on a metaphysical understanding of truth as the intelligible world, access to which performed the transformation of the master before being passed onto the disciple by his example.[118] The truth of the parrhesiast's discourse was *testified* and made communicable by the adequation between his ethical substance and his words, but not ultimately *grounded* in his person. But Foucault's analysis of the evolution of knowledge in the West shows that this ontological conception of truth progressively fell into disuse due to the growing epistemologisation of philosophy. The parrhesiastic characteristics of Foucault's discourse cannot therefore per se be sufficient to found its truth – a point of which Foucault is aware, and to which I shall return later. Secondly and correspondingly, the parrhesiastic model is not a *general* model of truth: The adequation between the discourse of the master and his ethical substance can only function as the visible expression of truth if this knowledge has an *ethical* dimension. In the case of Antiquity this was not really a limitation, as the indissolubility of the *gnôthi seauton* and *epimeleia heautou* meant that only those forms of knowledge that had such a potential counted as valuable and worthy of being pursued (hence the rejection of the objective knowledge of causes by Demetrius mentioned in note 100). But the context of contemporary thought is defined precisely by the autonomy of the epistemological understanding of the truth, that is, the inheritance of the Cartesian divorce between philosophy and spirituality. Further, Foucault points out that in this new configuration the very idea that knowledge of truth can transform the subject is now considered as a criterion of *non-validity*: One can

> identify a false science from the fact that it demands, in order to be accessible, a conversion of the subject and that it promises at the end of its development a conversion of the subject. . . . One can identify a false science from its spiritual structure.[119]

The dominant model is now that of a fundamental *incompatibility* between science and spirituality, which seems to invalidate in advance, or at least render extremely problematic, the very possibility of a return to the parrhesiast model of thinking truth.

Foucault thus finds himself in an uncomfortable position. Since the parrhesiastic characteristics of his discourse are insufficient to guarantee its truth, and since the Antique ontological understanding

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of truth has become obsolete, he has to turn towards the currently dominant model, the scientific paradigm. Paradoxically, in order to gain acceptability his discourse has to take up the scientific norms whose influence he is challenging – precise quotation and translation, maximal exhaustivity, rejection of internal contradictions, extensive critical apparatus, and so on. In doing so, he implicitly reaffirms the power of the very conception that he is trying to contest, as these criteria are considered independently of the potential for self-transformation of his work, There therefore exists a strong tension between the scientific *form* that his discourse must assume to be acceptable (and to ground the parrhesiast model), and its *content*, as the very nature of the contemporary epistemological paradigm appears to deny the very idea that is central to later Foucault, that of an intrinsic connection between the truth of a proposition and its ethical effects. Foucault's thought thus appears caught between a rock and a hard place, since the idea of overcoming epistemology with a return to the ethical through which alone the aporiae of the anthropological a priori might be overcome has the unforeseen and unfortunate consequence of referring philosophy back to the scientific perspective that it sought to emancipate itself from. As Foucault indicates, reinforcing epistemology leads to the mirages of naturalism, which believes itself capable of defining the field and content of knowledge independently of any examination of the corresponding positions of subjectivity. But inversely, to choose to ignore this epistemological demand and to engage in a purely spiritual understanding of truth – like Nietzsche, for example, who attempted to revive the pre-Socratic view of truth as mastery of truth and judge the truth of a discourse solely by its ethical consequences[120] – is to exposure philosophy to charges of irrationality or prophecy. If we take seriously Foucault's demand for a return to spirituality, which seems desirable, we nonetheless have to admit that it becomes very difficult to assign to philosophy a form of truth that would preserve its status as a autonomous discipline without returning it to the primacy to the sciences or making a new religion of it. This difficulty does not necessarily mean that such a task would be impossible, but it certainly indicates that the way out of the Analytic of Finitude, if it exists, is no doubt more problematic than the "reconstitution of an aesthetic and ethic of the self"[121] proposed by the last Foucault.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

NOTES

1 Michel Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits*, vol. IV (Paris, Gallimard, 1994), 632 (Han's italics). Henceforth *DEIV*.
2 Ibid. These are defined as "what the subject must be, which condition he is subjected to, which status he must have . . . to become the legitimate subject of such or such type of knowledge."
3 Ibid. These are the set of conditions under which "something has been able to become an object for possible knowledge, the way it could be problematised as an object to know, the kind of carving up process it was subjected to, the part of it that was considered relevant."
4 *DEIV*, 635.
5 *DEIV*, 636.
6 *DEIV*, 634. Han's italics.
7 *DEIV*, 632.
8 Béatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), in particular section II, chapter 1.
9 *DEIV*, 633: "this is about the history of subjectivity, if one understands by the latter the manner in which the subject experiences himself in a truth game where he is in relation with himself."
10 For example, Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet* (Paris, Gallimard, 2001), 24th March 1982, 443–444. Henceforth *HS*.
11 *HS*, 16.
12 Ibid. See also *HS*, 305.
13 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York, Vintage Books, 1994), 342. Henceforth *OT*.
14 *HS*, 305.
15 *OT*, 344.
16 Ibid.
17 *OT*, 341.
18 Han, *Foucault's Critical Project*, section I, chapter 1.
19 B. Han, "Foucault and Heidegger on Kant and Finitude," in A. Milchman and A. Rosenberg, eds., *Foucault/Heidegger: Critical Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 127–162.
20 Han, *Foucault's Critical Project*, section I, chapter 2.
21 Michel Foucault, *Commentaire*, 60. This is Foucault's unpublished Thèse complémentaire de Doctorat (128 pp.). There are copies at the Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne and at the Centre Michel Foucault. Henceforth *Com*.
22 In the "Transcendental Aesthetic."
23 In the "Analogies of Experience."

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

24 J. Derrida, *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990). The parallelism is made particularly relevant by Foucault's criticism of Husserl; see below.
25 *Com*, 60.
26 *OT*, 250. Italics added.
27 *OT*, 248.
28 *OT*, 248.
29 *OT*, 321.
30 See Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Brighton, U.K.: Harvester Press, 1982). See also Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
31 *OT*, 242.
32 P. Lacoue Labarthe and J. L. Nancy, *The Literary Absolute* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).
33 *OT*, 244. Han's italics.
34 Ibid. Translation modified.
35 *OT*, 250.
36 *OT*, 245.
37 *OT*, 317. Translation modified.
38 *OT*, 245.
39 Ibid.
40 *OT*, 320.
41 Also see *OT*, 319–320.
42 *OT*, 248.
43 Ibid.
44 Foucault does not indicate any particular reason for this failure. In particular, he does not allude to the debate between Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling about the transcendental deduction.
45 *OT*, 248.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 There are some elements in Husserl's work that allow Foucault's criticism to be filled in. For example, the passage from static to genetic phenomenology led Husserl to discover a passivity specific to the transcendental ego, which caused the distinction, in the *Cartesian Meditations*, between the "pole-ego" (*Ichpol*) and the life of the ego (*Ichleben*) as a "concrete ego" always already given (§53). This concrete ego is a lived ego that cannot be dissociated from the constituting activity of the pole-ego (Husserl calls the unity of the two "monadic"). The concrete ego has two forms of passivity: "originary passivity" (*ursprüngliche Passivität*), that of the affects, pulsions, and instincts that underlie intentionality;

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and another, secondary passivity, which is the obscure sedimentation of our intentional acts into an *habitus* (see the example of piano playing, *Ideen*, II, §5). The concrete ego is thus an underlying layer (*Untergrund*) of character, latent originary dispositions, which *are dependent on nature* (*Ideen* II, §61). Because of this, the noesis/noema correlation cannot be analysed at the pure level of the transcendental: It has its roots in the life and history of the concrete ego, which does suggest, as Foucault asserts, that the transcendental constitution of objects is dependent on anthropological finitude. One certainly could object that for Husserl, "concrete" is not identical to "empirical." For lack of space, I won't engage in this debate, the point of this footnote being simply to show that Foucault's criticism, although schematic, is not irrelevant.

49 *OT*, 321.

50 It is difficult to know what Foucault is alluding to here. Obviously, Merleau Ponty's analyses in the *Phenomenology of Perception* match this description fairly well. But the passage could equally apply to Husserl.

51 *OT*, 321.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid. Modified.

54 *OT*, 339. Modified, Han's gloss in brackets.

55 *OT*, 314. Han's italics, her gloss in brackets.

56 *OT*, 244.

57 *OT*, 313. Han's italics.

58 *HS*, 183.

59 Ibid.

60 Han, *Foucault's Critical Project*, sections II and mostly III.

61 There are nonnegligible differences between the Platonic and what Foucault calls the "Hellenistic" models. However, from the perspective I am interested in, both models have in common the impossibility to dissociate the access to truth and the necessity for the subject to transform himself.

62 *HS*, 182. See also 443.

63 *HS*, 69.

64 *HS*, 303. Han's italics.

65 NB: I followed Foucault in using the masculine to refer to the subject, the reason given by Foucault being that during Antiquity, only free male individuals could constitute themselves as subjects.

66 *HS*, 184.

67 *HS*, 304.

68 *HS*, 184.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

69 *HS*, 69.
70 *HS*, 303.
71 *HS*, 388.
72 *HS*, 389. See also Foucault's analysis of the *logoi* in Stoic thought (*HS*, 308) and his study of *paraskeuê* (preparation) (*HS*, 312ff.).
73 *HS*, 348ff.
74 *HS*, 391.
75 *HS*, 245.
76 Foucault mentions Augustine, *HS*, 345.
77 *HS*, 245.
78 *HS*, 308.
79 *HS*, 287.
80 *HS*, 225.
81 *HS*, 390–391.
82 *HS*, 345.
83 *HS*, 317.
84 *HS*, 391.
85 *HS*, 255ff. See also 209, 225, 267.
86 See Foucault's interesting distinction between the "antique athlete as an athlete of the event" and the Christian athlete as an "athlete of himself" (the first must be able to overcome any difficulty, and the second, to overcome himself and his desires). *HS*, 308.
87 *HS*, 184.
88 *HS*, 28. On the relation between spirituality and science, see also Foucault's interpretation of Faust and alchemy, 296–297.
89 Foucault nuances this claim in his analysis of Spinoza, a post-Cartesian thinker in whom the demand for spirituality remains. See *HS*, 16.
90 *HS*, 15.
91 *HS*, 183.
92 *HS*, 16.
93 Ibid.
94 *HS*, 183.
95 Ibid.
96 Thus, "it is enough to reason healthily, straightforwardly . . . to be capable of truth." *HS*, 183.
97 *HS*, 442. See also Foucault's distinction between the "three main forms of reflectivity in the West" (Platonic anamnesis, Stoic meditation, and Cartesian method).
98 *HS*, 19.
99 *HS*, 184.
100 Interestingly, Foucault refers *a contrario* to the causal model of explanation. He explains, with reference to Demetrius (during the Hellenistic

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

period), that knowledge through causes was rejected as philosophically irrelevant because it does not pertain to the good life and is of no use for the transformation of the subject's ethos.

101 *HS*, 20.

102 Ibid.

103 This confirms the analysis of the Classical age in *OT*, where Descartes also introduces a major break (the new transparency between being and representation).

104 *HS*, 255–256.

105 *HS*, 27.

106 *HS*, 183. Han's italics.

107 See in particular *Critique of Pure Reason*, the "Transcendental Doctrine of Elements" and the "Transcendental Logic."

108 *HS*, 30–31. Han's italics.

109 *OT*, 384–385.

110 *HS*, 30–31.

111 Ibid.

112 *HS*, 241.

113 *HS*, 30–31.

114 From the *Gay Science* on.

115 *HS*, 241.

116 B. Han, "Nietzsche and Foucault on Style: The Limits of the Aesthetic Paradigm," in Von Endre Kiss and Uschi Nussbaumer-Benz, eds., *Nietzsche, Postmodernismus und was nach ihhen kommt* (Cuxhaven, Germany: Junghans, 2000).

117 T. Flynn, "Foucault as Parrhesiast," in J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen, eds., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 102–119.

118 *HS*, 389.

119 *HS*, 30.

120 B. Han, "Nietzsche and the Masters of Truth: the Presocratics and Christ," in *Heidegger, Authenticity and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

121 *HS*, 241.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

HANS SLUGA

8 Foucault's Encounter with Heidegger and Nietzsche

How fruitful is it to relate Foucault to Heidegger and Nietzsche? What can be learned about the genesis of Foucault's thought from such a comparison? How does it illuminate the nature and content of his thought? How does it expand our understanding of the phenomena that Foucault explores? Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow have shown us how much one can gain from reading Foucault and Heidegger together.[1] Their book inspired Foucault to say to an interviewer, "Two of my friends in Berkeley wrote something about me and said that Heidegger was influential. Of course it was quite true, but no one in France has ever perceived it."[2] That does not mean, however, that Foucault should be read as a genuinely Heideggerian thinker, for one must also remember that he told the same interviewer that "Nietzsche was a revelation to me . . . I read him with great passion and broke with my life, left my job in the asylum, left France." He never attributed an equally crucial role to Heidegger. In contrast to the thesis put forward by Dreyfus and Rabinow, I consider it, in fact, more fruitful to read Foucault in Nietzschean terms. One must remember what he said in his last interview in 1984:

> I am simply a Nietzschean, and try as far as possible, on a certain number of issues, to see with the help of Nietzsche's texts – but also with anti-Nietzschean theses (which are nevertheless Nietzschean!) – what can be done in this or that domain. I attempt nothing else, but that I try to do well. (*FL*, 327)[3]

That declaration still leaves open to what extent we can consider Foucault a genuinely Nietzschean philosopher, but since he does not declare himself to be a Heideggerian in this passage we can, at least, conclude that Nietzsche weighed more for him in the end than

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Heidegger. However, that assessment is, in turn, made more difficult because Heidegger's relation to Nietzsche needs to be brought into the equation. Is it possible that Foucault read Nietzsche under Heidegger's influence and with Heidegger's eyes? We know, of course, that he also said in 1984, "I tried to read Nietzsche in the fifties, but Nietzsche by himself said nothing to me. Whereas Nietzsche and Heidegger – that was the philosophical shock" (*FL*, 326). But does this mean that Heidegger enlightened him with respect to Nietzsche or that he abandoned Heidegger in favor of Nietzsche? I believe that something like the latter is true, but to make that view compelling one would have to establish not only how Heidegger read Nietzsche and how Foucault read Heidegger, but also how Foucault read Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche and how he read Heidegger after reading Nietzsche himself.

Anyone setting out to examine Foucault's encounter with Heidegger and Nietzsche and, hence, the degree of his reliance on these two thinkers must take note of Foucault's words on this matter: "Heidegger has always been for me the essential philosopher," he declared in his last interview in 1984. "But I recognize that Nietzsche prevailed over him. . . . Nevertheless, these were my two fundamental experiences. . . . [T]hese are the two authors I have read most." In elaborating those claims, he also said on the same occasion,

> I started reading Hegel and Marx, and I began to read Heidegger in 1951 or 1952; then in 1952 or 1953, I no longer remember, I read Nietzsche. I still have the notes I took while reading Heidegger – I have tons of them! – and they are far more important than the ones I took on Hegel and Marx. My whole philosophical development was determined by my reading Heidegger. (*FL*, 326)

The words make evident that Foucault, at least at the moment of speaking, considered himself indebted to both Heidegger and Nietzsche. However, those words cannot be taken entirely at face value, impressive as they indubitably are. Although they are too specific to be dismissed offhand, they appear problematic for a number of reasons, and first of all because nothing quite anticipates them in Foucault's writings and earlier interviews. There are admittedly numerous references to Nietzsche in his work, but nowhere else does Foucault pay such fulsome tribute to Heidegger. Is it possible that in the face of his imminent death he was creating a new

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

myth for himself with no or little foundation in his actual life? Had he not, after all, presented himself once as "the masked philosopher" and begged his readers on another occasion to "leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order"?[4] Or are we to assume that, having been silent so long (for political reasons) about the extent of his philosophical debts, he found it necessary to set the record straight in this final interview? There are still other questions to ask about this last interview. How are we to reconcile Foucault's claim that Heidegger was one of the authors he had read most when he asserts in the same breath, "I don't know Heidegger well enough: I practically don't know *Being and Time* nor the things recently published. My knowledge of Nietzsche is much greater" (*FL*, 326)? What are we to make of the fact that the tons of Heidegger notes which he claims to have still in his possession have never shown up?[5] And what about the contradictory dates? On the one hand, Foucault says that he read both Heidegger and Nietzsche in the early 1950s, but he also maintains that Nietzsche meant nothing to him in the fifties. Does this mean that he read Nietzsche first in the fifties without the help of Heidegger and then once more after the fifties when he was familiar with Heidegger? Are we to conclude that Foucault's decisive encounter with both Heidegger and Nietzsche came only in the 1960s?

We know, of course, that Foucault often extemporized in his interviews and that he took occasional liberties with the facts and often accommodated himself to the assumptions and inclinations of his interviewers. A year before his last interview he, in fact, offered a substantially different account of how he had come to read Nietzsche. He claimed then to have read him initially "by chance" and, "curious as it may seem, from a perspective of inquiry into the history of knowledge – the history of reason: how does one elaborate a history of rationality?" In the same interview he described how he had considered the problem of reason, rationality, and the history of rationality originally from a phenomenological (Husserlian) perspective and how reading Nietzsche had proved "the point of rupture for me" by showing that "there is a history of the subject just as there is a history of reason." He went on to say at the time how he had found these same concerns in Canguilhem, who had also been "very interested in Nietzsche and was thoroughly receptive to what I was trying to do."[6] To this he added somewhat later in the same

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

interview that it had just come back to him why he had first read Nietzsche: "I read him because of Bataille, and Bataille because of Blanchot."[7] These claims made in 1983 correspond, in turn, to what he had told Duccio Trombadori in yet another interview in 1978. On that occasion he spoke of his discovery of Nietzsche "outside the university" (*IT*, 249). Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot together, he added, "were the authors who enabled me to free myself from the dominant influences in my university training in the early fifties – Hegel and phenomenology" (*IT*, 246). He had tried at the time to look for something different also from (Sartrean) existentialism and "I found it in my reading of Bataille and Blanchot and, through them, of Nietzsche" (*IT*, 247). It strikes us that none of what he said in either 1978 or 1983 – neither the claim that he read Nietzsche by chance and outside the university, nor that he read him because of an interest in the history of rationality and the subject, nor the belated observation that he read him because of Bataille and Blanchot – makes any reference to Heidegger, and it is far from obvious how Heidegger would have contributed to what, according to the 1978 and 1983 statements, concerned him in Nietzsche.

The two narratives can be reconciled, if we assume that Foucault is not quite accurate about the actual dates of his reading of Nietzsche. When he said, "I tried to read Nietzsche in the fifties," he may well have meant to say, "I tried to read Nietzsche in the **early** fifties," and this can easily be explained as a slip of the tongue. His first reading may well have been influenced by Bataille and Blanchot. Foucault may, indeed, have considered it also a chance encounter in so far as it was not part of his academic program at the time. While the final interview suggests that he came to understand Nietzsche through Heidegger, his remarks in the 1978 and 1983 interviews indicate then the following, more complex trajectory: (1) He first read Nietzsche with the help of Bataille and Blanchot. We can date this event fairly precisely, if we accept Foucault's statement that his interest in Nietzsche and Bataille did not interfere with his Marxism and that in 1950 he joined the Communist Party as a "Nietzschean communist" (*IT*, 249). Foucault's first, Bataille-inspired reading of Nietzsche took place, then, at the beginning of the fifties. (2) This reading led him to distance himself from the dominant influences of Hegelian, Husserlian, and Sartrean thought and, more broadly speaking, away from the prevailing academic opinions and attitudes. (3) That development, in turn, opened his eyes to the merits of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Heidegger, who he began to read in 1951 or 1952. (4) From this he turned, once more, to Nietzsche and now read him in 1953 inspired by his new, philosophical enthusiasm for Heidegger. (5) This new reading of Nietzsche proved a philosophical shock and turned him from an incipient Heideggerian into the man who could say "I am just a Nietzschean."

The year 1953 must therefore not be taken as the year when he first opened Nietzsche's books, but, rather, the date when he began to read them in a new way. It is in this sense that we must understand the comments of a number of witnesses cited in Didier Eribon's biography. Thus, Maurice Pinguet speaks of his friend's discovery of Nietzsche during a summer vacation in Italy in 1953: "Hegel, Marx, Freud, Heidegger – this was his framework in 1953, when the encounter with Nietzsche took place. I can still see Michel Foucault reading his *Untimely Meditations* in the sun, on the beach at Civitavecchia." That date is also given by Paul Veyne, who claims to have gotten it from Foucault himself (*E*, 62).[8] From that moment onwards, Nietzsche appears, in any case, to have played an increasingly important role in Foucault's philosophical life. Certainly, by the end of his time in Lille – that is, by the middle of 1955 – "Foucault began to talk a lot about Nietzsche and the book he wanted to devote to his new philosophical passion" (*E*, 62). By 1961, he was even contemplating a series of studies "in the light of a great Nietzschean inquiry." These were to draw on Nietzsche's demonstration "that the tragic structure on which the history of the Western world is based is none other than the rejection and forgetting of tragedy and its silent fallout." Relying, thus, broadly on themes from Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, Foucault suggested that one of the topics to be studied was to be our culture's "absolute dividing off of the dream," its basic rejection of dreams as mere hallucination even though man finds it impossible not to consult the dream "on the subject of his own truth." Another topic was to be the history of sexual prohibitions,

> the constantly shifting and obstinate forms of repression in our culture, and not to write a chronicle of morality or of tolerance, but to reveal how the limits of the Western world and the origins of its morality are its tragic division from the happy world and from desire.[9]

The evidence assembled so far confronts us with three questions: (1) To what extent was Foucault actually influenced by Heidegger?

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

(2) To what extent was he influenced by Nietzsche? (3) What was the nature of his transition from Heidegger to Nietzsche? Some readers have suggested that Heidegger's influence was surely minimal, whereas others have attached considerable importance to it. That Foucault mentions Heidegger only rarely by name is surely not enough to show that he had little significance for him. Only a comprehensive comparison of the two bodies of thought can settle that question. That Foucault mentions Nietzsche more frequently is, in turn, insufficient to establish a deep connection between the two. Here, too, a comprehensive comparison is needed to settle the issue. With regard to third question, it appears safe to assert that Foucault's early interest in Heidegger helped to stimulate his concern with Nietzsche. But it must also be said that Foucault's turn to Nietzsche was multiply overdetermined. Not only Heidegger and phenomenology seem to have contributed to it, but also Bataille and Canguilhem as well as Foucault's preoccupation with the history of rationality and the history of the subject, with tragedy, dream, and repression. A fully compelling story of how Heidegger and Nietzsche fit into the framework of Foucault's thought would evidently require an account of his total intellectual and philosophical development and of all the diverse forces that came to bear on it. This essay cannot undertake such a far-reaching project; it will, instead, seek to provide a series of specific suggestions on how one might go about in answering our three questions.

FOUCAULT AND HEIDEGGER

Foucault's claim in 1984 that Heidegger had always been for him "the essential philosopher" has led some interpreters to postulate a deep and lasting affinity between the two. But the remark is less decisive than they make it out to be, for the question is whether Foucault identified with the project of an "essential philosophizing." Given his often voiced ambiguity towards philosophy and his hesitations over calling himself a philosopher at all and given the way he sought to combine philosophical reasoning with scholarly, historical inquiry, it appears possible to conclude that essential philosophy was not Foucault's concern. If Foucault meant by "essential philosophy," moreover, a thinking that proceeds at the highest level of generality and concerns itself with "Being," "Nothingness," "*Dasein*," "the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Earth," and so on, one might even conclude that Foucault's characterization of Heidegger as an essential thinker was meant to distance him from that philosopher and to align him instead with Nietzsche. Foucault certainly never said "I am just a Heideggerian" (not even in his last interview) in the way he declared himself to be "just a Nietzschean." He did admittedly say that his reading of Heidegger had determined his whole philosophical development, but this is not the same as saying that the substance of Heidegger's thought had determined his course of development, or that he had held Heidegger's positive doctrines at any time, and it certainly does not mean that he remained in any sense a Heideggerian for the rest of his life.[10]

If Heidegger had a lasting influence on Foucault's thought, it will require "deep" reading to bring that out. The authors of a recent collection of essays on Foucault and Heidegger show what effort it takes to unearth the supposedly Heideggerian elements in Foucault's work. First and foremost among these is Hubert Dreyfus, who expanded and modified his earlier account of Foucault's relation to Heidegger by arguing that there are "rough parallels" between the two thinkers that "suggest that it might be illuminating to see how far the comparison of Heidegger's 'Being' with Foucault's 'Power' can be pushed" (*MR*, 30). According to Dreyfus, the two thinkers employ these concepts roughly analogously for the understanding of cultural "practices." He concludes that "we will find Foucault's view approaching Heidegger's, as the two thinkers focus their analysis on the understanding of being characteristic of modernity" (*MR*, 36–37). They differ, however, in the practical conclusions they draw from their corresponding insights. In contrast to Heidegger, Foucault follows Nietzsche "in affirming a continual instability in the practices defining both self and culture." Nietzsche, thus, won out in Foucault's ethical thinking (but, according to Dreyfus, only there). Once we bracket such concerns, Dreyfus concludes, "the structure of Foucault's thought is thoroughly Heideggerian" (*MR*, 50). This account of Foucault's relation to Heidegger is certainly ingenious. It seeks to make a precise distinction between Heidegger's and Nietzsche's contribution to Foucault's thought and locates the dividing line in Foucault's later writings, whereas most interpreters find Heidegger's influence most clearly expressed in Foucault's early work. In support of his interpretation, Dreyfus sets out to detail multiple parallels between Heidegger's concept of Being

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and Foucault's concept of power. In other words, he finds an affinity between the two thinkers precisely where most interpreters consider Foucault indebted to Nietzsche. In this undertaking Dreyfus is, however, not primarily interested in tracing the exact genealogy of Foucault's thought; his concern is, rather, to make the phenomena Foucault describes do work for his own essentially Heideggerian project.

Other interpreters are, by contrast, primarily concerned with what they see as the historical truth and find it easiest to tie Heidegger's name to Foucault's earlier writings. Thus, Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg argue in the introduction to their volume that "the presence of Heidegger is overwhelming" in Foucault's earliest texts (*MR*, 4). They have in mind here his introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's *Dream and Existence* and his book on *Mental Illness and Personality*. Both works were published in 1954 and thus may belong to the period in which Foucault had discovered Heidegger but when Nietzsche had still come to him as a shock. Heidegger is, indeed, mentioned in both texts, but it is rash overstatement to say that his presence in them is overwhelming. In the first of these texts Foucault undertakes to situate Binswanger's existential analysis "within the development of the contemporary reflection on man" (*DIE*, 31).[11] The working dimensions of this kind of "anthropology" are, he says, defined by "the context of an ontological reflection whose major theme is presence-to-being, existence, Dasein." In the two pages that follow he lays out a framework of ideas that is most familiar to us from Heidegger's *Being and Time* but that he ascribes mostly to Paul Häberlin's 1941 book *Der Mensch: Eine Philosophische Anthropologie*. This is a curious since Häberlin provides him, in fact, only with the idea of a philosophical anthropology but uses none of the language and concepts of Heideggerian philosophy. Häberlin was, in fact, in no way attached to Heidegger's ideas. In his 1952 book *Philosophia Perennis* he chided Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein*, indeed, as fatally flawed.[12] We must conclude then that Foucault deliberately obscured his debt to Heidegger in his contribution to the Binswanger book. This may support the conjecture that Foucault kept consciously silent about the influence Heidegger had on him. But even when we grant this, it does not follow that Heidegger's influence was overwhelming in 1954 and that Foucault was deeply familiar with the intricacies of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. And that

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

because after the first two pages of his introduction Foucault sets his broadly Heideggerian considerations abruptly aside with the remark,

> Detouring through a more or less Heideggerian philosophy is not some initiatory rite which might open a door to the esotericism of the analysis of *Dasein*. The philosophical problems are there; but they are not preconditions. Therefore, we may dispense with an introduction which summarizes *Being and Time* in numbered paragraphs, and we are free to proceed less rigorously. (*DIE*, 33)

He then proceeds to discuss dreams, Freud, Husserl, and dreams again to return finally to the philosophical concerns with which he had begun by asking how "the essential directions of *Existenz*, which form the anthropological structure of its entire history" are constituted (*DIE*, 64). The answers he provides are, once again, cast in a Heideggerian language, but they are hardly Heideggerian in content. Binswanger's analysis, he says, has brought out the structure of temporality. It has shown that "time is in essence nostalgic," that "the time of the epic is circular or reiterative," and that "in the opposition of light and dark" time is "marked by oscillations" in which "absence is always a pledge of return, and death, the pledge of resurrection" (*DIE*, 64). It is in the same non-Heideggerian tone that he goes on to speak also about authenticity and historicity. In Foucault's *Mental Illness and Psychology* Heidegger's presence is even more uncertain. Heidegger appears only once directly, in reference to Roland Kuhn's study of schizophrenics. Foucault writes that "for the patient, the world of *Zuhandenen*, to use Heidegger's term, is merely a world of *Vorhandenen*."[13] The question is whether this casual remark justifies a Heideggerian interpretation of the whole text, which is, after all, for the most part concerned with psychiatry rather than philosophy.

More common is the identification of a Heideggerian element in Foucault's *Order of Things*. Thus, Kevin Hill is convinced that a comparison of that book and Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* "with the central views of *Being and Time* strongly suggests that it is primarily Heidegger that Foucault has in mind" (*MR*, 8). And Michael Schwartz postulates that "the principal terms of investigation" in Foucault's *Order of Things* "are decidedly Heideggerian." The book, in fact, "rewrites the history of Being as an epistemic history of the experience of order" (*MR*, 163). These judgments are based

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

on the observation that both Heidegger and Foucault advance an epochal conception of history. But such conceptions have been familiar since Nietzsche and are reflected in the work of Oskar Spengler and Max Weber, among others. Foucault's periodization differs, moreover, from Heidegger's, and his critique of the idea of origin in *The Order of Things* may, indeed, reflect an implicit critique of Heidegger. Stuart Elden argues, by contrast, that "Foucault's *connaissance/savoir* distinction parallels Heidegger's ontic–ontological difference" and deduces from this a "continuity between two of the twentieth century's foremost thinkers" (*MR*, 202). But this overlooks the fact that discourses are, for Foucault, situated at the level of historical specificity and not that of ontology.

I do not want to claim that these summary objections are at all decisive; they are meant to indicate only that all these Heideggerian readings of Foucault require further buttressing and that in all of them supposedly Heideggerian elements are assumed to lie deep beneath the surface of Foucault's texts. Other interpreters seek to argue more broadly, like Jean Zougrana, that Foucault sought throughout "to think with Heidegger, but beyond Heidegger" (*MR*, 6). Or they assert with Ladelle McWhorter that "a careful reading" of the two thinkers "can generate an appreciation for the similarities in their critiques of traditional conceptions of subjectivity" and that the paths of these thinkers, "however different they may be . . . converge in the nonplace of difference" (*MR*, 124). Or they maintain, as Béatrice Han does in another context, that "the Heideggerian ontology could be read as the unthought of Foucault's oeuvre" and, hence, as that "which worked within it without being able to be clearly formulated."[14] One need not dismiss such interpretative strategies offhand, but they surely call for extreme caution. The repeated appeals to "reading" and "careful reading" of what is not immediately visible to the human eye, the references to the "structure" of Foucault's thought, to its "principal terms," the attempts to identify what Foucault had "in mind," all the talk of "suggestions," "structural correspondences," "similarities," "convergences," "parallels," "continuities," and "the unthought" indicate that the interpreters have been engaged in the sort of deep hermeneutics of which Foucault himself expressed justified suspicion when he vowed "we shall remain, or try to remain at the level of discourse itself" (*AK*, 48).[15] Foucault also warned us that "there is no sub-text. And

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

therefore no plethora. The enunciative domain is identical with its surface" (*AK*, 119). In consequence, he sought to steer us away from "the obstinacy of a meaning transmitted, forgotten, and rediscovered" (*AK*, 119). Following this advice, we should probably pursue other strategies than those employed by the interpreters and seek to determine at the level of positivities where Foucault employs the names of Heidegger and Nietzsche and where not, where he uses one kind of word and where another, where his object of discussion and the strategies of his thought are those we find also in Heidegger or Nietzsche. In short, we should probably forgo the attempt at a deep reading of Foucault's texts and the wish to discover behind their discursive forms the face of one German philosopher or another.

It might be objected here that Foucault in his last interview distinguishes between "three categories of philosophers: those I don't know; those I know and discuss; and those I know and don't discuss." Although he has never written on Heidegger and only one short article on Nietzsche, he also says that it was "important to have a small number of authors with whom one thinks, with whom one works, but on whom one doesn't write." And he suggests that "perhaps some day I'll write about them, but at that point they will no longer be instruments of thought for me" (*FL*, 326). These remarks should not, however, be taken to justify uncontrolled speculation about the Heideggerian or Nietzschean character of this or that Foucauldian text. If we are to say that Heidegger is present in these texts and Nietzsche in those others, that fact must show itself in some fashion or other at the surface of the text itself. There may, for all we know, be entirely hidden influences on Foucault's thought, but they must be left where they belong, at the level of the unthought. A final caution is, moreover, that Foucault's claim that Heidegger and Nietzsche are authors with whom he works and whom he uses as "instruments of thought" does not imply that the substance of his thought is Heideggerian or Nietzschean. In other words, more hesitation is in place, more uncertainty is called for than some of Foucault's interpreters display.

FROM HEIDEGGER TO NIETZSCHE

It seems plausible to assume that Heidegger's formative influence on Foucault's thinking (if there was such a thing) must have come

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

in the period before Nietzsche proved a philosophical shock for him. That was a relatively short period, extending, according to Foucault's estimate, from 1951 or 1952 to 1953. We must ask ourselves then what part of Heidegger's oeuvre Foucault would have read in this time. Given his admission that he never became very familiar with *Being and Time* (nor with Heidegger's later work) and given the state of publication of Heidegger's writings, this must have been a small number of texts. A first clue as to which texts these might have been comes from Didier Eribon's report that Foucault went regularly to hear Jean Beaufret in 1949 and that "Beaufret's performances made rather an impression" on him (*E*, 31). Beaufret was lecturing on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* at the time but was also talking a great deal about Heidegger. He was, moreover, Heidegger's most ardent disciple in France during those years, a fact that Heidegger had acknowledged by addressing his "Letter on Humanism" to him in the fall of 1946. The Beaufret–Kant–Heidegger connection might suggest that Foucault would have read Heidegger's book on Kant. If so, that reading left no further trace in his thinking apart, perhaps, from stimulating him to study Kant. Foucault's interest in Kant's anthropology, to whose importance Béatrice Han has so vividly drawn our attention, may well have originated at that point. But it is more fruitful to think that Foucault may have begun his study of Heidegger with the "Letter on Humanism." There would have been certainly much to attract him in that work. Given his intellectual background in Hegel and Marx, he is likely to have appreciated Heidegger's call for a productive engagement with Marxism. And given his longstanding hostility against Sartre, he may also have been drawn to Heidegger's biting critique of Sartre's "humanism." Two other themes in the "Letter" may have been of even greater philosophical significance for him. The first is Heidegger's emphasis on the importance of language, his characterization of language as "the house of Being," and the accompanying call for "less literature and more concern with the letter." Foucault's other point of interest may have been the particular form that Heidegger was giving to the epochal conception of history when he argued that "the truth of Being" manifests itself in distinct ways in different historical epochs.

The "Letter on Humanism" is most likely not to have been the only piece of Heidegger's writing that drew Foucault's attention in the period between 1951 and 1953. Apart from Heidegger's Kant book

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

he may also have become familiar at the time with the collection of essays Heidegger had published in 1950 under the title *Holzwege*. A comparative reading of this volume with Foucault's work suggests that not everything Heidegger had to say would have been of concern to him. The introductory essay "On the Origin of the Work of Art" – perhaps the most important piece in the whole volume – has, indeed, little to correspond to in Foucault's writings. Foucault's conception of art would always be more influenced by Nietzsche. Of greater interest to him may have been, however, the essay on "The Age of the World Picture" since it elaborates further on the epochal conception of history and addresses, in particular, the question of the history of modern rationality. It is also plausible to assume that Foucault read Heidegger's essay on Nietzsche in that volume. If so, we may begin to see why Nietzsche came afterwards as a shock to him. For the Nietzsche whom Foucault discovered from his own reading, the one reflected in his writings, is not at all like Heidegger's Nietzsche.[16] Where Heidegger treats Nietzsche as a metaphysician, Foucault will come to see him as being predominantly a moralist. Where Heidegger makes Nietzsche's *Will to Power* the centerpiece of his interpretation, Foucault will concern himself first and foremost with *The Gay Science, Beyond Good and Evil*, and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Where the will to power is for Heidegger a metaphysical hypothesis and conjoined to an equally metaphysical interpretation of the eternal recurrence of the same, power is for Foucault an anthropological, sociological, and political notion and the eternal recurrence the experience of a subject losing its identity (*IT*, 248).

We still have to answer the question how Foucault's return to Nietzsche was to come to him as a shock after reading the "Letter on Humanism," *Holzwege*, and other assorted Heideggerian writings. How did Nietzsche ultimately win out over Heidegger? The question becomes more acute when we consider that, according to Pinguet, it was Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* that caught Foucault's attention in 1953. What could it possible have been in those essays that came to Foucault as a shock and a challenge? Certainly not Nietzsche's attacks on David Friedrich Strauss and also not his eulogies on Schopenhauer and Wagner. A more likely candidate for Foucault's interest might have been Nietzsche's essay on the use and abuse of history with its distinction between monumental, antiquarian, and critical history and its call for a life-affirming use of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

historical knowledge. But even that can hardly have seemed shocking to him from the perspective of the mid-twentieth century. The essay (as, indeed, the whole of the *Untimely Meditations*) certainly strikes us today as one of Nietzsche's less provocative texts. It is, in any case, far from obvious how much of an impact that essay had on Foucault. When he wrote "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History" only one of the sixty-four footnotes refers to it. But if it was not the content of the *Untimely Meditations* that came as a shock to him, it may have been its form and its style of thinking. The book is certainly not written in the traditional philosophical manner, that is, from a perspective of high philosophical abstraction. Nietzsche seems to stand, rather, in the middle of life in the *Untimely Meditations*, ready to comment on the most mundane things that surround him, oblivious of the conventions and refinements of the philosophical discourse. Here was, indeed, a new way of doing philosophy – one that ignored the long-established distinction between the philosophical and the ordinary or, as we might say with Heidegger, the distinction between the ontological and the ontic. Foucault's comments in 1983 confirm that it was this deviation from the philosophical norms, this refusal to engage in a pure, "essential" philosophizing that came as a shock and challenge to him in his reading of Nietzsche:

> When you open *The Gay Science* after you have been trained in the great time-honored university traditions – Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl – and you come across those rather strange, witty, cheeky texts, you say: Well, I won't do what my contemporaries, colleagues or professors are doing; I won't just dismiss this. (*SP*, 447)

The outcome was for Foucault, in any case, not an interest in "the actual history of Nietzsche's thought," but in the "maximum of philosophical intensity," in "the current philosophical effects" that could be found in Nietzsche's texts.

FOUCAULT AND NIETZSCHE

We may ask at this point what this maximum of philosophical intensity, what the philosophical effects were that Foucault derived from Nietzsche. No single answer will, however, suffice, for there are, in fact, different Nietzsches in Foucault's life, corresponding roughly to the different phases in his thinking that he himself once

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

distinguished (*FL*, 318). The first Nietzsche was, no doubt, the one who was in Foucault's mind associated with Bataille and Blanchot. "The idea of a limit-experience that wrenches the subject from itself is what was important to me in my reading of Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot," Foucault said of this period in 1978 (*IT*, 241). This limit-experience was to be conceived in contrast to the phenomenological experience, which sought to bring its reflective gaze to bear "on the everyday in its transitory form," whereas Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot had been trying "to reach a point in life that is as close as possible to the 'unlivable'" (*IT*, 241). Experience served for them the function of wrenching the subject from itself, "of seeing that the subject is no longer itself, or that it is brought to its annihilation or its destruction" (*IT*, 241). From this derived for Foucault eventually a second Nietzsche, who helped him to describe the history of knowledge and reason freed from the phenomenological assumption of a founding, transhistorical subject. What mattered to him in this second Nietzsche was the realization that there is a history of the subject as well of reason. That was, however, a lesson that dawned on him only gradually, for he later complained that even *Madness and Civilization*, published in 1961, "was still close to admitting an anonymous and general subject of history."[17] A new aspect of Nietzsche appeared to Foucault, however, in the late 1960s. This third Nietzsche was the genealogical thinker, the philosopher of the will to power. His discovery may have been due in part to the publication of Gilles Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy* in 1962. For Deleuze, Nietzsche's essential problem was "the value of values, of the evaluation from which their value arises, thus the problem of their creation."[18] And since this creation of values was to be explained in terms of a notion of force or will, Nietzsche was for Deleuze primarily the philosopher of the will to power. With the help of Deleuze, Foucault began to see himself now as a genealogist of morals and in 1975 spoke accordingly of a new kind of affinity with Nietzsche:

> It was Nietzsche who specified the power relation as the general focus, shall we say, of philosophical discourse. . . . Nietzsche is the philosopher of power, a philosopher who managed to think of power without having to confine himself within political theory in order to do so. (*PK*, 53)[19]

We find this third Nietzsche most clearly reflected in works like *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and the first, introductory volume to

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the *History of Sexuality* (1976), where Foucault sets out to show how social and moral norms are to be understood as transfer points in relations of power. Yet, he was not to remain with these themes. As he was breaking with Deleuze in the late seventies, his philosophical concerns were again taking a new direction. When questioned, he said now that he was no longer doing the genealogy of morals (*DR*, 240). The question of power, he declared, no longer interested him, nor the problem of sex. Instead, he announced a new concern with "problems about techniques of the self" (*DR*, 229). His crucial question, he said, was how we "create ourselves as a work of art," how to conceive of an "aesthetics of existence." And in this, he saw himself once again indebted to Nietzsche. Rejecting any suggestion that this move was bringing him close to Sartre's concern with authenticity, Foucault resolutely declared himself "much closer to Nietzsche's than to Sartre's" concerns (*DR*, 237). Where Nietzsche had initially meant for him the destruction of the subject, he now identified him with its aesthetic production. This forth and final Nietzsche was, thus, in a way a complement to the first.

Since the story of Foucault's appropriation of Nietzsche is too complex to be told here in full, I will restrict my attention to the genealogical Nietzsche, the one who stands in the middle of Foucault's engagement with Nietzsche. In narrowing my focus to this particularly significant period in Foucault's appropriation of Nietzsche I hope to be able to address two crucial questions: first, to what extent Foucault was actually in debt to Nietzsche, and second, to what extent he nevertheless went beyond him. Having identified such a middle period, one must add that Foucault's concern with the genealogical Nietzsche was by no means disconnected from his earlier interests in him. We can see him rather as trying to integrate his earlier take on Nietzsche into this new one. This becomes evident, for instance, in his seminal essay on "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in which Foucault announces a threefold agreement with Nietzsche concerning (1) his conception of the genealogical method, (2) his understanding of the goals of the genealogical enterprise, and (3) his assessment of its broad implications. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" harks, however, at the same time back to Foucault's earliest concerns with Nietzsche. Published in 1971, the essay may, indeed, incorporate some earlier material. This is suggested by three characteristics. The first is the essay's concern with "the destruction of the subject," a theme that had originated in Foucault's

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

earliest engagement with Nietzsche. The second characteristic is that Foucault does not employ his own notion of power even though the concept had become important to him by 1971. Instead he speaks of the "hazardous play of dominations" and interprets that play in terms of Deleuze's notion of force (*NGH*, 148–150).[20] The third indication that "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" has earlier roots lies in the peculiar style of the essay, its occasionally ecstatic, almost dithyrambic tone, which differs markedly from the colder, more scientific prose Foucault was otherwise writing in the seventies. If these conjectures are right, it would follow that Foucault had been interested in Nietzsche's genealogical method long before he himself became a genealogist.[21]

In order to appreciate Foucault's take on the genealogical enterprise and in order to settle the question of the extent to which it was meant to continue Nietzsche's genealogy, one must throw a glance, first, at the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche writes there that his ultimate goal is to construct a "real history of morals." He warns us accordingly against an "English hypothesis-mongering into the blue." The genealogist, he declares, must concern himself, instead, with "that which can be documented, which can actually be confirmed and has actually existed, in short, the whole, long, hard-to-decipher hieroglyphic script of man's moral past" (*GM*, preface, 7).[22] It is, however, important to note that Nietzsche neither delivers nor promises such a history in his book. The "On" in its title implies, in fact, that the work is meant to explore the possibility of a genealogical inquiry, not to provide a worked-out genealogical deduction. Nietzsche is, in any case, certain that no single person could carry such a project to completion. In an appendix to the first essay he expresses, instead, the hope that his book "might serve to give a powerful impetus in such a direction" and he calls for a concerted effort to advance the historical study of morality (*GM*, 1, note). In Foucault's essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" we find him largely agreeing with these methodological principles. Paraphrasing Nietzsche's words, Foucault speaks of genealogy as "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary." The enterprise, he writes,

> operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times. . . . Genealogy,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

consequently, requires patience and a knowledge of details and it depends on a vast accumulation of source materials. . . . In short, genealogy demands relentless erudition. (*NGH*, 139–140)

It demands, in other words, the kind of sustained scholarship that Foucault himself practiced over many years and that led him to speak fondly of "one of the more ancient or more typical secret societies of the West,. . . . the great warm and tender Freemasonry of useless erudition" (*PK*, 79).

In his essay Foucault also expresses agreement with the goal of Nietzsche's genealogical inquiry: the determination of "what origin our terms good and evil actually have" (*GM*, preface, 3). But he points out that the word "origin" (*Ursprung*) is deeply ambiguous. It is sometimes meant to denote the place from which something derives its legitimation. However, he writes, we must understand that Nietzsche uses the word *Ursprung* interchangeably with the more neutral *Herkunft* and speaks thus not only of the *Ursprung*, the origin of good and evil, but also the *Herkunft*, the descent or ancestry of our moral prejudices. Even the latter formulation has to be interpreted properly according to Foucault, for he wants to see Nietzsche not as specifically focused on the question of the historical beginnings of morality, but on that of its validity and legitimation. That Nietzsche's genealogy intends no legitimation of moral values is, of course, made patently clear in his rude persiflage of the Platonic allegory of the cave. Where Plato had insisted that the philosopher must escape from the human cave in order to discover the origin of value, Nietzsche asserts that "ideals are made on earth," in the dark, smelly cave of human life and are manufactured from falseness and self-deception (*GM*, 1:14). Against all forms of moral absolutism, the genealogist maintains thus a resolutely historical and critical stance, and Foucault entirely agrees with that judgment. He insists for this reason that "the work of the intellect is to show that what is, does not have to be, what it is" (*FL*, 252), and for the same reason admonishes us "to dig deep to show how things have been historically contingent, for such and such reasons intelligible but not necessary" (*FL*, 209). In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" he argues accordingly that the genealogist must seek to find behind things "not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

from alien forms" (*NGH*, 142). Genealogy, understood as a history of descent, does therefore not involve the "erecting of foundations; on the contrary, it disturbs what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself" (*NGH*, 147). Every search for the origin of morality will, in consequence, take the form of a critique of values.

In the last part of his essay Foucault confronts genealogy with history in the traditional sense. He points out that Nietzsche questioned the traditional form of historical investigation with its claim to a suprahistorical authority. The genealogist, by contrast,

> will push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing. No longer the identification of our faint individuality with the solid identities of the past, but our 'unrealization' through the excessive choice of identities. (*NGH*, 160ff.)

Genealogical inquiry is, in other words, meant to deprive the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature. It is here, in this last part of the essay, where Foucault appears to be most in tune with the Nietzsche he had discovered through Bataille and Blanchot, the Nietzsche who had been concerned with the destruction and annihilation of the subject. Two points stand out from these dense formulations as to the broad implications of a genealogical inquiry. And these implications hold presumably still in this post-Bataille, post-Blanchot reading of Nietzsche. The first is that the inquiry cannot lay claim to a detached, objective, and timeless truth, but must understand itself as a practical tool for the critique of values. The second is that such a critique of values must destroy at the same time the idea of a fixed human identity. The genealogical enterprise, far from being a search for human identity, is, in fact, committed to its dissipation. Instead of postulating solid identities we must learn to engage in radical "experimentation with ourselves."

Though Foucault voices broad agreement with Nietzsche's conception of the genealogical project, he does not, however, mean to follow him in every respect. His writings show rather that he freely appropriated the Nietzschean project, adapting it to his own purposes where he saw problems, obscurities, or shortcomings. Most problematic for him was evidently Nietzsche's obliviousness to the difficulties in the path of the genealogical project. A complete history

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of morals and, in particular, an account of the historical origins of morals would, presumably, have to reach back into the deepest past, into the evolution of man and the millennia stretching from the appearance of our species to the advent of recorded history. Nietzsche seems insufficiently concerned with the fact that a fully documented history of the whole "hieroglyphic script" of morality may be in principle unavailable because the history of morality coincides with the whole history of our species. For this reason any totalizing account of the ancestry and descent of morality would have to be precisely what Nietzsche seeks to avoid: a mere "hypothesis-mongering" – plausible at best but inevitably contestable. Nietzsche's treatment of the history of morals is, indeed, largely speculative, even though he restricts his attention almost entirely to the moral history of Europe. What concerns him most in *The Genealogy of Morals* is the transition from master- to slave-morality, an event coinciding roughly with the end of the Graeco-Roman age and the rise of Christianity. Even here his treatment is summary. He subsumes the whole Christian age under the heading of slave-morality with no acknowledgement of the significant differences between ancient, medieval, and modern forms of Christianity. The speculative character of Nietzsche's genealogy becomes most evident in his treatment of what he takes to be the initial phase of moral history. There existed, according to him, at the beginning a populace great in numbers but shapeless and shifting. On these, "a conqueror and master race" that is "organized on a war footing, and with the power to organize, unscrupulously lays its dreadful paws." Nietzsche asserts that "the shaping of a population, which had up till now been unrestrained and shapeless, into a fixed form, happened at the beginning with an act of violence and could be concluded only with acts of violence." The oldest state appeared thus "as a terrible tyranny, as a repressive and ruthless machinery and continued working until the raw material of people and semi-animals had been finally not just kneaded and made compliant but also shaped" (*GM*, 2:17). In Nietzsche's story the conquered race eventually came to resent their master's domination. "The slave revolt in morality begins when ressentiment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values" (*GM*, 1:10). Since our system of values is the product of this slave revolt and is for that reason inherently flawed, Nietzsche envisages the prospects of a new

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

revolution that will reverse the destructive damage of the earlier event. He writes,

> But at some future time, a time stronger than our effete self-doubting present, the true Redeemer will come, whose surging creativity will not let him rest in any shelter or hiding place, . . . so that when he comes forth into the light he may bring with him the redemption of that reality from the curse placed upon it by a lapsed ideal. (*GM*, 2: 24)

I have summarized Nietzsche's account because it generates a number of problems that Foucault sets out to resolve in his own genealogical inquiry. We want to ask Nietzsche: From where does the original division between an unformed populace and a conquering master race come? Why is the history of morals as a whole to be understood as the struggle between a ruling and a ruled class? How can the supposedly weaker, subservient class ever come to overthrow its masters? Why is the history of morality inevitably one of great revolutions and counter-revolutions? What justifies the hope for a coming revolution in morality? Why is that revolution to be conceived in terms borrowed from the Christian logic of sin and salvation? And, more generally, why is the use of power ultimately always that of an unrestrained violence? Behind Nietzsche's whole account of the history of morality lies, in fact, a distinctive understanding of the nature of power. Relations of power are for him always inherently hierarchical: A suppressive power is always exerted by a stronger group on a weaker one. There is, therefore, never a genuine balance of power. There is only domination and sudden reversals in domination. This story is justified by Nietzsche in terms of a global conception of the world as will to power in which the will to power is interpreted as being always an overpowering force. Moral phenomena are, hence, epiphenomenal to the will to power, but the validity of the underlying view of the world is never seriously tested.

We can read Foucault's genealogical work, particularly in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, as a redoing of Nietzsche's genealogical project – one that seeks to bypass its problems. In contrast to Nietzsche, Foucault makes no attempt at a totalizing history of morals and altogether ignores the question of the initial emergence of morality. He concerns himself, instead, with specific historical moments and seeks to show how they shaped our view of ourselves.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

He concerns himself, in other words, with telling, paradigmatic tales, assuming evidently that a critique of morality does not call for an overall historical narrative. Even a single revealing interlude may be sufficient to establish the conditioned and historical nature of our values. In contrast to Nietzsche and his concern with historical origins and totalizing historical perspectives, Foucault's genealogical investigations are pointedly specific, concerned with particular phenomena at particular moments of time. Foucault is, indeed, profoundly suspicious of the intellectual as "spokesman of the universal" and calls, instead, for the emergence of a new type of intellectual: the specific intellectual who concerns himself with the particular, the local, and the temporally circumscribed. In conversation with Deleuze he says in 1975:

> The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself "somewhat ahead and to the side" in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' 'truth,' 'consciousness,' and 'discourse.' In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice. But it is local and regional . . . and not totalizing. This is a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious. . . . A 'theory' is the regional system of this struggle. (*LCP*, 208–209)

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault focuses accordingly on the historically specific manner in which we have come to create behaviors, codes, discourses, and institutions incorporating the facts of sex. The investigation is historically specific in the sense that it deals only with norms that have developed in Western Europe since the sixteenth century. But the particular narrative is meant to illuminate at the same time the larger arena of moral life. Where Nietzsche had sought to understand human relations in terms of the global concept of the will to power, Foucault's sees power relations as exclusively social, multiple, and variable in character. Adopting what he calls a strictly nominalist point of view, he denies altogether that there is a single phenomenon to be called power or will to power. "Power", he writes, "is constructed and functions on the basis of particular powers, myriad issues, myriad effects of power" (*PK*, 188). To this he adds succinctly in another place that power "is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and mobile relations" (*HS*, 94).[23] And these relations are meant to be exclusively social in character – "economic processes, knowledge relations, sexual relations" (*HS*, 94).

Having freed himself from Nietzsche's master narrative, Foucault is no longer obliged to think of power as inherently an overpowering. Instead he can look at the diverse manifestations of power and can, thereby, come to understand that the creation and enforcement of moral norms does not inevitably involve acts of violence. Drawing attention to the rise of pedagogical, medical, and psychiatric practices and to the emergence of organized processes of surveillance, examination, and classification of social phenomena, he notes that sexual norms are, in fact, today primarily constituted and maintained through a discourse that permeates the various layers of modern society. Foucault rejects therefore Nietzsche's assumption that power relations are inevitably relations of domination, that power descends necessarily in a linear direction from those who have it to those subjected to it, and that the history of morals can therefore be summarized as the struggle between a ruling class and a ruled one. He declares, instead, that he does not have in mind "a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body" (*HS*, 92). He has therefore also no need to commit himself to the assumption of historically fixed social stratifications and can account for social transformations in ways that are effectively cut off for Nietzsche.

Foucault does not exclude the possibility of systems of domination. He connects the emergence of modern sexuality indeed with the rise of the bourgeoisie as a new ruling class. But he does not regard hierarchical domination as essential to the working of power. He insists, rather, that, even where we can distinguish a ruling and a ruled class, power must be assumed to circulate through the entire social system. There are as a result countercurrents in every system of domination. Hence, as he famously said, "where there is power, there is resistance" (*HS*, 95).[24] And for that reason there is "no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix" (*HS*, 94). Because he sees power as circulating through the entire body of society and because he also assumes that it flows sometimes in large currents and sometimes invisibly through the social capillaries,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

he does not believe that moral change inevitably involves revolutionary upheaval. "Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then?" he asks in *The History of Sexuality*, and he answers himself in uncompromisingly anti-Nietzschean words:

> Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. (*HS*, 96)

Foucault issues, therefore, no call for a radical revaluation of all values. He does not foresee an overman who could transform the culture in a radical fashion. He assigns, accordingly, also a different and more modest role to the intellectual and the philosopher. On his account, the critical intellectual can help transform an oppressive system of values, but he can do so only by gradually undermining it through exposing the mechanisms that make it function. For Foucault, political power is effective only as long as it succeeds masking itself. "Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms" (*HS*, 86). The intellectual's contributes to the transformation of a system of power by helping to bring to light its underground operations. There is, according to *Discipline and Punish*, a historical explanation for this peculiar function of the modern, specific intellectual. Although power has in the past always shown itself publicly, it is "exercised through its invisibility" in modern, rule-governed, "disciplinary" society.[25] To make these invisible mechanisms appear, to show up their multiple effects is the principal task of the Foucauldian intellectual. Since power relations are pervasive and since there is no escape from them, the intellectual's analyses of these relations and of the nature and effects of power must, however, be understood as internal to the network of power relations. The Foucauldian intellectual knows of no great escape from the existing system of power. He can, for that reason, not take on the role of a great redeemer who can bring about a radical revaluation of all values.

We can see Foucault, then, in his middle period as engaged in a genuinely Nietzschean project, but pursuing it in his own ways and for that reason ending with conclusions that differ radically from Nietzsche's. "Genealogy of morals," broadly understood, can certainly serve as the title of what Foucault was doing at the time. But

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

as an intellectual living a century after Nietzsche, he was evidently skeptical of Nietzsche's large-scale historical perspectives, skeptical also of his global conception of the will to power, and skeptical finally of Nietzsche's post-Christian faith in the redemptive power of the intellect. It is useful to recall at this point Foucault's characterization of himself as a Nietzschean who concerns himself with anti-Nietzschean theses that he understands, nevertheless, in a Nietzschean manner. It is obviously not only in his agreement with Nietzsche, but just as much in his questioning of Nietzsche's assumptions that Foucault sees himself working in Nietzsche's spirit. It must be admitted that Foucault's anti-Nietzschean Nietzscheanism comes at a price. Can a general critique of morality be derived from specific genealogies of the sort that Foucault constructs? Nietzsche's project, if it were possible, would certainly lead to the devaluation of all values hitherto. Specific genealogies, by contrast, can only destruct specific moral claims. The Foucauldian genealogist will find himself therefore forced to engage in a never-ending diagnostic and destructive process. Whenever he has unmasked one form of moral absolutism, he will find himself compelled to take on another one. This does not detract from the importance of his undertaking, but his efforts will yield at best only partial successes. We must also observe that Foucault cannot escape as easily from the call for a general theory of power as he might wish to. For one thing, we find him often speaking of power not as an array of various mobile and unequal social relations, but as something flowing through the veins of society. He then seems to employ the notion not only as a descriptive term but as an explanatory principle. Has he not at such points simply substituted his own global conception for Nietzsche's? Foucault's belief that power circulates continuously and that wherever there is power there is resistance certainly seem to be global claims about the nature of power, and these are no more justified than Nietzsche's assertion that the will to power is inevitably an overpowering.

Such doubts may explain why Foucault eventually left the field of genealogical investigations behind and no longer concerned himself with the concept of power. Always open to changes in direction, he now began to see himself engaged in the study of "*problematizations* through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought." The phrase certainly evokes Heideggerian associations, but when

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Foucault spoke of problematizations he was, in fact, relating them to "the arts of existence," which he explained in turn as

> those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria.[26]

His concern was, in other words, in effect once again more Nietzschean than Heideggerian. What he wanted, after all, was the exploration of "new life-styles not resembling those that have been institutionalized" (*FL*, 229). It was from this interest in "the exercise of the self on the self" that his fourth and final take on Nietzsche emerged (*EST*, 282).

As I look back over this essay I realize that my considerations have not settled the question of Heidegger's and Nietzsche's influence on Foucault. My discussion was, however, meant only to determine what needs to be done to achieve such a settlement. It was also meant to reveal in this way the complexity and uncertainty of the entire enterprise. I conclude therefore with a passage from Nietzsche's *Gay Science* that tells us how difficult, how impossible, how vain our search for an answer may be. As I sit here trying to trace the links between Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Foucault, I can almost hear him reading these words bent over with laughter:

> We, too, associate with "people"; we, too, modestly don the dress in which (*as* which) others know us, respect us, look for us – and then we appear in company, meaning among people who are disguised without wanting to admit it. We, too, do what all prudent masks do, and in response to every curiosity that does not concern our "dress" we politely place a chair against the door. But there are also other ways and tricks when it comes to associating with or passing among men – for example, as a ghost, which is altogether advisable if one wants to get rid of them quickly and make them afraid. Example: One reaches out for us but gets no hold of us. That is frightening. Or we enter through a closed door. Or after all lights have been extinguished. Or after we have died.[27]

NOTES

1 Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault. Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) (the second edition of 1983 is hereafter cited as *DR*). We know now that

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Dreyfus was more committed to a Heideggerian reading of Foucault than Rabinow. The matter was important to him not only for setting the historical record clear; he was just as much interested in asking to what extent he could use Foucault's thought for his own Heidegger-inspired account of human practices.

2 Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power Self," in L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. H. Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 12ff. He had added that *Being and Time* was difficult reading "but the more recent works are clearer." It is not at all obvious, however, what he meant here by "the more recent works." I will argue that they are likely to have been Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" and the essays collected in *Holzwege*. I do not assume that Foucault was referring to the work of the late Heidegger, which he claims in his 1984 interview not to have known. Though he recognizes the influence of Heidegger in the 1982 interview, he goes on, just as would do in 1984, to put even greater emphasis on the importance of Nietzsche for him: "Nietzsche was a revelation to me. . . . I read him with a great passion and broke with my life, left my job in the asylum, left France" (p. 13). He never ascribed such a crucial role to Heidegger.

3 Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live*, trans. John Johnston, ed. Sylvere Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989). Hereafter cited as *FL*.

4 Michel Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault. Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 321; and Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper, 1976), 17.

5 Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, "Toward a Foucault-Heidegger *Auseinandersetzung*," in Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, eds., *Foucault and Heidegger. Critical Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 4. The book will be cited hereafter as *MR*.

6 On these points see also the "Interview with Foucault" conducted by Duccio Trombadori, in James Faubion, ed., *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault. Volume 3: Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 256. This interview will be cited hereafter as *IT*.

7 Michel Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-structuralism," in James Faubion, ed., *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault. Volume 2: Aesthetics: Method and Epistemology* (New York: New Press, 1998), 438–439. The interview is referred to hereafter as *SP*.

8 Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991). Cited hereafter as *E*.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

9 Michel Foucault, *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961), ix, as quoted in *E*, p. 94.
10 When Foucault told Trombadori in 1978 of his early interest in "existential analysis," or, as he also called it, "phenomenological psychiatry," he added, "Ronald Laing was impressed by all that as well . . . (he in a more Sartrean and I in a more Heideggerian way)." To this he added dryly, "But we moved on to other things" (*IT*, 257).
11 Michel Foucault, "Dream, Imagination and Existence," trans. Forrest Williams, *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 19 (1984–1985): 29–78. Hereafter cited as *DIE*.
12 Paul Häberlin, *Philosophia Perenni*s (Berlin: Springer, 1956), 66.
13 Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (New York: Harper, 1976), 52.
14 Béatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project. Between the Transcendental and the Historical* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2002), 13.
15 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper, 1976). Hereafter cited as *AK*.
16 Hans Sluga, "Heidegger's Nietzsche," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall, eds., *A Companion to Heidegger* (Oxford: Blackwell, forthcoming).
17 *AK*, 16. I owe this reference to Erin Beeghly, who has helped me in various ways to achieve a better understanding of Foucault.
18 Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 1.
19 Michel Foucault, in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980). Hereafter cited as *PK*.
20 Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Donald F. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Countermemory, Practice* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977). Hereafter cited as *NGH*. The book itself is hereafter cited as *LCP*.
21 Continuities in Foucault's reception of Nietzsche are also suggested by his 1973 lectures on "Truth and Juridical Forms" (in James Faubion, ed., *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault. Volume 3: Power* [New York: New Press, 2000], 1–89). The lectures were meant to show "how social practices may engender domains of knowledge that not only bring new objects, new concepts, and new techniques to light, but also give rise to totally new forms of subjects and subjects of knowledge" (p. 2). Foucault added that "what I say here won't mean anything if it isn't connected to Nietzsche's work" (p. 5). He hoped that "by using the Nietzschean model," we would be able "to do a history of truth" (p. 15).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Drawing on Nietzsche's *Gay Science*, a text he admired and had once edited in collaboration with Deleuze, he spoke of "the subject in its unity and sovereignty" as one of the shadows of God and then repeated Nietzsche's old question, "When will we complete our de-deification of nature?" (p. 10). Nietzsche, he also declared, had said in the same work that understanding was a compromise or settlement between "laughter, lament, and detestation." It followed that the drives that lie at the root of knowledge involve a distancing from the object and "a will, finally, to destroy it" (p. 11). Behind knowledge there lay thus "a radical malice of knowledge," which manifested itself in a relation of distance and domination, "not unification but a precarious system of power" (p. 12). In a Nietzschean "politics of truth" knowledge was seen as "a certain strategic relation in which man is placed" (p. 14). Its perspectival character derived directly from "the polemical and strategic character of knowledge" (p. 14). Such remarks refer us back all the way to the Nietzsche whom Foucault had come to know through Bataille and Blanchot; they speak also of the Nietzsche who mattered to him in relation to a history of knowledge; they clearly reflect Foucault's genealogical concerns with knowledge and power, and they finally even gesture forward to the question of the construction of the subject.

22 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Carol Diethe, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994). Hereafter cited as *GM*.

23 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). Hereafter cited as *HS*.

24 Foucault provides, in fact, few reasons for the global terms in which he sometimes characterizes power relations. In a late interview he argues somewhat weakly that "power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free." For if anyone were completely at someone else's disposal and thus subject to limitless violence, "there wouldn't be any relations of power." In order for there to be power relations, he says, "there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides. . . . This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance." But this makes the claim, implausibly enough, a matter of definition rather than a substantial insight into the working of power. Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault. Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 292.

25 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 187.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

26 Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 11, 10.
27 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 365.

My thanks to Hubert Dreyfus for his comments on earlier versions of this essay.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

DAVID INGRAM

9 Foucault and Habermas

I confess a deep reluctance to commenting on Foucault in light of his astute observation that commentaries only "say what has already been said and repeat tirelessly what was nevertheless never said."[1] How much truer this is when the commentator proposes to repeat an earlier commentary, as I propose to do here.[2]

The vanity of my undertaking will, I hope, be offset by the modesty of my aim: to revisit the debate between Foucault and Habermas in order to dispel the notion that they are engaged in incompatible rather than complementary acts of social critique. Accepted wisdom has it that Foucault is an anti-humanist who rejects the emancipatory ideals of the Enlightenment. Habermas, by contrast, is portrayed as the arch defender of those ideals. Again, "common knowledge" holds that Foucault is a historical relativist with strong "anarchist" leanings, whereas Habermas is a "transcendental" philosopher in the Kantian vein engaged in rationally deducing universal and necessary norms.

In truth, both are humanists – despite their divergent takes on the philosophical coherence of humanism. Both readily accede to the value of such things as rights and democratic institutions in shaping and protecting modern critical aptitudes, and both accept the ambivalent nature of rights and democratic institutions in simultaneously constraining and enabling individual acts of nonconformism and resistance. Where they principally differ is on their choice of priorities: Foucault can be understood as a modern-day *virtue ethicist* fighting to liberate the capacity of individual self-choice and personal self-formation from oppressive conformism, whereas Habermas can be seen as a *political theorist* concerned with

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

justifying and promoting a more just conception of democracy based upon an ethics of discourse.

To be sure, Foucault and Habermas seem to differ quite strongly on whether philosophical humanism is necessary for motivating critical practice in some deep "theoretical" sense, and they also seem to disagree on whether philosophical humanism is even coherent. But here, too, I shall argue that the difference between them is largely one of perception. Foucault and Habermas agree that humanism forces us to think of human agency in terms of dualistic categories of reflection; they just assess this situation differently. Whereas Foucault sees humanism as an ambivalent force of self-empowerment that excludes as much as it includes and constrains as much as it emancipates, Habermas sees it as an instantiation of dialogical openness that is unconditionally liberating.

Before proceeding further it is advisable to acknowledge up front that any discussion of Foucault and Habermas must confront the messy fact that their own thinking about critical theory underwent fairly drastic changes over a period of twenty-odd years. Here I am again reminded of Foucault's admonition to those who would aspire to be his critics: "Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same. Leave it to our bureaucrats and police to see that our papers are in order" (*AK*, 17). Although I'm afraid I cannot grant him this last request, I do so with the knowledge that none of us who thinks himself or herself a critical theorist – including Foucault – has ever succeeded in resisting the urge to police the limits of what can and cannot be said. Having conceded that, I will limit my policing by focusing mainly on his and Habermas's most mature writings, in which both reclaim the legacy of Kant and the Enlightenment against each other.[3]

After briefly discussing Foucault's initial reservations about Enlightenment humanism, I will turn to Habermas's defense of the same. Following this initial exchange, I propose to examine their respective "theories" of social and – above all – critical practice. The standard view held by most commentators is that Habermas situates critical practice in consensus-oriented communicative action unconstrained by power, whereas Foucault situates critical practice in strategic action that is importantly conditioned by power. I argue that this view is grossly misleading. What Habermas means by

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

"communicative action" must incorporate something like "strategic action" in Foucault's sense of the term; conversely, what Foucault means by "strategic action" must incorporate something like what Habermas means by "communicative interaction." I conclude my commentary by arguing that the two sorts of critical theory/practice put forward by Habermas and Foucault are complementary rather than antagonistic.

THE CRITIQUE OF HUMANISM IN MARX AND NIETZSCHE

The proper place to begin our discussion is with humanism, since it is around this elusive concept that so much of the debate between Habermas and Foucault seems to revolve. To that end, a brief reprise of the quintessentially ambivalent reception of humanism among their philosophical progenitors – especially Marx and Nietzsche – seems appropriate. Humanism – or the notion that there exists a universal moral core common to humanity – is the very substance and soul of modern enlightenment.[4] Against all parochial narrow-mindedness and tyranny, it celebrates the inherent freedom and equality of all persons and charts an unwavering course toward complete and total emancipation. Since Rousseau, critical theorists have continued to sing its praises. But not without reservation. Although Rousseau extolled the higher freedom that comes with obeying the universal law of reason, he rued the calculated egoism unleashed by the rational dissolution of social bonds. Hegel (like Burke) later pilloried Rousseau's defense of sentimental individualism in his withering critique of the "Rights of Man and of Citizen," whose abstraction from social convention he thought paved the way for the terrorist excesses of the French Revolution. Then there is Marx. Even while opposing Feuerbachian humanism to capitalism, the young Marx rejected human rights (political emancipation) as symptomatic of this very same dehumanization. True emancipation, he reasoned, will only come with the revolutionary establishment of communism, which abolishes private property. This having been accomplished, conflicts between egoistic individuals will gradually disappear – along with rights that are needed to protect them from each other.

Within barely a few years of penning his critique of human rights, Marx would come to rephrase the emancipatory aims of humanism

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

in a way that would cast doubt on humanism itself. Leaving aside his premature speculations about the world-historical mission of the proletariat as a truly universal class encompassing the oppression of all other classes, what remains in his later thought is the utter rejection of idealism in any form and the complete embrace of historical relativism. For the mature Marx, *humanity* is an unreal abstraction that masks real conflicts between economic classes that have essentially antagonistic interests and share nothing of importance in common. That is why Marx eschews utopian socialist appeals to human decency in galvanizing revolutionary action. Sounding more and more like Bentham, he never ceases to remind us how useless such vapid notions as human rights are in adjudicating conflicts over property and other matters of distributive justice. And buying into moral abstractions can be risky for other reasons as well, not the least being that they can be interpreted in ways that are entirely compatible with the status quo. As Marx pointed out, because human rights are by nature abstract, the justice and equality they serve to protect is likewise abstract, permitting extreme inequalities in their actual exercise.

Admittedly, my all-to-brief summary of Marx's anti-humanism fails to do justice to his irrepressible faith in the inevitability of progress, understood precisely in terms of universal human fulfillment. It is therefore hardly surprising that it is Nietzsche, not Marx, who is today regarded as the real founder of modern anti-humanism. Sounding like an apostate of Feuerbach and the young Marx, Nietzsche sees in humanism nothing more than a secular version of theism, with all its freedom- and life-denying implications. Even that great paean to freedom and life – human rights – is for him nothing but a sly invention on the part of the weak to constrain the vital, creative powers of the strong. As Nietzsche so eloquently put it in the *Genealogy of Morals*, "What an enormous price man had to pay for reason, seriousness, and control over his emotions – those grand human prerogatives and cultural showpieces! How much blood and horror lies behind all good things!"[5]

Thanks to Freud and the Frankfurt School, subsequent generations of critical theorists would make Nietzsche's diagnosis of the modern soul – that "wild beast hurling itself against the bars of its cage"[6] – the centerpiece of their critique of "rationalized society," as Weber understood it. It is thus not without reason that

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Adorno and Horkheimer would later cite the recurring motifs of Nietzsche's genealogy – the relationship between exchange and justice as equivalence-retribution-revenge and the erection of rational autonomy on the ruins of a guilty and repressed "conscience" – in building their case against enlightenment.[7]

But we really owe it to Foucault – who admittedly took his lead from Nietzsche and not from the Frankfurt School[8] – for having so adroitly exposed the ambivalent effects of this humanistic discourse. According to him, humanism promises emancipation at the cost of imposing uniformity and excluding those who don't fit the mold of a genuine human being. Its *universal scope*, which at first seems so progressive in marking for emancipation women, persons of non-European descent, and the working poor who formerly had been denied their humanity, actually works by subjecting all persons to the hegemonic regimen and discipline of a single, universal code of behavior. Here, reason – conceived as the faculty of universal moral commandments – supposedly dictates clear and precise norms that are susceptible of being administered to a subjugated population in a scientifically rigorous manner by an elite body of technocrats. Corresponding to this regime of knowledge and power we find a parallel universe of self-discovery and *self-control* instituted within each individual, which ensures that one's innermost identity as a desiring subject, truly revealed and confessed, will happily synchronize with the innermost identities of other similarly self-constituted subjects. In this way a generalized will to power, thoroughly decentralized, disseminated, internalized, and individualized in countless contexts by means of diverse microtechnologies, succeeds in generating that anodyne feeling of freedom and solidarity that earlier social contractarians like Rousseau would have imagined possible only through more coercive, juridical means.

FOUCAULT'S CRITIQUE OF HUMANISM

It is precisely at this juncture that Foucault's difference from Habermas seems most glaring. Habermas, after all, regards his own discourse ethics as the proper heir to Rousseauian social contractarianism. He thus fancies himself an arch defender of human rights and democracy. But Foucault clearly doesn't. And the reasons – all

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

having to do with the frailties of humanism – recall the sordid uses to which these ideals have been put.

First, there are the empirical arguments against humanism. Like Marx, Foucault regards humanism as a contingent phase in Western history that is on the verge of surpassing itself, along with the notion of the sovereign state as the centralized locus of legitimate power. Before there was humanism there was absolutism, which was embedded within an entirely different economy and an entirely different paradigm of knowledge and power. After humanism, there will be the "death of Man," or rather the dissolution of "the subject" into preconditioned habits and reactive responses, in which concepts like "reason," "consciousness," and "rights" as humanism understands them will cease to exist.

Now, Foucault's famous treatment of this shift in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) draws heavily from his archaeological study of knowledge paradigms (*epistemes*) developed in *The Order of Things* (1966). Until the mid-seventeenth century, knowledge and truth were conceived *analogically*; knowing something involved tracing its metaphorical and metonymical relationships to other things. According to this model, the sovereign ruler was virtually identified with his kingdom, and his power was in some sense viewed in terms that were analogous to God's power over his Kingdom, which is to say that it was absolute, unlimited, and in need of no other legitimation. Any law-breaking was thus regarded as a kind of *personal* affront, literally a violation of the sovereign's bodily integrity. Punishment – which often took the form of public torture and disfigurement – therefore served as a ritual, symbolic restoration, and reintegration of the monarch's power at the expense of the victim's dismemberment (*DP*, 49–56). Furthermore, since merely being suspected of criminal activity by the monarch was considered to be an affront to his person (which was presumed to be relatively infallible in its judgment), a suspect was presumed to be at least partly guilty. Hence, torturing the suspect served to expiate his guilt as well as reveal the full truth of his criminal intent. Failure to extract a confession did not invalidate the sovereign's original suspicion, but it did exonerate the suspect from any further suspicion of criminality.

The important thing to notice here is that it is personal power, divinely and absolutely sanctioned, that determines what is right and true – not humanity, which impersonally lends equal dignity to each

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and every individual. The rise of humanism changes all that. With the advent of the classical paradigm of knowledge that emerged in the mid-seventeenth century, we notice a new egalitarian spirit. Common sense enables each and every one to *represent* clearly and distinctly the things of nature according to their proper classifications. Applied to the political sphere, common sense speaks through the impartial voice of reason – the unique and supreme expression of our humanity – and perceives the clear limits of arbitrary power in the natural rights of "Man." Henceforth sovereign power will be limited and divided into separate powers, and it will be exercised through the people, whose interests and powers it represents. In the age of classical humanism, punishment ceases to be personal vengeance and is instead rethought contractually, as the repayment of a debt that is owed to humanity at large. But respecting the dignity and autonomy of the criminal as one who is rationally accountable for his crime requires extracting this debt in a way that does not do violence to his rational, moral nature. Imprisonment, based upon a precise calculus of social harm and responsibility, thus replaced torture at the end of the classical period. If anything remained of the public spectacle, it was the labor-gangs who "represented" the moral fault of their criminal idleness in their hard work and passive confinement.

The theme of labor anticipates the refiguration of sovereign power and punishment according to yet another – more modern – humanism. The emergence of capitalism had already rendered the premodern dismemberment and destruction of the body costly. The laboring power of the criminal's body was something to be preserved, strengthened, and disciplined. The classical, retributive model of punishment – based upon the contractarian idea of repaying past debts – did not yet capture the utilitarian need to rehabilitate the criminal as a future, productive member of society. Beginning in the nineteenth century, we thus see punishment serving newer and different ends. No longer is one punished according to what one did (a discrete and quantifiable act capable of definite representation), but according to what one might do, based upon a psychiatric examination of one's infinitely malleable and reformable character. In short, punishment increasingly has as its aim the disciplining of the body as a source of *productivity*; and discipline, as a softer and less visible – albeit more global – form of punishment, has as its aim the training of a pliant, productive population (*DP*, 24).[9]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The new humanism sees knowledge and truth as *produced*, rather than represented, by humanity. Since Kant, German idealists had insisted that humanity transcendentally produces through its own knowing activity the unified world it inhabits. In the writings of Fichte and Hegel, humanity is elevated to Promethean dimensions, as the demiurge that continually recreates itself and its world in striving to realize its nature as absolutely free and unlimited. The "truth" of the new human sciences of psychology and sociology would henceforth consist in furthering this apprenticeship in the art of "becoming fully human." This infinite task of reform is throughout guided by an ideal norm of perfection, in comparison to which each and every actual human being is judged to be deficient if not deviant.

The old humanism sought to represent human nature as it is: essentially limited by the laws of God and nature. This deference to God and nature designates its own limitations as humanism: Freedom is simultaneously a gift and a necessity imposed upon us whether we like it or not; it is not something that we give to ourselves. Old humanism's defense of freedom is thus inherently conservative: to preserve and protect the natural freedom of the individual against the power of the state. The new humanism does away with this opposition. Far from suppressing freedom, governmental power rather seeks to cultivate and tame it for productive ends. Freedom – or universal human fulfilment – becomes the new goal of social progress, whose revolutionary embodiment is the "pastoral" state.

As depicted in Foucault's writings, the reality of this state is quite the opposite of what it seems. If humanity is something made, it is not made with rational foresight and consciousness. The same applies to the state: It, too, is the product of many fortuitous events, not all of them reconcilable. Classical humanism vested the legitimacy and sovereignty of the state in its representation of a preexisting unity: the general and harmonious will of a united people. Modern humanism sees things differently: The state produces this will out of itself. But the truth of the matter is that there is no supreme will, people, subject, or humanity that is guiding this process; and so there is no common humanity being produced. What remains, at the core, are mainly decentralized processes of conditioning and resistance: action and reaction, *biopower*. From the highest echelons of impersonal

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

bureaucratic administration down to the lowest levels of personal self-management, power and agency remain divided and dispersed. The illusion that someone is in control is no doubt aided and abetted by all the micro-techniques of macro- and micro-management that the human sciences proliferate – statistics, archives, metrics, classification schemes, exams, therapies, and disciplines – for use in detaining, surveying, conditioning, partitioning and "governing" discrete and irreducibly diverse populations. But these processes feed off of – and in turn incite – the very reactions they seek to control. So there is no sovereign power and no common humanity striving to embody it; only context-specific relations of force and counter-force that well up inside us in the form of conditioned responses and partially controlled and calculated reactions.

There is, then, no reality to which "Humanity" refers. From a truly enlightened and "scientific" point of view, it would be altogether more accurate to say that there are no self-determining subjects *strictu sensu*, only social force fields traversed by the material effects of labor, language, and desire. But Foucault finds humanism *logically incoherent* in ways that are potentially terrifying as well. The classical paradigm conceived humanism in terms of a dualistic ontology. Universal humanity here designates an unconditioned immaterial "substance" – reason, or "soul" – that stands opposed to the particular embodied person, with all its determining passions and limitations. Corresponding to this ontological dualism we find an epistemological one: The knowing subject – which is again conceived as the rational subject – stands opposed to an independent object, which it seeks to represent.

Dualism proves to be the downfall of this paradigm. Simply put, it is impossible to understand how an object can be represented to a subject that is separated from it by such an immense gulf. The problem is magnified further when that object happens to be humanity itself, which – as Kant would later argue – cannot even be thought as an object in the strict sense of the term. Hence Kant's attempt to embed humanity in a more modern – and, if you will, more humanistic – paradigm of knowledge. The epistemological dualism between subject and object is overcome once the human subject – or more precisely, a universal transcendental subject – is postulated as constituting objectivity by applying its universal categories of reasoning to passive sensation. The rest is history. Kant's epigones

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

in the German Idealist tradition successively eliminate the "precritical" residues of Kant's humanism – specifically his postulation of a "thing-in-itself" that stands in for the unknowable causal source of sensation – thereby rendering humanity epistemologically and ontologically absolute.

But there remains something odd about this solution. Humanity is postulated as both the totality of reality and knowledge and its original creative source. "Man" is the term we use to designate each and every finite concrete individual as well as the term we use to designate the universal Spirit that both inhabits and transcends the individual. This "transcendental-empirical doublet," as Foucault refers to it (*OT*, 318), has not really expunged the dualism of subject and object, universal and particular. It has only declared the two sides of the equation to be *commensurable* because one side cannot be *thought* without the other. Transferred to a discussion of rights, the identification of humanity or universal reason, conceived as the unconditioned legislator, and the individual embodied person, understood as the legal subject, appears patently paradoxical. How (to rephrase Rousseau's query) can one be obligated to oneself? How can the effect (end) be identical to the origin (cause)? In short, how can one be God?

Dialectical paradoxes like these pose a real danger. Who, after all, is humanity and, more importantly, who in particular speaks for it? Locke, Rousseau, and Kant – the founders of the modern idea of human rights – defined humanity to suit themselves, and by so doing consigned women, wage laborers, and persons of non-European descent to the status of partial humans. But the danger here of confusing a general attribute with any one of its particular instances is unavoidable, since humanity and the rights that properly accrue to it will remain empty and meaningless – without definition – unless they are spoken for by someone. Conversely, once spoken for and declared, the rights of "Man" – no matter how parochially interpreted to suit the needs of just certain "men" – will take on the dubious ideological status of a timeless and universal truth. Henceforth, women and people of non-European descent will have their humanity measured by the extent to which they have "disciplined" themselves to become like men of European descent. The only proper antidote to this oppressive mystification is to deconstruct the idea of humanity by deploying the same "philosophical-historical" practice as

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

that engaged in by Nietzsche, Marx, and the early members of the Frankfurt School. In the words of Foucault,

> the question is being raised: "what, therefore, am I," I who belong to this humanity, perhaps to this piece of it, at this point in time, at this instant of humanity which is subjected to the power of truth in general and truths in particular? The first characteristic of this philosophical-historical practice, if you will, is to desubjectify the philosophical question by way of historical contents, to liberate historical contents by examining the effects of power whose truth affects them and from which they supposedly derive.[10]

The deconstruction of humanism suggested here announces a form of critique and enlightenment that seems far removed from if not opposed to the concept of critique and enlightenment advocated by Habermas. Speaking of Habermas, Foucault says that the aim of critique should *not* be to "identify general principles of reality" – such as humanity or some other transcendental, universal ground – from which "what is true or false, founded or unfounded, real or illusory, scientific or ideological, legitimate or abusive" can be *known* (*WC*, 200–201). Its aim should rather be the genealogical tracing of the "conditions for the appearance of a singularity born of multiple determining elements of which it is not the product but the effect" (*WC*, 203). In other words, genuine critique should be less concerned about its own truth or untruth and more concerned about clarifying – in some imperfect and unavoidably partial way – the peculiar historical conditions in which it operates.

HABERMAS'S RESPONSE TO FOUCAULT

But can we criticize and resist these peculiar historical conditions without the aid of humanism and its sacred rights? There was a time when Foucault thought so:

> if one wants to look for a non-disciplinary form of power, or rather, to struggle against disciplines and disciplinary powers, it is not towards the ancient right of sovereignty that one should turn, but towards the possibility of a new form of right, one which must indeed be anti-disciplinarian, but at the same time liberated from the principle of sovereignty. (*PK*, 108)

Habermas's response to Foucault can be understood as an attempt to fulfill at least part of this aspiration. Although he doubts whether

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

any anti-disciplinarian right can be formulated that doesn't appeal to human rights, he does think that humanism and its sacred rights can be "liberated from the principle of sovereignty" (or, as Habermas puts it, the principle of "subject-centered reason"). In other words, Habermas thinks that Enlightenment humanism can be interpreted in ways that avoid the philosophical paradoxes adduced by Foucault. Furthermore, Habermas thinks his explanation shows not only why humanism is still alive and kicking – as a factual force within *post*–subject-centered society – but also why it designates a relatively permanent disposition toward emancipation within all human society.

As for the "normalizing" features of disciplinary society that both he and Foucault criticize, Habermas locates their cause not in philosophical humanism, but in certain "social pathologies" associated with class societies and, more specifically, of late capitalism.[11] Like Foucault, Habermas deplores the extent to which dividing practices and hierarchies of knowledge undermine persons' critical aptitudes. The intensive division of intellectual and manual labor and the splitting off of specialized forms of technical expertise, he notes, all too easily lend themselves to centralized, top-down management, routinization and normalization, conformity, and rigid discipline. He shares Foucault's conviction that governmental paternalism in dispensing social welfare robs citizens of their freedom, dignity, and individuality. But that is precisely the point. Were it not for the vitality of humanism, would persons even complain of their dehumanization? Would parents and teachers resist the bureaucratization of schools? Would social workers and clients, nurses, doctors, and patients resist the bureaucratization of their health and welfare (*PDM*, 287)? And what about Foucault's defense of the rights of prisoners, homosexuals, and mental patients (*PDM*, 290)? Last but not least, could the author of "Confronting Governments: Human Rights" (1984) have written the following words sincerely if he had not been a humanist?

> There exists an international citizenship that has its rights and its duties, and that obliges one to speak out against every abuse of power, whoever its author, whoever its victims. After all, we are all members of the community of the governed, and thereby obliged to show solidarity.[12]

Habermas suspects that Foucault's yearning for "new rights" is really nothing more than a yearning for a less problematic

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

philosophical paradigm in which to formulate the old human rights. In any case, the "crypto-normativity" of Foucault's rhetorically charged genealogies (as Nancy Fraser puts it) shows that Foucault is not the "happy positivist" he claimed to be.[13] If it turns out that Foucault is a kind of humanist after all, we shall have to turn to Habermas in order to understand why.

Let's begin with Habermas's attempt to reinterpret modern humanism in a way that makes no reference to that sovereign supersubject, humanity. The reader will recall that this notion implies both an epistemological and an ontological dualism that is as dangerous as it is incoherent. This dualism can be formulated in many ways. On one hand, it denotes a subject that knows an object only by superimposing its own unitary identity on it. Ontologically, it denotes a transcendent – universal and unconditioned – ground of agency that conditions the activity of individual embodied subjects. This super-sensible ground – characteristically identified with Reason – develops and progressively realizes its essential freedom in the course of history. In all these instances, humanity appears as a contradictory identity of opposites. More importantly, from Rousseau on, this philosophical (or conceptual) dialectic is thought to underlie a real practical one: the so-called "Dialectic of Enlightenment." According to this dialectic, humanism is inherently ambivalent. Historical progress in enlightenment and emancipation simultaneously appears as historical regression to mythic fatalism. Modernists like Marx and Nietzsche respond to this dialectic by projecting a good outcome in the end ("communism," the "end of man," etc.); antimodernists like Heidegger do so by nostalgically recovering (if only in "poetic thinking") a prelapsarian origin unsullied by metaphysical "Man."

Now, Habermas proposes to dissolve this dialectic by refounding the idiom of human rights on a new philosophical paradigm: *communication*. Prior to the linguistic turn – and more precisely, prior to the pragmatist linguistic turn inaugurated by the late Wittgenstein – philosophers were mainly obsessed with the problem of knowledge, which they characteristically interpreted in Cartesian terms. This problem begins with a lone subject who seeks certainty regarding objects in the world outside of its immediate stream of consciousness. Subjective partiality is avoided and objective certainty achieved by recourse to innate reason, or common sense. But it is precisely here

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

where all the problems of classical and modern humanism begin. A better place to begin, Habermas believes, is with social interaction – or *intersubjectivity*. This is because social interaction is the foundation for both subjectivity and knowledge. Without socialization there would be no individuation and no subjects. And without people raising claims about the world that can be checked by others, there would be no knowledge, no "impartial" belief.

Speech action (or what Habermas calls "communicative action") is thus the primary medium in which subjectivity and knowledge emerge. Unlike knowing subjects, speakers do not relate to one another in the mode of "spectators" observing one another as "objects." Rather, they relate to one another in the mode of "participants" engaged in a process of mutual engagement and understanding. Here, what is mutually communicated, shared, and agreed upon – intersubjectivety – takes precedence over subjectivity. This means that there are no subjects, understood as absolutely autonomous and self-determining centers of activity – and no humanity, conceived as the universal, sovereign ground of that activity:

> If we abandon the conceptual framework of the philosophy of the subject, sovereignty need not be concentrated in the people in a concretistic manner. . . . The "self" of the self-organizing legal community disappears in the subjectless forms of communication that regulate the flow of discursive opinion- and will-formation whose fallible results enjoy the presumption of rationality. This is not to repudiate the intuition associated with the idea of popular sovereignty but rather to re-interpret it in intersubjective terms.[14]

Decentering "humanity" in this way does not mean that all forms of ontological and epistemological dualism associated with that concept have been dissolved. The dualism between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, is still preserved, along with the dualism between impartial and partial, rational and irrational, perspectives. Retaining these dualisms is important for Habermas because social criticism is impossible without them. And this, precisely, is the benefit of humanism – the establishment of a common, impartial reference point from which "we" can assert something like "human rights." But the meaning of humanism and its duality changes once it is translated into the register of communicative action. The dualism between "impartial reason" and "partial belief," for instance, no

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

longer designates a *metaphysical dualism* internal to the individual subject, but rather an *empirical distinction* – and a relative one at that – between two types of intersubjective communication: inclusive, egalitarian, and unconstrained on one side, and closed, hierarchical, and constrained, on the other.

Now we are in a better position to understand how a communicative paradigm might avoid the paradoxes of humanism associated with a subject-centered paradigm.

> The transcendental-empirical doubling of the relation to self is only unavoidable so long as there is no alternative to this observer-perspective; only then does the subject have to view itself as the dominating counterpart to the world as a whole or as an entity appearing within it. No mediation is possible between the transcendental I and the intramundane stance of the empirical I. As soon as linguistically generated intersubjectivity gains primacy, this alternative no longer applies. Then ego stands within an interpersonal relationship that allows him to relate to himself as a participant in an interaction from the perspective of alter [*sic*]. And indeed this reflection undertaken from the perspective of the participant escapes the kind of objectification inevitable from the reflexively applied perspective of the observer. (*PDM*, 297)

Subject-centered humanism encourages each of us to divide ourselves into opposed parts: one transcendental (universal humanity), the other empirical ("me"). "I" become a "free" human only to the extent that I direct my higher rational subjectivity against my lower, embodied subjectivity, and reflect upon this latter syndrome of bodily desires and conditioned habits as a natural object that can be rationally controlled and, if need be, dominated and repressed. Communication-centered humanism, by contrast, postulates no such division. Under its guidance I become a free human by participating in open, inclusive, and unconstrained discussion regarding the compatibility of my needs with respect to others. Critical reflection is "from the angle of vision of the second person," and this person is not a superhuman observer, evaluator, and executor, but just another partial participant.

The advantage of this paradigm becomes readily apparent when we recall our earlier discussion of dehumanization and human rights. Habermas, like Foucault, sees dehumanization as an overextension of subject-centered (or instrumental) reason. Unlike Foucault, however, he also sees this overextension as a "distortion"

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of communicative reason, and a distortion, moreover, that is not caused by something as abstract as Enlightenment humanism, but by something as concrete as capitalist economic growth and its side effects, which call for ever-growing bureaucratic regulation of everyday life:

> Horkheimer and Adorno have, like Foucault, described this process of a self-overburdening and a self-reifying subjectivity as a world-historical process. But both sides missed its deeper irony, which consists in the fact that the communicative potential of reason first had to be released in the patterns of modern lifeworlds before the unfettered imperatives of the economic and administrative subsystems could react back on the vulnerable practice of everyday life and could thereby promote the cognitive instrumental dimension to domination over the suppressed moments of practical reason. The communicative potential of reason has been simultaneously developed and distorted in the course of capitalist modernization. (*PDM*, 315)

As for human rights, subject-centered humanism encourages us to discover them by simply tapping into our higher rational humanity. Each of us does this in isolation from others, by simply gazing inward. Our innate conscience is all we need rely on in knowing what is right. Unfortunately, our "reason" is all too often clouded by personal bias. Eliminating bias by striving for ever-higher levels of abstraction on which all our reasons converge leaves us with nothing more than empty platitudes. We may disagree about the rightness of abortion but who can dispute the notion that every human should have a right to life with human dignity? Communication-centered humanism, by contrast, mitigates bias without sacrificing prescriptive specificity by encouraging us to reason together. In this way, the meaning of human rights is not absolutely fixed for all times and places, but is subject to concrete historical and contextual interpretation.

How far does this response go toward answering Foucault's objections to humanism? Perhaps not far enough. Some critics argue that Habermas's theory of communicative action has not entirely escaped the clutches of subject-centered philosophy.[15] After all, hasn't Habermas himself said that inclusiveness, reciprocity, and freedom from constraint are necessary, universal norms of rational argumentation (discourse), so that arguers who refuse to acknowledge them are, in effect, committing a "performative contradiction"? And doesn't saying this amount to postulating a kind of transcendental

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

subjectivity, if only as the theoretical culmination of a logic of moral development that should – but need not – be historically actualized?

Perhaps not quite, if we are to take Habermas's word for it. Habermas insists that "communication is neither a unitary process of self-generation [whether of the spirit or of the species]" nor an alien fate to which we must submit. Although he subscribes to Kohlberg's hypothesis regarding logical stages of moral development (suitably translated into stages of moral communication), he reminds us that actual progress from stage to stage is contingent on external circumstances. Furthermore, he recognizes that "even basic concepts that are starkly universalist have a temporal core" (*PDM*, 301). The freedom and equality enjoyed by the eighteenth-century shopkeeper are not the same as those vouchsafed to present-day clients of the modern welfare state.

This is one reason why Habermas, unlike his colleague Karl-Otto Apel, resists the temptation to claim anything like a strong transcendental justification for norms of communicative rationality. Pure philosophical reflection and conceptual analysis alone cannot confirm the empirical existence and efficacy of these norms apart from social science. It may well be that we know of no other way to interpret the notion of rational persuasion except by appeal to these norms; but that is at least partly a matter of disputable fact, not of intuitive certainty. In any case, the actual meaning and force of communication norms is always partly and perhaps largely contextualized with respect to actual – spatially and temporally delimited – processes of communication. This applies to the justification of human rights as well. As Habermas points out, even if one might plausibly argue that some human rights – such as freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of conscience – were instrumentally justifiable as necessary conditions for communicative rationality, this would not apply to all human rights. And even if it did, the "realization of human rights" – their precise definition as enforceable, legal rights – would vary depending upon the local speech contexts in which they were received.[16]

Hence Habermas today is much more sensitive to the notion that the "we" who interpret rights designates a *plural and multicultural* nexus of many *different identities* whose being is never theoretically or ideally pre-given but is always in the process of changing

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

in the course of historical political struggle:

> Ethical discourses aimed at achieving a collective self-understanding – discourses in which participants attempt to clarify how they understand themselves as members of a particular nation, as members of a community or state, as inhabitants of a region, etc., which traditions they wish to cultivate, how they should treat each other as minorities, and marginal groups . . . constitute an important part of politics. But under conditions of cultural and social pluralism . . . there often lie interests and value orientations that are by no means constitutive of the identity of the political community as a whole. (*TNMD*, 156)

FOUCAULT'S LATER HUMANISM

Toward the end of his life Foucault wryly observed that he was "in a little more agreement" with Habermas than Habermas was with him. This agreement is strongly reflected in Foucault's later embrace of certain humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment, including the notion that there may well exist transhistorical or "permanent" dispositions among all humans to resist government, broadly conceived. On this reading, universal norms of communication such as unconstrained consensus and rights to question are crucial ideals to defend. We would therefore be well advised to see how Foucault rephrased the convergence of his later theory with Habermas's while at the same time keeping in mind his belief that he and Habermas were embarking on very different critical projects.[17]

The extent to which Foucault's critical project converges with and diverges from Habermas's can be gleaned from Foucault's monumental history of sexuality. The last two volumes of the *History of Sexuality* published during his life marked something of a watershed in Foucault's understanding of his life's work. He now admitted that his central preoccupation with humanism (or as he now put it, the "relationship between the subject and truth") could best be approached by way of a genealogy of ethical self-understanding. What now occupies center stage in his analysis is the way in which persons voluntarily and intentionally subject themselves to technologies of self-control – technologies that are embedded in specific practices and types of knowledge determinant of a way of life, a manner of self-understanding, an identity – in short, an *ethos* (*UP*, 10).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

These practices exhibit their own continuity through time. In contrast to Foucault's earlier emphasis on epistemological breaks, his genealogical account of the Christian ethos that has shaped the modern age acknowledges superficial resemblances between its moral codes and those of its Greek and Greco-Roman predecessors. If we think of the moral code as "the set of values and rules of action that are recommended to the individual through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies," then all three systems are alike in their prescription of sexual abstinence (*UP*, 25). Despite his concession that there were universal constants at play traversing the three ethical schemes, Foucault maintained that there were perhaps deeper rifts embedded in their "ethical substance." In other words, "the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral conduct" might differ historically, despite the superficial commonality in the way in which sexuality is talked about (*UP*, 26). Some ethical regimes place greater emphasis on the moral code, its systematicity and inclusiveness. Here adherence to law is decisive in determining the mode of subjection. Others place emphasis on the esthetics of self-transformation. The Christian ethos and especially its modern, secular equivalent tend toward the former; the Greek and Greco-Roman ethic, toward the latter (*UP*, 21, 31). The differences among the three become apparent when examining the ethics of sexual abstinence. Whereas the Greek ethos sought to cultivate a moderate use of pleasure for the sake of personal and civic virtue and the Greco-Roman ethos sought to cultivate a solicitous care over the self for the sake of rationally administering a complex identity, the Christian ethos seeks to cultivate a hermeneutics of desire aimed at discovering the hidden truth of the soul. Its renunciation of a fallen self that is permanently deceived about itself marks the transition to a deontological ethic that privileges dutiful obligation to moral law over esthetic self-realization.

Now it is well known that Foucault identified his own critical project in terms of the kind of virtue ethic exemplified in these premodern ethical orientations. As he put it, "There is something in critique which is akin to virtue . . . [the] critical attitude as virtue in general" (*WC*, 192). Indeed, this is one of the features that seem to distinguish his critical project from Habermas's, which is so concerned with legitimating human rights. However, it would be wrong to liken this retrieval of an earlier ethical orientation as a "conservative"

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

rejection of modern ethics, as Habermas once thought (*MP*, 354).[18] Foucault disdained the idea of returning to the past. More importantly, as we shall now see, Foucault later situated his project within the same modern moral framework shared by Kant and Habermas. What results from this amalgamation of the ancients and the moderns is a distinctively "postmodern" virtue ethic that privileges the radical freedom to resist normalization as such.

Foucault tells us, in fact, that the critical attitude we typically associate with the modern Enlightenment arises "in any moment of history" in which governmentality, or the relationship between "power, truth, and the subject," is questioned (*WC*, 199). Foucault's invocation of a "critical spirit" running throughout human history sounds very humanistic and is confirmed by his view about human thought itself:

> Thought . . . can and must be analyzed in every manner of speaking, doing, or behaving in which the individual appears and acts as subject of learning, as ethical and juridical subject, as subject conscious of himself and other. In this sense, thought is understood as *the very form of action – as action insofar as it implies the play of true and false, the acceptance or refusal of rules, the relation of oneself to others*. . . . Posing the question in this way brings into play certain altogether *general principles*. Singular forms of experience may perfectly well harbor *universal structures;* they may well not be independent from the concrete determinations of social existence . . . [t]his thought has a historicity which is proper to it. That it should have this historicity does not mean that it is deprived of all *universal form*, but instead the putting into play of these universal forms is itself historical. (*FR*, 335; my emphasis)

What are these universal structures of human thought and action? Foucault gave different answers to this question during his lifetime. However, on occasion he appealed to none other than Habermas – specifically Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests – in arguing that human nature is motivated by three quasi-transcendental orientations, toward (a) technical or instrumental control of nature, (b) practical communication aimed at mutual understanding, and (c) resistance to domination. According to Foucault,

> power relations, relationships of communication, objective capacities should not therefore be confused. This is not to say that there is a question of three separate domains. Nor that there is on one hand the field of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

things, of perfected technique, work, and the transformation of the real; on the other that of signs, communication, reciprocity, and production of meaning; finally that of the domination of the means of constraint, of inequality and the action of men upon men. It is a question of three types of relationships which in fact always overlap one another, support one another reciprocally, and use each other mutually as means to an end. (*SP*, 217–218)

Significantly, as we saw above, Foucault elsewhere adds a fourth "transcendental" structure to this constellation of "techniques": "technologies of the self."[19] The question we must ask is: Why did Foucault feel compelled to supplement Habermas in this way?

To answer this question, we must look more closely at what Foucault found problematic in Habermas's theory. Foucault is especially interested in what Habermas has to say about communicative action and domination (power). Foucault seems to accept Habermas's general characterization of consensual communication as foundational for the raising of validity claims and the incurring of general obligations in a modern society. This impression is reinforced by his remark that

in the serious play of questions and answers, in the work of reciprocal elucidation, the rights of each person are in some sense immanent in the discussion. . . . The person asking the questions is merely exercising the right that has been given him: to remain unconvinced, to perceive a contradiction, to require information, to emphasize different postulates, to point out faulty reasoning. (*FR*, 381)

Elsewhere Foucault takes issue with Habermas's idealization of consensual communication, denying that "there could be a state of communication which would be such that the games of truth could circulate freely, without obstacles, without constraint and without coercive effects." Stated bluntly, Foucault thinks that Habermas's assessment of the prescriptive value to be accorded unconstrained consensus is too utopian:

It is being blind to the fact that relations of power are not something bad in themselves, from which one must free one's self. I don't believe there can be a society without relations of power, if you understand them as means by which individuals try to conduct, to determine the behavior of others. The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

techniques of management, and also the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination.[20]

In this passage Foucault hints at why we need to supplement the critique of ideology and, along with it, the democratic legitimation of law, with an ethics of virtue based upon "technologies of the self." Ideology critique and democracy are no more immune from the effects of power and domination than any other regime of "knowledge" and "legitimation." The "power-knowledge" exerted by "expert" critics – be they psychoanalysts or critical social theorists – and the "power-politics" exerted by democratic majorities must in turn be resisted by the counter-power exercised by virtuous subjects. Taken in its own right, none of these forms of power is bad. Indeed, all of them can be put to good use. But all of them need to check one another in a balanced play of forces.

Just how far this language of strategic gaming can be reconciled with the language of constraint-free mutual understanding promoted by Habermas will become apparent shortly. Of course, such a reconciliation would have seemed preposterous to Foucault and Habermas. But then again, since neither really understood the other, why should we take their opinions as gospel truth? To take one glaring example, Foucault's imputation that Habermas is advocating a utopian view of constraint-free communication simply contradicts what Habermas repeatedly said on the subject. Habermas denied that "perfectly transparent communication" was possible, since we are at most capable of reflecting on only a portion of our preconscious, taken-for-granted assumptions at any given time. And he denied that the kind of power-free "ideal speech situation" presumed by speakers engaged in rational argumentation was – or even should be – realizable. Indeed, this "counterfactual assumption" is only weakly regulative: It does not enjoin the realization of "ideal speech" – as Habermas never ceases to point out, there are many economic and administrative contexts in which engaging in communicative interaction is either inefficient or inappropriate – but at best warrants the questioning of any factual consensus as ideological.

So Habermas and Foucault both agree that there is no such thing as communication unconditioned by the effects of power and that certain forms of power can be productive, positive, enabling, and

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

empowering. That said, there remains an important point of contention between Foucault and Habermas: Habermas continues to emphasize the value of "truth" or "right" as a hedge against power, whereas Foucault doesn't. Like Nietzsche, Foucault is deeply skeptical of all knowledge claims. Because knowledge claims are conditioned by historical frames of understanding that have been partly constituted and affected by subliminal "power relations," Foucault wonders what it could possibly mean to "justify" (legitimate) a claim as true or valid. In short, in Foucault's account, all validity claims (as Habermas puts it) are necessarily partial, constrained, and illegitimate – even if only somewhat. Hence, for him, critique must take the negative form of "de-legitimizing" claims: "all knowledge rests on injustice (there is no right, even in the act of knowing, no truth or foundation for truth)" (*LCP*, 163).

I will return to this provocative thesis at the conclusion of my essay, for it suggests why Foucault is more attracted to a virtue ethics of personal, existential resistance than he is to deontological ethic based upon impersonal rights. Before doing so, however, I would first like to return to a problem I mentioned above regarding the apparent tension between Foucault's description of social interaction as preeminently "strategic" and Habermas's description of the same as preeminently "consensual." This little detour will help us understand the extent to which power might be productive of "truth" and "right." Understanding this will in turn shed light on the way in which Foucault regards "power" as a kind of quasi-transcendental locus of productivity, a position Habermas criticizes – wrongly I believe – as metaphysical.

POWER AND ACTION

In the passage cited above, Foucault asserts that he is following Habermas in claiming that power (domination) is a "transcendental" on a par with communicative relationships and instrumental capacities. However, in only one of the possible texts to which Foucault might have been referring does Habermas even remotely suggest that power is a transcendental medium of knowledge and action. The issue is further complicated by the fact that Habermas often has in mind many different notions of power. In the text cited by Foucault, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), Habermas suggests that

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

domination (*Herrschaft*) is not a transcendental or necessary feature of the human condition, like the other two orientations, but a contingent feature associated mainly with class societies. In a somewhat later essay, Habermas closely follows Hannah Arendt in opposing power (*Macht*), conceived as united action based upon voluntary, communication-based consent, to domination, or violence aimed at asymmetrical instrumental control.[21] In yet another venue – the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) – Habermas discusses other senses of power associated with what he calls strategic "speech acts" and "power-backed" systemic imperatives. Only here could it be said that Habermas accepts the "necessity" of power in structuring human relationships.

In truth, both Foucault and Habermas regard power as a permanent, if variable, feature of society. For Habermas, the manifestations of power, ranging from relatively innocuous forms of subtle influence to overt forms of violent domination, vary both structurally and historically. From a structural point of view, power may designate a feature of *speech action* or a mechanism of *system integration*. As a feature of speech, it specifies the peculiar sanction of authority backing up commands. Although in the *Theory of Communicative Action* Habermas categorically distinguished commands backed by mere threat of force from commands backed by rationally binding moral authority, in a more recent reply to critics he conceded that "a continuum obtains between power that is merely a matter of factual custom and power transformed into normative authority."[22] Such a continuum is attested to by the simple fact that *rationally binding* moral platitudes such "Tell the truth!" are initially learned as commands backed by threat of sanctions.[23]

A similar continuity obtains when power is viewed as a vertical mechanism of systemic integration.[24] Even prior to the splitting off of autonomous economic and political subsystems, the exercise of power in stratified tribal societies, Habermas notes, occurs in the form of *personal* prestige and influence. Importantly, this kind of power need not rely on sanctions. The asymmetrical exercise of power owing to differences in lineage, gender, and generation is still interwoven in consensus-oriented communication between persons who, morally speaking, remain mutually accountable to one another. Today, this same burden falls on technical experts, despite their monopoly on the power of expertise. By contrast, the bureaucratic

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

power exercised in modern organizations depends on *impersonal* legal sanction. Here the exercise of power is largely relieved of the above burden. I say "largely" because, for Habermas, the exercise of administrative power still requires democratic legitimation, which occurs within the medium of consensus-oriented communication. Although the government relies upon legal coercion – not negotiation – in exacting compliance, this strategic medium remains subject to judicial and public oversight ("Reply," 254–258).

In a manner that invites comparison with Habermas's taxonomy, some of Foucault's late interviews also distinguish between levels, or degrees, of power, domination, and governance.[25] Whereas domination involves unilaterally exercising uncontested power over others, governance – even between unequals – involves some reciprocal give and take.[26] Strategic relationships like this can even be perfectly reciprocal. Indeed, the most striking thing about Foucault's discussion of strategically exercised power is that he does *not* oppose such power to consensus-oriented communication.

Habermas's tendency to do just the opposite partly reflects his somewhat idiosyncratic understanding of strategic action. As Habermas understands it, strategic action occurs whenever one or more actors pursue personal aims by influencing the behavior of others through threat of force, covert manipulation, or some other instrumental inducement. Often this requires concealing a strategic motive behind an apparently open and consensual one (*TCA I*, 10, 85, 273–274). But this is not the only notion of strategic action Habermas has in mind, as evidenced by his discussion of rhetoric and indirect communication.[27] More importantly, it is *not* the notion that Foucault has in mind either. Indeed, the egoism and atomism that Habermas, like many game theorists, attributes to strategic action are much less pronounced in Foucault's account of strategic relations, since he repudiates methodological individualism. On the contrary, if his notion of strategic action comports with any model of gamesmanship, it would be the model of "play" that Hans-Georg Gadamer has argued underlies all forms of *consensual understanding*.[28]

Foucault tells us that a strategic power relation is "not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others" (*SP*, 219). This comports with Gadamer's concept of free play, in which it is the *preconscious subtext of the speaker's utterance* (including the perlocutionary,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

affective, and rhetorical force of speech) that draws out and elicits a response from the listener. To this extent, subjective agency remains beholden to actions that have a meaning (power and efficacy) all their own, independent of consciously intended aims. This is not a relationship of violence, but requires "that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts" (*SP*, 220). This is to say that "power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government": the structuration of a field of possible responses (*SP*, 221). According to this latter reading, not only are freedom and power not mutually exclusive, but "freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power" (*SP*, 220). Hence the free play of actions and effects is not entirely independent of rational agency – it presupposes a real and, as we shall see, legal capacity for initiative and counter-initiative – but it is not reducible to it, as Habermas would like to think it is.

Speech act theory provides ample confirmation of this interplay of freedom and power. Take the example of promising. As Habermas notes, the freedom of the addressee depends on his or her capacity to refuse the promise. This offer thus presents an opportunity for exercising freedom; that is, it opens up a field of possible responses on the part of the addressee. We might say that, by taking the initiative in opening up a determinate field of possibilities, the speaker's offer constitutes a deployment of power whereby the response of the addressee is conducted. This conducting, however, is not a manipulating. At best, only a field of possibilities – one that is relatively open – is offered up by the speaker. This offer both limits and enables a range of responses, one of which is refusal and resistance. The freedom and power of the addressee is conditional for the freedom and power of the speaker and vice versa. Promise making, for instance, would be meaningless if the addressee had no choice but to accept the offer. The free consent of both speaker and addressee is at play here since, as Kant famously showed, without the assumption of reciprocity that accompanies promise making, the manipulation of the promise breaker would never succeed.

These remarks are important not only because they suggest that strategic reciprocity is prior to strategic manipulation, but also because they imply that strategic actors – far from being passive bearers of functional roles and internalized norms – actively and freely

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

contribute to structuring the field of possible responses. Strategic power and consensual freedom thus constitute one another and both are necessary features of social relationships.

Critical Practices: The Ambivalence of Enlightenment

What implications does Foucault's belief in the transcendental necessity of power have for critical practice? In his late commentary on Kant's famous essay of the same title, "What Is Enlightenment?" (1784), Foucault contrasts two types of critical practice, both of which he finds implicit within Kant's philosophy:

> Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits. But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today has to be turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression. . . . This entails the obvious consequence: that criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. In that sense criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible . . . it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action, but it will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events. And this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are to what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are. . . . It is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom. (*FR*, 46)

Let us be very clear about what Foucault is saying here. He is not denying the existence of general conditions that both constrain and make possible the peculiar mode of being we commonly associate with modern humanity – that much we have already established. The "universalizing tendencies" he discovers at the root of Western civilization – "the acquisition of capabilities and the struggle

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

for freedom" – have constituted, in his opinion, "permanent elements" (*FR*, 48). That is why he characterizes "our" freedom as an "ascetic task" of self-production that is both discipline *and* limit. As he puts it, "modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it *compels* him to face the task of producing himself" (*FR*, 42; my emphasis).

Yet it is precisely this compulsion to be modern that in Foucault's judgment renders any justification of modernity itself problematic. Although one might hypothesize about the conditions that define and limit the modern compulsion to be free, one could not claim any transcendental certainty for them. In any case, if the enlightenment is part of the "historical ontology of ourselves" that has determined *who* we are, it would make no sense to be for or against it (*FR*, 43). Because it is meaningless to legitimate what is beyond choice, and because there is no emancipating knowledge that is not itself inherently partial and conditioned by preconscious effects of power, one must remain content to do the one thing that is existentially possible, namely, freely reinterpret and live it in a manner that best accords with one's singular understanding of who one is.

If Foucault eschews the role of Kantian legislator in favor of playing transgressive critic, it is only because he no less than Habermas posits freedom – the compulsion to be free – as a kind of irresistible "limit" on our transgressive practice. Or perhaps we should say "enabling condition." For, in truth, are not Habermas and Foucault describing social structures that, in some sense, simultaneously compel and empower us to question power? Likewise, once we accept the notion that all knowledge is itself inherently fallible, might we not say that we "know" – at least in some provisional sense that encourages endless disputation and justification – that we *should* question power, and that unquestioned power (or power imposed that allows insufficient freedom for response and strategic maneuver) is potentially *illegitimate*?

But – you say – Foucault is not Habermas. He has given up the notion that critical resistance – or if you will, delegitimation – *must be* justified, or legitimated. If genealogical critics are called upon to justify their "claims," they will not do so by offering reasons that will be compelling to everyone, since even the most widely accepted scientific and historical practices will be resisted by some because of their partiality.[29] Yet Habermas would no doubt consider Foucault's

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

own "qualified" use (or mention) of scientific and historical sources as paradoxical. How can Foucault expect others to take his genealogies seriously if the secondary sources on which they rely are not advanced as true or right?[30]

Perhaps one way to extricate Foucault from this dilemma is to point out that convincing justifications come in many varieties, some discursive and some non-discursive. Reading Foucault's genealogies as dramatic scripts containing multiple roles that either have been or currently are (or might be) performed by himself or others opens up just this possibility, and seems to draw support from the last course he conducted at the Collège de France in 1984. There Foucault talked about a different kind of self-justification modeled on the *parrhesia* practiced by ancient Greek and Roman ethicists.[31] The emphasis here is on producing a "true life" through one's bearing and demeanor. According to Habermas, however, dramatic performances and the scripts they enact are still implicitly discursive. So-called "narrative" speech acts (which raise claims to innovative disclosure and exemplary worthiness) must be discursively redeemed like ordinary communicative speech acts. Furthermore, fiction and history remain parasitic on everyday communicative action in the sense that the actors within the story or script themselves raise "virtual" pragmatic validity claims to truth, rightness, and sincerity. Yet, if we think of the practitioner of *parrhesia* as *primarily* raising aesthetic-expressive claims to sincerity, authenticity, and exemplary, innovative disclosure, it is possible, using Habermas's model, to regard this kind of narrative-performance as requiring a *non-discursive* justification. For, as Habermas concedes in numerous places, justifications of sincerity and authenticity are *mainly* cemented by deeds and words consistently and resolutely reenacted (or, as in the case of innovative disclosure, by experiences felt as exemplary), not by reasons discursively debated (*PDM*, 203, 207; *TCA I*, 20).[32]

Now, Foucault's interest in *parrhesia* centers on its exemplifying a *non-discursive* form of justification in precisely this sense. In other words, we might take this to mean that, for Foucault, critique really is nothing more than the embodied exemplification of virtuous resistance, "performed" as Judith Butler says, but not rationally justified.[33] The only problem with doing so is that performance is itself a social act that presumes the virtual *identification*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and *mutual understanding* of a sympathetic audience that sincerely believes that something of value – some truth, say, about the human condition – is at stake. The presumption that some sort of shared truth is being conveyed gets us back to the notion of consensus, or the idea (developed in exemplary fashion by Gadamer) that the audience participates along with the actor/narrator in completing the performance, that is, in bringing its meaning/truth to full expression in the form of another interpretation (or performance).

With the notion that performance consists in the convergence of an authoritative tradition of interpretation we find ourselves confronting the question posed by Habermas to Gadamer: What legitimates the authority of this convergence, if tradition itself rests upon unspoken power? Foucault also poses this question when he criticizes any consensus of opinion whose normative authority is taken for granted: "consensus," he tells us, must remain "a critical idea to maintain at all times." Because Foucault affirms the mutual and unavoidable interaction between communication and power, he agrees with Habermas that one must "ask oneself what proportion of nonconsensuality is implied in such a power relationship, and whether the degree of nonconsensuality is necessary or not" so that "one may question every power relationship to that extent" (*FR*, 379).

Parrhesia, then, must itself be reconfigured as a *social* virtue that also impinges on issues of *social justice* in which the *free consent* and *rights* of *others* are at stake. As such it must combine two distinct critical techniques: one that is aesthetic and transgressive and another that is moral and discursive. *Transgressive critique* resists normative *limits*. It invents new vocabularies for describing who we are and who we want to be as individuals – all new ways of expressing and caring for ourselves. Finally, it elevates to a fine art the "undefined work of freedom that is condemned to creating its self-awareness and its norms out of itself" (*TAHP*, 106). Hence it principally acts upon "bodies and pleasures" rather than upon minds and reasons.[34] *Ideology critique*, by contrast, embraces normative limits. Ideals of truth and justice inspire us to seek our own empowerment in concert with others. They compel us to reason together as free and equal participants in a democratic form of life.

Democratic accountability designates an on-going process of questioning, resisting, and dissenting. On this point Foucault and Habermas are in perfect agreement. As the passage I cited earlier

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

clearly shows, Foucault no less than Habermas appeals to unconstrained dialogue as a standard of critique. But then – to return to our original query – is this not to say that he, too, must ground the act of critical delegitimation in something (some reason) that he takes to be legitimate?

The burdens of legitimation fall upon persons who are committed to reserving as much freedom for others as they reserve for themselves. This kind of freedom would scarcely be imaginable outside of a constitutional framework that protects against the intrusive and constraining power of those anonymous systems of surveillance and discipline that find their maximum concentration in the state. By the same token, it can be argued that the framework itself is in jeopardy when people cease to question its meaning. Each person must interpret this framework as a realization of both his or her common humanity and his or her unique individuality. Humanity and individuality mediate one another and both refer to needs and desires. Hence the integrity of a system of rights must depend on the extent to which legal subjects have freely cultivated their own *aesthetic sensibilities*.[35] Can the same be said about the integrity of society as a locus of collective self-realization and mutual fulfillment?

ALIENATION, AESTHETICS, AND THE LIMITS OF IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE

Habermas is fond of saying that values interpret our needs; they relate our physiological and corporal being to our spiritual yearning for complete happiness. Freedom and duty do not exhaust our ethos. Ruminating on the limits of a form of social criticism oriented exclusively toward questions of justice and domination, he once asked,

> Is it possible that one day an emancipated human race could encounter itself within an expanded space of discursive formation of will and yet be robbed of the light in which it is capable of interpreting its life as something good? The revenge of a culture exploited over millennia for the legitimation of domination would then take this form: right at the moment of overcoming age-old repressions it would harbor no violence, but it would have no content either.[36]

Social justice – to paraphrase Habermas – is no substitute for social happiness. And here we need to recall that last vestige of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

eudaimonistic Marxism in Habermas's theory of communicative action. According to Habermas, capitalism necessitates unhappiness. It promotes a *selective rationalization* in which "one cultural value sphere" – in this case, the moral-ethical-aesthetic sphere – "is insufficiently institutionalized without a structure-building effect for the whole of society and (at least) one sphere of life" – the economic-administrative sphere – "prevails so far that it subordinates other orders of life under its alien form of rationality" (*TCA I*, 240). Simply put, capitalism *alienates* us from our lifeworld, in which individual needs are interpreted by shared values that in turn aspire towards a felicitous state of harmony. Capitalism has thus "found some functional equivalent or ideology formation," which consists in frustrating this harmonization by "preventing holistic interpretations from coming into existence" (*TCA II*, 383).

Now, there is no other guidepost for determining when our lives have become overly colonized by economy and state, overly splintered and fragmented by the hyper-specialization of expertise, and overly alienated from the lifeworld except by appeal to value judgments that express our *felt sensibility* that things are not *well* with us. To cite Habermas, "if we do not wish to relinquish altogether standards by which a form of life might be judged to be more or less failed, deformed, unhappy, or alienated, we can look to the model of sickness and health" (*TCA I*, 73–74). But he immediately adds that the "balance among non-self-sufficient moments, [the] equilibrated interplay of the cognitive with the moral and aesthetic-practical" implied in this model cannot be derived from "the formal concept of freedom which modernity's decentered understanding of the world has left us." Unlike justice and emancipation, happiness is not directly implicated in the formal structures of the "ideal speech situation." As such, it is questionable whether critical theory ought to speculate about it. Indeed, Habermas goes so far as to suggest that the critique of alienation is something that critical theory "must refrain" from doing (*TCA II*, 383).

Of course, Habermas cannot be serious about this. He cannot abandon the critique of alienation – of the "colonization of the lifeworld" and of the "splitting off of expert cultures" – without playing into the hands of a system that encourages uncritical thinking by "preventing holistic experiences from coming into existence." So despite being rationally *un*grounded, the critique of alienation remains both

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

desirable and possible from Habermas's perspective. Indeed, holistic orientations to collective well-being, happiness, and the good are indispensable for other reasons as well. According to Habermas, they provide the necessary complement to his deontological – specifically procedural – account of law and democracy. The rights that instantiate procedural ideals of freedom, equality, and justice are themselves only realized in the form of enforceable statutes. But the process by which legislatures, administrators, and judges define rights in turn responds to specific harms and benefits – and broader "ethical" conceptions of public well-being – debated by average citizens.

As I noted above, debates about harms and benefits are only possible to the extent that individuals cultivate their aesthetic-ethical sensibilities. Part of this cultivation no doubt occurs in rational argumentation about judgments of taste. However, it cannot be reduced to it.[37] For prior to being discussed, judgments of taste must be cultivated in aesthetic *experience*, which is partly *intuitive* and *affective*. Habermas adds that, "such an experience is used to illuminate a life-historical situation and is related to life problems, it . . . not only renews the interpretation of our needs in whose light we perceive the world," but it also

> permeates as well our cognitive significations and our normative expectations and changes the manner in which all these moments refer to one another. In this respect, modern art harbors a utopia that becomes a reality to the degree that the mimetic powers sublimated in a work of art find resonance in the mimetic relations of a balanced and undistorted intersubjectivity of everyday life. (*MP*, 353)

Talk of art's "mimetic powers" finding "resonance" in everyday life once again brings us back to Foucault's aesthetic technologies of self-formation. Contrary to what one might expect from the utopian yearnings embedded in art, one cannot experience reconciliation alone. It requires an *intimate* caring for one's self *and one's consociates* in all their sensuous singularity.[38] Despite their self-referential nature, technologies of aesthetic self-formation are instruments for communicating care. So, in addition to our *metaphysical faith* in and *humanitarian hope* for a better life for all, the individualized care and responsibility we extend to *particular others* requires a unique receptivity to our *own* "bodies and pleasures." We learn to

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

care about ourselves from others' caring about us and also from our caring about them.[39]

To conclude, the seemingly solitary judgment and *phronesis* exercised by the transgressive virtue ethicist may well complement the collective process of normative legitimation exercised by critics of ideology. Yet the difference between the former and the latter still stands – no matter how far one "enlarges" one's felt sensibilities to include others. As Nietzsche wisely observed, it is "selfish to experience one's own judgment as a universal law."[40]

And yet, in the process of interpreting that law for purposes of social criticism, how can we possibly avoid doing what Nietzsche bids us not to do? As a standard for criticizing injustice, humanity is but an empty receptacle that must be filled with our most deeply felt utopian yearnings for happiness. What we know of it is largely what we have made of it. In the age of humanism, that sounds a bit terrifying. We have become the God that we ourselves killed – so much so that there is literally *nothing* left in our own humanity that could withstand the infinite depths of our critical reflection. Accordingly, Nietzsche's lament that he is "all too human" also expresses a joyful paean to the "overman" within him whose every affirmation of life is simultaneously an act of Promethean self-nihilation. Likewise for Foucault, this sublime transgression of limits contains an element of the tragic. Perhaps it is this Faustian dialectic – so emblematic of the horrors of the last century – that Nietzsche had in mind when he said that we must "discover the hero no less than the fool in our passion for knowledge" (*GS*, 164). If so, then the *tragic* "hero" in our passion for *self*-knowledge must be the one who learns to embrace the most enduring and noblest of lies, namely, the illusion that there is a humanity and truth worth striving for. And here I cite Nietzsche one last time:

> the question "Why science?" leads back to the moral problem: *Why have morality at all* when life, nature, and history are "not moral"? No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this "other world" – look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our* world? But you will have gathered what I am driving at, namely, that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests – that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is *divine*. But what if this should become more and more incredible, if nothing should prove to be divine any more unless it were error, blindness, the lie – if God himself should prove to be our most enduring lie? (*GS*, 282–283).

NOTES

1 M. Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 221. Hereafter *AK*.

2 The present commentary revisits and revises an earlier commentary of mine, "Foucault and Habermas on the Subject of Reason," which appeared in the first edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*.

3 M. Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Random House, 1984), hereafter *FR*. Other works of Foucault cited in this essay include *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), hereafter *DP*; D. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), hereafter *LCP*; *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1970), hereafter *OT*; Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, Colin Gordon, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), hereafter *PK*; *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), hereafter *HS*; *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Volume III*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1985), hereafter *UP*; *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, Volume III*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1986), hereafter *CS*; and "The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Afterword, 214–232, hereafter *SP*. Works of Habermas cited in this essay include "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), hereafter *TAHP*; *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Fred Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), hereafter *PDM*; *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols., trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984/1987), hereafter *TCA I* and *TCA II*; *Moral*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Consciousness and Communicative Action, trans. C. Lenhardt and S. Nicholson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), hereafter *MC*; and "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," trans. S. Weber, in David Ingram and Julia Simon, eds., *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 342–356, hereafter *MP*.

4 The kind of civic humanism characteristic of the Renaissance is not at issue here, but only the modern philosophical humanism that informs classical Enlightenment and Romanticism.

5 F. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. F. Golffing (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), 194.

6 Ibid., 217.

7 M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972).

8 In a 1978 interview with Duccio Trombadori, Foucault duly noted that first-generation critical theorists "had tried ahead of time to assert things" that he, too, had been working for years to sustain, among them "the effects of power that are connected to a rationality that has been historically and geographically defined in the West." In the interview Foucault also lamented his ignorance of the Frankfurt School's work during his formative years (he read with difficulty some of Horkheimer's texts) and added, "If I had encountered the Frankfurt School while young, I would have been seduced to the point of doing nothing else in life but the job of commenting on them." On the less complimentary side, Foucault revealed his unhappiness with their humanism and laxness with respect to historical sources. See M. Foucault, *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*, trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 115–129.

9 Foucault here draws upon an earlier study, *Punishment and Social Structure* (1939), that was published by the Frankfurt School in its Studies on Authority and Family. Foucault notes that the authors of the study, Georg Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer, "were right to see [public tortures and executions] as the effect of a system of production in which labour power, and therefore, the human body, has neither the utility nor the commercial value that are conferred upon them in an economy of an industrial type" (*DP*, 54).

10 M. Foucault, "What Is Critique?," in D. Ingram, ed., *The Political* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 199.

11 Habermas notes that the welfare state has succeeded in containing the systemic crises of capitalism at the cost of generating new crises and pathologies at the level of the political system. To offset its legitimation crisis, caused in part by its use of public tax revenue to

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

pursue contradictory aims – promoting economic growth and compensating for its harmful side effects – the state must discourage its citizens from taking too great an interest in governance. This is partly achieved by getting them interested in pursuing careers and families and by defining their well-being in terms of work and consumption. It is also achieved by encouraging the belief that class conflicts no longer exist and that the collaboration of labor and capital benefits everyone equally. Having dispensed with worries about "who gets what," government can define its mission in purely "technical" terms: ensuring long-term economic growth and prosperity for all. Obviously, this is a job for scientific and technological elites, who mustn't be held accountable to the ignorant masses. The depoliticization of the masses would "solve" the state's legitimation crisis, were it not for the fact that compensating for the destructive side effects of economic growth requires bureaucratic interventions that repoliticize the citizenry or, as in the case of welfare law, reinforce their pathological dependency (*TCA II*, 332–373).

12 M. Foucault, "Confronting Human Rights," in James D. Faubion, ed., *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984. Volume 3: Power* (New York: New Press, 2000), 474.

13 Habermas's critique of Foucault's cryptonormativism develops a theme first discussed by Nancy Fraser in "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions," *Praxis International* 1 (1981): 272–287. Fredric Jameson observes a similar contradiction between the critical rhetoric of genealogical method, which encourages resistance, and the fatalistic rhetoric of a totalizing theory of power, which encourages resignation. See his "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (September 1984): 53–92.

14 J. Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in D. Ingram, ed., *The Political* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 159. Hereafter *TNMD*.

15 S. Benhabib, "The Utopian Dimension of Communicative Ethics," in David Ingram and Julia Simon, eds., *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 397.

16 J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. W. Rehg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 311–312.

17 Whether Foucault's later turn toward hermeneutic sociology and the Enlightenment marks a real theoretical and methodological convergence toward Habermas's way of thinking and a radical shift in his thought is a matter of some dispute. In one retrospective summation of his life's work, Foucault stressed his abiding interest in the relationship between the subject and truth but acknowledged that his analysis of this relationship over the years stressed different angles: the role of the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

theoretical human sciences in constituting the image of man, the role of coercive practices and institutions (penology, medicine, and psychology) in normalizing behavior, and the role of ascetic practices in constituting the ethical subject (M. Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984," in James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, eds., *The Final Foucault* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988], 1–2). Elsewhere he said that his aim had been the creation of a history of the different modes of objectification by which human beings are made subjects: the scientific objectification of the subject in linguistics, economics, medicine, and so on; the coercive objectification of the self in exclusionary and disciplinary practices; and the self-objectification of the subject in the hermeneutics of desire (*SP*, 208). Again, in the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault describes these "theoretical shifts" as expanding the scope of genealogy, on the one hand, while specifying more precisely its method and goal, on the other (6, 9). For further discussion of the question of continuity in Foucault's thought, see: D. C. Hoy, Introduction, in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); A. Davidson, "Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics," in David Couzens Hoy, ed. (loc. cit.), 221–234; Garth Gillian, "Foucault's Philosophy," in James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, eds., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 34–44; and James Bernauer, "Foucault's Ecstatic Thinking," in James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, eds., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 45–82.

18 Nancy Fraser submits that "Habermas's charge misses the mark" inasmuch as "Foucault is not necessarily aspiring to a total break with modern values and forms of life just because he rejects a foundationalist metainterpretation of them." Yet she goes on to say that, whenever Foucault is read as a "strategic" or "normative" *anti-humanist* who rejects modern values because they either produce counter-emancipatory effects or produce emancipatory effects that are cognate with disciplinary normalization, the charge sticks. In any case, cynicism might not be the only reaction provoked by Foucault's critique of modernity. David Hoy, for one, argues that genealogy is best interpreted as a form of immanent social criticism: "Foucault paints the picture of a totally normalized society, not because he believes our present society to be one, but because he hopes we will find the picture threatening" (Hoy, "Foucault: Modern or Postmodern?," 14). See also Nancy Fraser, "Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'?," in Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 52.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

19 M. Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," in P. Rabinow, ed., *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault. Volume 1: Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 177.

20 M. Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984," in James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, eds., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 18.

21 J. Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's: On the Concept of Power," Philosophical-Political Profile, trans. F. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), 171–187, and *TCA II*, 153–197.

22 J. Habermas, "A Reply," in Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, eds., *Communicative Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 239.

23 According to Habermas, one must distinguish normative expectations accompanying the acceptance of *meaningful* utterances (illocutionary force in the broad sense) from normative expectations accompanying the acceptance of *morally binding* obligations (illocutionary force in the narrow sense). Even borderline cases involving *immoral* demands, such as a bank robber's "Hands up!," accord with *norms* of correct speech *as a condition for their being successfully understood*. However, since the conditions of pragmatic (illocutionary) meaningfulness *ultimately* include the conditions for successful interaction as well (illocutionary meaning broadly construed), Habermas says that the bank robber's demand remains *parasitic* on the structure of mutual moral obligation inherent in voluntary speech action. As we shall see, Habermas's characterization of the rules of discourse as a "fact of reason" perfectly illustrates the sense in which a generalized, *customary* practice of communicative action *within the historical context of Western rationalized culture and society* also assumes the status of a normatively binding authority (ibid.).

24 For a detailed discussion of Habermas's subtle analysis of the different kinds of strategic force (*Gewalt*) that accompany the use of systemic media of money and power, on one hand, and influence and prestige, on the other, see J. Nicolas Kaufmann, "Formations discursives et dispositifs de pouvoir: Habermas critique Foucault," *Dialogue* 27 (1988): 41–57.

25 James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, eds., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 3, 18–19.

26 Foucault does not deny the worthiness of inquiring into the issue of *social domination* (or the question of *who* exercises power over *whom*). Rather, he chooses to address a different question: How do persons exercise power over other persons? Or better, *How* do the effects (intended and unintended) of a given action structure the field of possible

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

responses? In contrast to the theory of power or, more specifically, the theory of domination developed by theorists in the Marxist tradition, such as Steven Lukes and Habermas, Foucault's "analytic of power" does not conceptualize power as something that certain subjects possess and consciously exercise in the repression of others. Although the *critical rhetoric* that accompanies Foucault's analysis of power *does* presuppose a normative distinction between oppressive and non-oppressive power relations, the analysis as such does not. See Steven Lukes, "Power and Structure," in his *Essays in Social Theory* (London: MacMillan, 1977), pp. 3–30. For a defense of Foucault's structuralist account of power against the charge of fatalism leveled by Lukes, see David Hoy, "Power, Repression, Progress: Foucault, Lukes and the Frankfurt School," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 123–147.

27 "Reply," 254–259. For Habermas, actors resort to communicative action *precisely in order to coordinate the pursuit of personal aims*. Here, however, the orientation toward personal success is subordinated to the orientation toward reaching mutual agreement. Stated differently, the ideal constraints of communicative reciprocity are superimposed over the real, empirical constraints that impinge at the level of mundane purposes. Only when strategic and communicative orientations are pursued on the same level, as it were, does contradiction occur. But Habermas also recognizes that there are borderline cases, such as the hortatory rhetoric of the politician, that mix orientations. Here the orientation toward reaching mutual understanding is pursued reservedly, at best (291, n. 63). In this regard it bears noting that Habermas by no means neglects the subordination of strategic speech acts to communicative aims that occurs whenever one "gives another to understand something" indirectly. The opening up and preservation of communicative interaction often depends on such non-verbalized *perlocutionary* effects. The unannounced power, or indirect influence, that stems from the (relatively independent) meaning of the speech act and/or its context of deployment cannot be conceived merely as a strategic accretion in the narrow sense, as Habermas once thought. Rather, it constitutes, as he now realizes, an indirect communication in its own right, one that is perhaps best captured by the very different notion of strategic action alluded to by Foucault (239ff.).

28 Earlier in his career, Habermas appealed to the philosophical hermeneutics of H.-G. Gadamer, who argued that consensual dialogue can be understood as a strategic game in which the structure of play and reciprocity predominate over the subjective aim of winning. Not coincidentally, the concept of a language game was originally introduced by

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Wittgenstein to capture the rule-governed, consensual nature of speech. By contrast, J.-F. Lyotard recently emphasized the agonistic (or contestatory) nature of language games. Although Foucault often formulates his theory of strategic relations in confrontational terms, his remarks about preserving the freedom of the other without dominating him (see below) suggest a more Gadamerian phrasing. See H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1986), 91–119; J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), section 5; David Ingram, "Jurgen Habermas and Hans-Georg Gadamer," in R. Solomon and D. Sherman, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Continental Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 219–242; "The Possibility of a Communicative Ethic Reconsidered: Habermas, Gadamer, and Bourdieu On Discourse," *Man and World* 15 (1982): 149–161; and "Legitimacy and the Postmodern Condition: The Political Thought of Jean-Francois Lyotard," *Praxis International* 7:3/4 (Winter 1987/1988): 284–303.

29 Hubert Dreyfus argues that abandoning the kind of theoretical holism that Quine, Davidson, Habermas, and Gadamer hold – the view that the meaning of action can be captured in terms of non–context-specific true or false beliefs – in favor of the practical holism of Heidegger's *Vorhabe*, Bourdieu's *habitus*, or Foucault's pre-discursive practices enables us to circumvent the need for justification and, along with it, the debate between relativists and universalists. However, Dreyfus's concern about theoretical holism is baseless, since it rests on a confusion, to wit: that transcendental enabling conditions like praxical and communicative competencies are like linguistic contents, which delimit meaning. Reducing different language games to limiting – as opposed to enabling – conditions forces us to conclude that they must be *radically* incommensurable, or incapable of being translated into each other. But it is precisely the "universal" and "formal" conditions underlying a universal communicative competence that enable specific contents from different languages to be translated (however imperfectly) into one another. See H. Dreyfus, "Holism and Hermeneutics," *Review of Metaphysics* 34 (1980): 3–23. For a detailed argument against strong holism, see J. Bohman, *New Philosophy of Social Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 115ff.

30 Hoy suggests that Foucault's postmodernism enables him to avoid the charge of pragmatic contradiction (or self-referential paradox) leveled against him by Habermas. As a postmodernist Foucault can both accept the inescapability of rational notions of truth and legitimacy – something the anti-modernist can't do – and deny that they can (or need) be given any transcendental or teleological justification. Habermas seems

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to miss this aspect of Foucault's position, classifying him as an "anti-modernist" and "young conservative" (one who yearns for the "archaic, the spontaneous powers of imagination, of experience and emotionality") who nonetheless departs from a modern concept of emancipated subjectivity. See David Hoy, "Foucault: Modern or Postmodern?," in Jonathan Arac, ed., *After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge Postmodern Challenges* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 12–41.

31 See T. Flynn, "Foucault as Parrhesiast: His Last Course at the College de France (1984)," in James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, eds., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 102–118.

32 For further discussion of Habermas's aesthetic theory, see my "Habermas and Aesthetic Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment," *New German Critique*, 53 (Spring, 1991): 67–103, and *Reason, History, and Politics: The Communitarian Grounds of Reason in the Modern Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chapter 7.

33 J. Butler, "What Is Critique? An Essay On Foucault's Virtue," in D. Ingram, ed., *The Political* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 212–226.

34 Habermas compares Foucault's appeal to a different economy of bodies and pleasures to Georges Bataille's appeal to the heterogeneous and Peter Sloterdijk's to the Cynics' bodily-expressive forms of protest, both of which are similar to the *parrhesiast's* truth-telling. The comparison with Bataille seems weak. Bataille's appeal to "sovereignty" actually resonates with Marcuse's critique of repressive desublimation, in that both envisage an estheticization of the body and pleasure free of the constraints of genital sexuality. But as Habermas elsewhere acknowledges, Foucault never tired of rejecting the notion that there existed a "primordial vitality" (or "purity of desire") beneath sexual prohibitions. See B.-H. Levy, "Power and Sex: An Interview with Michel Foucault," *Telos* 32 (1977): 158; Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*: *Studies* in *the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 56–83; and P. Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp,1983). For a critique of Foucault's appeal to "a posthumanist political rhetoric of body language" see Nancy Fraser, "Foucault's Body Language: A Posthumanist Political Rhetoric?," in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 55–66.

35 See *TCA II*, 4off. and 57ff., where Habermas appeals to Mead's account of the relationship between "me" and "I" to explain the complementarity of moral individuation and autonomy, on one hand, and esthetic self-realization and creativity, on the other.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

36 J. Habermas, "Walter Benjamin: Consciousness-Raising or Rescuing Critique, in *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. F. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), 158.

37 Foucault's defenders seem to have misunderstood the thrust of Habermas's discourse ethic and its appeal to unconstrained consensus. Dreyfus and Rabinow, for example, argue that Habermas's advocacy of enlightenment requires replacing *phronesis*, rhetoric, and art with rational communication that has been purged of all strategic power relations – a position that is clearly contrary to his position as I have laid it out here. On a somewhat different point, it seems too facile to say, as Habermas and McCarthy do, that Foucault ended up embracing the aesthetic side of the enlightenment in opposition to the cognitive and moral sides. See McCarthy, "The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School," *Political Theory* 16 (1990), 437–469; H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, "What Is Maturity? Habermas and Foucault on 'What Is Enlightenment?'," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 119–121; J. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 98,133, 175, 195ff. (hereafter *MC*); David Ingram, "Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment," *New German Critique* 53 (Spring/Summer, 1991), 67–103; and David Ingram, *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 39, 101, 131, 172.

38 Cf. Habermas's response to Kohlberg and Gilligan in "Justice and Solidarity: On the Discussion Concerning Stage," *The Philosophical Forum* 21:1–2 (Fall–Winter 1989–1990), 47.

39 Cf. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982). Do a virtue ethic of care and a deontological ethic of justice designate opposed methods of moral deliberation? Or do they designate complementary aspects of a more inclusive and complete account of moral deliberation? I incline toward this latter alternative, and I think Habermas does, too. Habermas proposes a two-step process of moral deliberation involving the *justification* of norms followed by their contextual *application*. Both steps involve real or simulated dialogue incorporating the perspectives of generalized and concrete other. This position seems to resonate with Gilligan's views. For, although she distinguishes between social concern and intimate caring (155), she shares Habermas's opinion that communicative openness is basic to both (29–30). In this context see Seyla Benhabib, "The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics," in David Ingram and Julia Simon, eds., *Critical Theory:*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The Essential Readings (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 388–399; Habermas's response to Gilligan in *MC*, 175–182; and my discussion of Gilligan, Benhabib, and Habermas in David Ingram, *Critical Theory and Philosophy* (St. Paul, Minn.: Paragon House, 1990), 207–211.

40 F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 265; hereafter *GS*.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

TODD MAY

10 Foucault's Relation to Phenomenology

> Insofar as comprehension means at once to gather together, to grasp immediately, and to penetrate, this new reflection on mental illness is above all "comprehension" (understanding). It is this method that phenomenological psychology has practiced.
>
> Michel Foucault, 1954[1]

> If there is one approach that I do reject, however, it is that (one might call it, broadly speaking, the phenomenological approach) which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity – which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness.
>
> Michel Foucault, 1970[2]

It is a hazardous business to use Michel Foucault's interviews as a key to understanding his thought. One cannot be sure when he is speaking seriously and when tongue in cheek. For instance, although he seldom cites Heidegger in his studies and refers nowhere to the ontological difference, he claimed in an interview that, "Heidegger has always been for me the essential philosopher. . . . My whole philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger."[3] What exactly are we to make of that?[4] If Foucault's interviews are offered as self-interpretations of his work, it is best to approach those interpretations with one's own interpretive care.

One way to do that is to compare the self-interpretations with the work itself, to see how well they mesh.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

In an interview published in 1983, where Foucault discusses the early trajectory of his work, the mesh is tight. Foucault offers a depiction of the intellectual atmosphere of his formative years, describing the centrality and then the rejection of phenomenology. Looking at those early years, he says that

> we should not forget that throughout the period from 1945 to 1955 in France, the entire French university – the young French university, as opposed to what had been the traditional university – was very much preoccupied with the task of building something which was not Freudian-Marxist but Husserlian-Marxist: the phenomenology-Marxism relation. That is what was at stake in the debates and efforts of a whole series of people. Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, in moving from phenomenology to Marxism, were definitely operating on that axis.[5]

At the outset of that decade, Foucault was eighteen years old; at its close he was twenty-nine. Those would have been crucial years of his intellectual development.

However, as most readers of this book already know, Foucault's mature work is not phenomenologically oriented. He rejects utterly the phenomenological method as a method of intellectual inquiry. It is not an exaggeration to say that although Foucault's work goes through methodological changes, it always defines itself *against* phenomenology. The influences of Foucault's formative years become for him exemplary of paths that one *cannot* take if one were to try to gain some foothold of understanding on who, what, or where we are.

It was not always so. Foucault has two long phenomenological pieces to his credit. At one point during his formative years he saw himself squarely, although not uncritically, within the horizon defined by phenomenology and Marxism. If we are to understand Foucault's relation to phenomenology, we must start from those early years, asking what they consist in and how he comes to reject them. Following this path will not only allow us access to Foucault's methodological trajectory; it will also give us some insight into the motivation for his mature works. It will also allow us to see what remains continuous throughout his career, for although Foucault rejects phenomenology in both his method and his content, he retains what might be called the spirit or motivation behind the phenomenological project.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Both of Foucault's phenomenological works concern the realm of psychology. Before writing them, in 1949 Foucault obtained a degree – a *licence* – in psychology, and worked in psychiatric hospitals. It was through this work that he met Ludwig Binswanger, the existential-phenomenological psychologist whose essay "Dream and Existence" is the subject of Foucault's first phenomenological work.[6]

It would not be unusual in a climate dominated by phenomenology for a young intellectual to become involved in psychology. Phenomenology, whether in its Husserlian transcendental form or the more existential version of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, focuses on the experiencing subject. For Husserl, in order to understand the nature of the experienced world, it is necessary to turn to the nature of the experiencing subject. In transcendental phenomenology, that experiencing subject is not an empirical one; it is not a particular *I* situated in a particular environment or context. The transcendental turn is not a turn toward subjectivity, if we understand subjectivity as the internal activity or experience of a given person. However, if we understand subjectivity in a more impersonal way, as the source of experience rather than the internal activity of a particular person, then transcendental phenomenology is focused on subjectivity. The external world is bracketed, as is the particularity of any given subjectivity. What is left is a "pure" subjectivity that is the source of all experience: the transcendental ego.

Husserl was aware of the affinities between transcendental phenomenology and a more psychological phenomenology. In his works, he is often at pains to distinguish the transcendental turn from any psychological interpretation – any interpretation that would mistakenly situate the transcendental in the empirical. Since the psychological realm of experience is akin to the bracketed realm of experience investigated by transcendental phenomenology, it is easy to mistake one for the other and thereby corrupt the investigation into the constitutive character of the transcendental realm. On the other hand, Husserl was not averse to a phenomenological psychology on its own terms, and in fact offered a set of lectures on the subject later in his career.[7]

Later followers of Husserl, and in France especially Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, reject the transcendental turn. Phenomenology, in their hands, is not a transcendental study; it is an existential one. This rejection, in effect, removes any epistemological or ontological

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

distance that might exist between phenomenology and psychology. The experiencing subject cannot be bracketed in order to arrive at a pure transcendental subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty famously puts the point, "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction."[8] Therefore, as Merleau-Ponty in particular understands, phenomenological reflection is inseparable from psychological study. In order to understand the nature of experience, one must offer a descriptive characterization of the embodied experience of particular subjects.

It is no surprise, then, both that many psychologists contemporary with post-World War II existential phenomenology embraced to one degree or another a phenomenological approach, and that many rising intellectuals in turn became fascinated with psychology. Foucault's first work lies at the nexus of the two. It is an introduction by a rising, phenomenologically oriented intellectual to an essay by an existential-phenomenological psychologist.

Among the significant phenomenological psychologists, such as Erwin Strauss, Medard Boss, and Eugene Minkowski, Ludwig Binswanger stands out. His works have probably done more to define the character and reception of phenomenological psychology, both in the United States (where it has not had much influence) and in Europe (where, probably because it arose in the wake of philosophical phenomenology, it has had more). Binswanger's approach to psychology owes as much to Heidegger as it does to Husserl. (Much of his work, including "Dream and Existence," published in 1930, preceded that of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.) However, it is inspired not only by Heidegger's positive work, but also by Husserl's critique, in the *Crisis*, of the objectifying trend of science.

Both Heidegger and the later Husserl were concerned that science has warped our understanding of the world. For Husserl, this warping has arisen in the wake of the rejection of the role of human consciousness and, as Husserl later called it, the human "life-world" as a constitutive factor in all epistemic pursuits:

> we must note something of the highest importance that occurred even as early as Galileo: the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructed world of idealities for the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experience or experienceable – our everyday life-world.[9]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

If science neglects the life-world, not only is it betraying our experience of the world; it is also undercutting itself epistemically. It is only through the life-world, through our conscious experience of the world, that science arises. Any science worthy of the name, then, must root itself epistemically in the life-world from which it emerges.

For Heidegger, the problem of science is much more one of a forgetting of the question of Being, or better an interpretation of Being that reduces Being to a manipulable technology that thus forgets to ask about it. Science, in his view, is part of a framing of Being that places in the foreground the technological concerns of human beings at the expense of a more open and receptive view of the nature and call of Being.

Although distinct in their approach, both Husserl and Heidegger converge on the idea that by reducing the horizons of our world and our experience to mathematical objectifications, the essential character of both world and experience are betrayed.

Phenomenological psychology in general and Binswanger in particular are motivated by the project of restoring human consciousness and human experience to the study of the mind and behavior. They resist treating psychology as a natural science that reduces human beings to the status of animals or inanimate objects. In order to do that, and in keeping with the impulse of phenomenology, they seek to come to grips with human experience – both in its normal character and its deviations in mental illness – through a descriptive approach rather than an explanatory one. As Binswanger writes,

> In this context we do not say: mental illnesses are diseases of the brain (which, of course, they remain from a medical-clinical viewpoint). But we say: in the mental diseases we face modifications of the fundamental or essential structure and of the structural links of being-in-the-world as transcendence.[10]

It is perhaps worth noting here – a point to which I shall return later – that the impulse of the phenomenological psychologists, embraced by the early Foucault, to struggle against reductionism in psychology, informs Foucault's later rejection of phenomenology. In both cases, the issue is that of social and historical constraints placed upon the understanding of humanity and its possibilities. For

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

phenomenology, the problem is a betrayal of the realm of the subjective; for the later Foucault, the subjective is the betrayal. There is, however, a continuity of motivation.

The approach Binswanger embraces, as evidenced by the previous quote, is Heideggerian. He does not follow Heidegger's ontological exploration of Being, but instead reads the Heidegger of *Being and Time* in light of a more ontic project, that of psychological exploration. The project of psychology is not one of *explaining* human character or mental illness through scientific categories. Rather, it is to *understand* them through nuanced description and observation. As Binswanger said of a particular case he studied, criticizing the psychoanalytic approach,

> We should, therefore, not explain the emergence of the phobia by an overly strong 'pre-oedipal' tie to the mother, but rather realize that such overly strong filial tie is only possible on the premise of a world-design exclusively based on connectedness, cohesiveness, continuity.[11]

Here it is the attempt to capture the world as lived by the patient that takes precedence over the ascription of a diagnostic label or category.

Binswanger's account of dreams in the essay "Dream and Existence" is in keeping with this approach:

> By steeping oneself in the manifest content of the dream – which, since Freud's epoch-making postulate concerning the reconstruction of latent dream thoughts, has in modern times receded all to far into the background – one learns the proper evaluation of the primal and strict interdependence of feeling and image, of being-attuned and pictorial realization.[12]

Freud sees the manifest content as little more than a carrier, a messenger, for the significant content of the dream, which is latent. Manifest content simply represents latent content, and is therefore reducible to it. For Binswanger, by contrast, the manifest content of the dream needs to be investigated in its specificity. It is by means of grasping the character and flow of the latent content of a dream that we begin to understand – not just intellectually but viscerally – the world that is being constructed by the dreamer. "If we feel ourselves into these dreams . . . it is possible for us to sense the pulse of Dasein, its systole and diastole, its expansion and depression, its ascendence and sinking."[13]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Foucault's introduction to the French translation of "Dream and Existence," published twenty-four years after it, is over twice the length of Binswanger's essay. The introduction places the essay in the French phenomenological context, a context dominated by the humanism of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Foucault begins his introduction with a phenomenological definition of human being: "Let us say provisionally," he writes, "(pending some later revisions) that human being (*Menschsein*) is nothing but the actual and concrete content which ontology analyzes as the transcendental structure of *Dasein*, of presence-to-the-world."[14] Here Foucault, like Binswanger, appropriates Heidegger's characterization of Dasein as a model for understanding human beings rather than approaching Being itself. Moreover, by saying that human beings are no more than their "actual and concrete content," his thought intersects with that of both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. It is not what lies beneath human existence that reveals what humans are; it is what they actually live. It is the manifest content of their lives that is to be investigated, not the latent content. This priority of the manifest over the latent calls for a phenomenological approach, an approach that works by descriptive understanding rather than explanatory reduction.

Freud, as Binswanger points out, abandons the description of the manifest content of the dream in favor of the interpretation of its latent content. For Foucault, this amounts to neglecting the very constitution of the dream itself:

> A method of this sort presupposes a radical objectification of the dreaming subject, which comes to play its role among other personages in a setting where it takes on a symbolic character. . . . This is only a constituted subjectivity. The analysis of the dream ought to bring into full light the constituting feature of dream subjectivity.[15]

What is required is a methodology that can grasp what Foucault calls "the expressive act," the act by which a dream world is brought into being in the first place.

This is where phenomenology becomes relevant. Husserl, Foucault points out, distinguishes between index and signification:

> A phenomenology of the dream, to be rigorous, must not fail to distinguish between indicative elements, which may designate for the analyst an objective situation which they betoken, and significant contents which constitute, from within, the dream experience.[16]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

What are these significant contents? They are the very constitution of a dream world.

> The dream world is a world of its own, not in the sense of a subjective experience defying the norms of objectivity, but in the sense that it is constituted in the original mode of a world which belongs to me, while at the same time exhibiting my solitude.[17]

What psychoanalysis does, in essence, is neglect the fact that the possibility of interpreting a dream, of seeing within its landscape symbolic elements, presupposes that there is a landscape there to begin with. It is only *after* the constitution of a dream world that symbolic interpretation can begin. Phenomenology is the study that seeks to understand the character of that initial constitution.

What that study discovers is the role of psychological imagination in constituting a dream world. "The dream, like every imaginary experience, is thus a specific form of experience which cannot be wholly reconstituted by psychological analysis, one whose content points to man as a transcended being."[18] The human imagination is the possibility of constituting a world, of transcending the interiority of human consciousness toward a world that becomes reducible neither to subjective positing nor objective elements. Foucault calls this possibility "freedom."

"By breaking with the objectivity which fascinates waking consciousness," he writes, "and by reinstating the human subject in its radical freedom, the dream discloses paradoxically the movement of freedom toward the world, the point of origin from which freedom makes itself world."[19] Beneath the symbolic elements of the dream, but woven into the dream world itself, is human freedom, that freedom through which a world can come into being – not a physical world, a world of atoms and forces, but a world in the Heideggerian sense, a world of meaning, an inhabitable world. A phenomenology of dreams, by pausing over the *fact* of a dream world rather than rushing to interpret it, reveals the freedom of the human imagination.

This freedom, however, is unstable. It denies itself in the moment of its expression. By constituting a world, freedom loses its character as freedom and, in a moment that Foucault associates with ancient Greek thought, falls into destiny. "And when, in ceaseless repetition, it declares some destiny, it is bewailing a freedom which has lost itself, an ineradicable past, and an existence fallen of its own motion

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

into a definite determination."[20] Otherwise put, the dream "sees death as the destiny of freedom."[21]

With this death, psychoanalysis again becomes relevant. A dream world has been constituted. It is a world of meaning. We cannot stop there, however. We must now interpret the dream:

> Phenomenology has succeeded in making images speak; but it has given no one the possibility of understanding their language . . . the need to justify comprehension implies a reintegration of the moment of objective indication on which Freudian analysis has dwelt.[22]

Psychoanalysis is not replaced by phenomenology. Instead, it is entwined with phenomenology. Even there, however, we must not make the mistake of saying that once a dream world has been created, phenomenology leaves off and psychoanalysis begins.

What phenomenology has revealed is not only the fact of the dream world's constitution, but also its texture. That texture must remain analytically available. The meanings of dreams are not given solely in their symbolic content, but also in their often mute expression. "If dreams are so weighty for determining existential meanings, it is because they trace in their fundamental coordinates the trajectory of existence itself."[23] That trajectory must not be lost sight of in the attempt to interpret a particular person's dreams. That is why, in Binswanger's essay, the theme of falling, which dominates the discussion, is treated not solely as symbolic of particular conflicts, but also as a way of being in the world. We must, as he says, "feel ourselves into these dreams."

Phenomenology and psychoanalysis are not layered one upon the other. Rather, they are the woof and warp of dream interpretation.

Foucault's introduction to "Dream and Existence" is dominated by phenomenological themes that are current in France in 1954: the Heideggerian concept of the world as a concept of meaning rather than brute physical arrangement, the Merleau-Pontian investigation of the rhythm of experience, the Satrean preoccupation with the human constitution of the world, the Husserlian distinction between indication and signification. Beneath its surface, however, we can also glimpse two themes that will preoccupy the later Foucault in his rejection of the phenomenological method. First, there is the question of freedom. In the essay on Binswanger, freedom lies at the center of human existence, in the ability to create a meaningful

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

world through which one can navigate. Later, freedom will be discussed not in terms of a human essence, but rather in terms of the possibilities offered by specific political contexts. One can see, though, that from early on the question of freedom and constraint concerns Foucault. He seeks, within the specific given arrangements and constraints to which we are subject, to locate a space of resistance to those constraints. In his phenomenological period, that space lies *beneath* them in the verities of human existence. Later, it will lie *within* them in the contingencies of a historical context. In both cases, though, the question of freedom from constraint appears as an urgency in Foucault's thought.

The second, and entwined, theme that will remain in Foucault's later thought is the critique of psychology, and in particular of the treatment of madness. One might say that in both cases – early and late – what is at stake is the *reduction* of madness. In the early work, the reduction of madness is to its symbolic components. By symbolic reduction, the humanity of the patient is lost when one starts with an already constituted experience and fails to acknowledge the human constitution of that experience. Later, of course, it is the very conception of the human – both in its content and in its ahistorical character – that is considered reductive. In both cases, though, there is an inseparability of the critique of psychological treatments of madness from the question of freedom and its political character. This latter point, implicit in the essay on Binswanger, becomes more explicit in Foucault's other extended work that appears in 1954, *Maladie Mentale et Personalité*.

Before turning to that text, I should note that *Maladie Mentale* is not actually one text, but two. The first one, *Maladie Mentale et Personalité*, was published in 1954. The second edition, entitled *Maladie Mentale et Psychologie* (translated into English as *Mental Illness and Psychology*[24]), was published eight years later. Both texts are divided into two parts. Both have nearly the same first part. But the second edition radically revises the second part from a Marxist-oriented discussion of mental illness to something of a précis of *Histoire de la Folie à l'Âge Classique*, which was published the year before, in 1961. Between the two second parts lies the trajectory of Foucault's rejection of phenomenology, although the first part of the book, which is phenomenological, remains in both editions. Essentially, as we will see, the change from the first to the second edition

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of the second part is part of a movement from the "task of building something which was . . . Husserlian-Marxist" that Foucault refers to in the interview I cited at the outset to a form of analysis, inspired by Nietzsche and Georges Canguilhem among others, that offers us the Foucault we have come to recognize.

The first part, common to both editions, begins with a critique of the reduction of mental illness to organic pathology:

> My aim . . . is to show that mental pathology requires methods of analysis different from those of organic pathology and that it is only by an artifice of language that the same meaning can be attributed to "illnesses of the body" and "illnesses of the mind."[25]

Although the mind may be ontologically indistinct from the body, mental illness cannot be modeled on bodily illness. To do so would be to commit a category mistake in Ryle's sense.

Foucault credits Freud with taking the first important step away from an organic understanding of mental illness by recognizing the importance of the ill person's history in the constitution of his or her illness. Freud understands that who one is is not simply a product of biological necessity but of personal history. "Freud's stroke of genius lay in being able, so early on, to go beyond the evolutionist horizon defined by the notion of libido and reach the historical dimension of the human psyche."[26] Mental illness is not simply a matter of regression, of the adult regressing to the behavior of a child. Although regression does occur, as the organic model would have it, it is situated in the temporal nexus of a person's life history. In fact the type of regression a mentally ill person exhibits is a product of his or her particular past in its relation to the present.

For Freud, symptoms are an intertwining of past and present. Something in the past is too traumatic; it cannot be integrated into the unfolding of one's life. As a result, it presses against the present, at each moment. But because it is so traumatic, it can neither be forgotten nor remembered. It becomes a wound in one's existence: a symptom. The symptom, then, is an insistence of the past in the present, and a living of the present as a warding off of the past that insists in it:

> Does the patient defend himself with his present against his past, or does he protect himself from his present with the help of a history that now belongs

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

to the past? We should probably say that it is in this circle that the essence of pathological behavior is found.[27]

To recognize the role of one's history in the constitution of mental illness is an important step, but not enough. Mental illness is not just undergone; it is lived. As Binswanger shows, mental illness involves the constitution of a world. We must go beyond the organic and the psychoanalytic if we are to grasp the real nature of mental illness. "The analysis of evolution situated the illness as a potentiality; the individual history makes it possible to envisage it as a fact of psychological development. But it must now be understood in its existential necessity."[28] That necessity has two moments: one phenomenological, the other political.

The phenomenological moment is constituted in understanding the lived world of the mentally ill person. "The understanding of the sick consciousness and the reconstitution of its pathological world: these are the two tasks of a phenomenology of mental illness."[29] Foucault describes four elements under each of these two tasks. Under the heading of the "understanding of the sick consciousness," Foucault notes the prominence of organic symptoms for the patient, the role that symptoms have in transforming the meaning of one's life, the creation of an autonomous – and sometimes hallucinatory – world, and, at the psychotic limit of mental illness, the submergence of the sick consciousness into that world.

As for the reconstitution of the world, Foucault notes alterations in lived time, lived space, social relations, and bodily awareness. A number of these alterations are described by other phenomenological psychologists (Foucault cites both Binswanger and Eugene Minkowski); Foucault emphasizes the phenomenological point that one cannot grasp the character of a particular mental illness without a descriptive understanding of the world of the patient:

> The morbid world is not explained by historical causality (I am referring, of course, to psychological history), but historical causality is possible only because this world exists: it is the world that forges the link between cause and effect, the anterior and the ulterior.[30]

As in the essay on Binswanger, Foucault emphasizes that a reductive understanding of subjectivity – an understanding that seeks to reduce subjectivity (whether normal or abnormal) to purely objective

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

categories – misses the real character of subjectivity itself. A sick consciousness is not a consciousness reduced to organic pathology or historical causality; it is a consciousness that lives a certain way, and whose illness can only be grasped when that way of living is itself comprehended.

If this were all, then the second part of *Malade Mentale et Personalité* would either be an expansion of the phenomenological themes glossed in the first part or would be unnecessary. The first part of the book moves from the most reductive organic perspective on mental illness to the phenomenological richness of the lived world of the mentally ill person. An approach that remained within the parameters of psychology would continue this movement. But at the end of the first part, Foucault raises a question that turns him from phenomenological concerns to political ones. Moreover, as we shall see, the political character of those concerns changes radically from the first to the second edition; that change is flagged by a change in the last sentence of the first part from former to latter. In essence, the second part of the first edition *explains* the existence of mental illness; the second part of the second editions *questions* it.

The penultimate sentence of the first part of both editions offers a transition from the phenomenological moment of mental illness to the political one. Foucault asks, "if this subjectivity of the insane is both a call to and an abandonment of the world, is it not of the world itself that we should ask the secret of its enigmatic status?"[31] In the first edition, he continues by asking, "After having explored the interior dimensions, is one not necessarily led to consider its exterior and objective conditions?"[32]

"Exterior and objective conditions." We are here led back from phenomenological description to explanation. But the explanation will not be organic or psychoanalytic: It will be political and Marxist. After an introductory section (which remains the same in both editions), Foucault's next section is called "The Historical Sense of Mental Alienation." He argues (in a harbinger of later writings) that mental illness has not always been conceived the same way. In the eighteenth century, mental illness loses a sense of connection with the supernatural that had characterized it in earlier periods and becomes a privation of one's higher mental capacities. What higher capacities are these? That is a question the nineteenth century

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

answered. "The nineteenth century responds by saying that it is the use of the highest faculty that exists in man, the faculty that defines the humanity of man: liberty (*la liberté*)."[33]

Liberty is not simply a psychological concept; it is also a political one. To lose one's liberty is not only to lose a mental capacity. It requires also that one lose one's rights, specifically those rights conferred by the French revolution. Put another way, one becomes alienated, in the sense of becoming both a stranger to one's nature and a stranger within society. "The destiny of [mental] illness is fixed at that moment for a century: it is alienation."[34]

Foucault's claim here is not that the nineteenth century, or bourgeois society more generally, explains mental illness in terms of alienation. The issue is not, as it would later become, the Nietzschean one of interpretation. Rather, it is the more Marxist claim that bourgeois society *produces* it. Different societies, different cultures, embody different contradictions. These contradictions are expressed in the mental illnesses they produce. "The true foundation of psychological regression is therefore in a conflict of social structures, each marked with a chronological index that designates [*dénonce*: also "denounces"] its diverse historical origins."[35] In the case of capitalism, it is alienation that expresses its particular social contradictions, an alienation that perhaps finds its most poignant expression in schizophrenia, of which Foucault writes that "it is not by chance that the morbid world so often takes, in our day, the character of a world where a mechanistic rationality excludes a joyous spontaneity."[36]

We are, at this point, far from the phenomenological psychology of the first part of the book. It is no longer a matter of comprehending the world of the mentally ill. It is instead a matter of explaining it by reference to the social conflicts that are its wellspring. Foucault cites the inadequacy even of a phenomenologically oriented approach to mental illness near the end of this section, writing that "one must not confuse the diverse aspects of [mental] illness with its real origins, if one wants to avoid recourse to mythical explanations such as the evolution of psychological structures, or the theory of instincts, or an existential anthropology."[37] With the last phrase he indicates decisively that an adequate understanding of mental illness requires a political, that is, Marxist, approach that goes beyond the categories he discovers in the work of Binswanger.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Foucault follows this political approach with a chapter utilizing Pavlov's discussion of the excitation and inhibition of impulses in order to situate mental illness within social contradictions:

> at the moment where the conditions of the milieu no longer permit the normal activity of the nervous system and the contradictions to which an individual is submitted no longer permit the normal dialectic of excitation and inhibition, there is established the inhibition of defense. It is this inhibition of defense that explains the mechanisms of illness.[38]

Mental illness, then, *is* to be explained, contra the claims of the early part of the book. It is not to be explained by reference to the individual isolated from his or her environment, however. It is to be explained by reference to the social milieu in which his or her life is carried out.

Is there a theoretical tension between the Marxism of the second part of the book and the phenomenology of the first part? It might seem so, since the second part resorts to explanatory categories, a project the phenomenology of the first part rejects. It must be borne in mind, however, that the question of the relationship of phenomenology to Marxism was in the air at this time. In the interview cited at the outset, Foucault refers to it, and specifically to Sartre's attempt to articulate a Marxism consonant with his existentialism and Merleau-Ponty's early theoretical navigation between the two.[39] The question of how to reconcile the phenomenological approach to the subject, which frees the human person from his or her objectification in explanatory categories, and Marxism, which objectively (and in the view of many of its proponents, scientifically) explains the oppression of human persons, is a vexed one. Foucault was writing in a milieu in which the two are brought together in ways that are not always theoretically comfortable. He was seeking to retain the humanistic character of phenomenology while submitting it to the political rigors of Marxism.

In this submission, it is, as it is for Sartre and for the early Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology that must yield to politics. Foucault concludes the second part of the first edition of the book with the words, "the true psychology must extricate itself from psychologism, if it is true that, like all sciences of man, it takes as its goal man's disalienation [*le désaliéner*]."[40] If Binswanger has helped recover the human subject in the richness of his or her living, discovering what lies beneath the categories of previous psychological discussion, that

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

subject must in turn be understood in the social and political context in which he or she carries out the project of living. In particular, if that living is flawed, we must seek the social contradictions that give rise to those flaws. "It is not therefore because one is ill that one is alienated, but it is to the degree that one is alienated that one is ill."[41]

Foucault sees Marxism as a way of understanding the emergence of mental illness. He does not deny that there is such a thing as mental illness; nor does he deny that its existence requires explanation. And although his explanation is, in keeping with the aura of his time, in accordance with the leftist critiques of dominant psychological and psychiatric theory and practice, it does not go so far as to question the fundamental terms of that practice. In this, he stays within the orbit marked out by his existentialist predecessors.

And then something happens.

In 1962, a year after the publication of *Histoire de la Folie à l'Âge Classique*, the book is reissued with a new title. Now it is not *Mental Illness and Personality*, but *Mental Illness and Psychology*. What is at issue is no longer the personality of the human subject but the psychological study of personality. The first part of the book is reproduced largely intact. The last sentence of the first part has changed, however. Instead of asking about the exterior and objective conditions of mental illness, a new question is posed:

> Is there not in mental illness a whole nucleus of significations that belongs to the domain in which it appeared – and, to begin with, the simple fact that it is in that domain that it is circumscribed *as* an illness?[42]

What must be questioned is not simply the social situation of mental illness but the very category of illness itself.

If the second part of the first edition sits uneasily with the first part, the combination of first and second parts in the second edition stand in something close to paradox or contradiction. In his biography of Foucault, Didier Eribon calls it a "mongrel," and notes that Foucault attempted, unsuccessfully, to prevent both the later reissue of the book and its translation into English.[43] It is not difficult to see why this book would cause Foucault so much stress. If, in the first edition, the second part of the book *explains* the phenomena described in the first part, in the second edition the second part of the book *rejects* entirely the project of the first part.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The fifth chapter of *Mental Illness and Psychology* is, like the fifth chapter of the first edition, historically oriented. But now, instead of tracing the historical forms mental illness takes, it traces the historical forms through which certain phenomena *were taken as mental illness*. This chapter, which is essentially a précis of *Histoire de la Folie*, shows how madness is discussed and viewed from the Middle Ages through the period of the French Revolution. Foucault concludes, in keeping with the trajectory of his later work, "Madness is much more *historical* than is usually believed, and much *younger* too."[44]

If madness is historical, then the project is no longer one of explaining how it arises but of tracing the successive forms through which the experience of madness takes shape. Marxism is replaced by archaeology. Gone is the chapter on Pavlov, discussing how contradiction gives rise to mental illness. In its place is a chapter that articulates the treatment of madness as an experience of the Other:

> The recognition that enables one to say, 'This man is mad,' is neither a simple nor an immediate act. It is based in fact on a number of earlier operations and above all on the dividing up of social space according to the lines of valuation and exclusion.[45]

This is the Foucaultian approach with which we are familiar. It is a far cry from either phenomenology or Marxism. Unlike phenomenology, it does not seek to uncover the subjective structure of mental illness. It is not the world constituted by the mentally ill that is relevant; it is instead the world of mental illness – a world constituted over and against the world of the sane – whose constitution we must seek. And to do that, we must look toward the contingency of history, not the interiority of the subject. On the other hand, unlike Marxism, Foucault no longer explains the surface phenomena by means of underlying contradictions. Surface phenomena are taken both more and less seriously than a Marxist approach would allow. More seriously, because specific historical details matter; there is no grid of "contradiction" that can be laid over every historical period. Less seriously, because the reality of madness is not accepted as such; what is of interest is not how madness comes to be but how certain people come to be treated as mad.

In one of his later references to his earlier work, Foucault describes the rejection of the *Mental Illness* book, in both its incarnations. It

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

is perhaps worth citing in its entirety:

> To study forms of experience in this way – in their history – is an idea that originated with an earlier project, in which I made use of the methods of existential analysis in the field of psychiatry and in the domain of "mental illness." For two reasons, not unrelated to each other, this project left me unsatisfied: its theoretical weakness in elaborating the notion of experience, and its ambiguous link with a psychiatric practice, which it simultaneously ignored and took for granted. One could deal with the first problem by referring to a general theory of the human being, and treat the second altogether differently by turning, as is so often done, to the "economic and social context" . . . But I wondered whether, rather than playing on this alternative, it would not be possible to consider the very historicity of forms of experience.[46]

In this passage, "this alternative" is in fact the first edition of the book. The consideration of the historicity of forms of experience is what happens over the next eight years, issuing out into *Histoire de la Folie* and then the second edition of the mental illness book.

Between 1954 and 1962, the publication dates of the first and second editions of the book, arise the intellectual changes that define Foucault's later work and his concomitant rejection of phenomenology. Those changes can be summed up in two names: Nietzsche and Canguilhem. The influence of the latter is less immediate, but surely as profound. The influence of the former can traced to the pages of *Histoire de la Folie* and in the second edition of *Mental Illness and Psychology*, where Foucault writes, "'Psychology' is merely a thin skin on the surface of the ethical world in which modern man seeks his truth – and loses it. Nietzsche, who has been accused of saying the contrary, saw this very clearly."[47]

It did not take long after the publication of *Malade Mental et Personalité* for Foucault to feel Nietzsche's influence. Foucault started reading Nietzsche in 1953 and continued throughout the writing of *Histoire de la Folie* from 1955 to 1960.[48] (It is probably worth noting that Foucault spent those five years in Sweden, away from an immediate engagement with the French intellectual scene.) What does Nietzsche's influence consist in? In one interview, Foucault says,

> Nietzsche, Blanchot, and Bataille were the authors who enabled me to free myself from the dominant influences in my university training in the early fifties – Hegel and phenomenology. . . . What did they represent for me? First,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

an invitation to call into question the category of the subject, its supremacy, its foundational function.[49]

Phenomenology requires the subject to play a founding role. This is not just a matter of historical happenstance but instead one of philosophical necessity. Phenomenology rejects the explanatory reduction of human experience by seeking to understand that experience from within its parameters. If we are to avoid the trap of objectifying the subject into misleading or oppressive explanatory categories, we must do so by taking the experience of the subject more seriously. Do not explain: describe. But to describe is to give "supremacy" to the category of the subject, to place subjective experience at the center of the analytic or reflective project. This is what Binswanger does, and Foucault as well in his early work. The experience of the mentally ill must be investigated on its own terms. It is not merely symptomatic of an illness to be explained but indicative of a way of constituting and living a world: the world's space, its time, and the other subjects who inhabit it.

It is precisely the authority of the subject that Nietzsche rejects. In adopting the genealogical approach, Nietzsche – and later Foucault – take the subject as more constituted than constituting. It is not subjective experience, but rather the formative history of that experience, that now becomes the relevant subject matter. "'Everything is subjective,' you say; but even this is interpretation. The 'subject' is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is."[50] If the early Foucault sits uneasily between the phenomenological project of giving primacy to description and the Marxist one of giving primacy to historical contradiction, Nietzschean genealogy resolves that unease by rejecting both phenomenology and contradiction. Like phenomenology and against Marxism, genealogy takes seriously the specific and contingent moments of the object of its investigation. But like Marxism and unlike phenomenology, the object of investigation is the history of the subject, not its experience.

If Nietzsche forms one prong of Foucault's rejection of phenomenology, Georges Canguilhem forms the other. Canguilhem, a historian and philosopher of science, is particularly concerned with the life sciences. Unlike the mainstream of philosophers of science, his work is not concerned with the progress of science from

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

ignorance toward truth, but of the role that error and normativity play in articulating science. Foucault and Canguilhem had personal contact upon Foucault's return to France in 1960, and in fact Canguilhem was the sponsor of *Histoire de la Folie*.[51] In his preface to Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological*, Foucault opens with the lines,

> Everyone knows that there are few logicians in France, but that there have been a fair number of historians of science. We also know that they have occupied a considerable place in the philosophical institution . . . it so happens that all these philosophers, or nearly all, were affected directly or indirectly by the teaching or the books of Canguilhem.[52]

In this preface, Foucault in essence credits Canguilhem in large part for his break with phenomenology. There is a rupture, he writes,

> that separates a philosophy of experience, of meaning, of the subject, and a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality, and of the concept. On the one side, a filiation which is that of Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty; and then another, which is that of Jean Cavaillès, Gaston Bachelard, Alexandre Koyré, and Canguilhem.[53]

Whereas the "filiation" of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty – the filiation to which the early Foucault attaches himself – takes its bearings from the experience of the human subject, the other "filiation" questions the received categories within which we understand knowledge and rationality.

For Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, knowledge and rationality are matters of experience; they arise from the subject's encounter with the world. Canguilhem and others like him refuse the phenomenological approach to knowledge. For them, knowledge has different structures in different historical periods and is therefore not reducible to a subject's encounter with the world. As Foucault says later in the interview cited at the outset,

> I would try to take my distance from phenomenology, which was my point of departure. I do not believe in a kind of founding act whereby reason, in its essence, was discovered or established and from which it was diverted by such and such an event. I think, in fact, that reason is self-created, which is why I have tried to analyse forms of rationality: different foundations, different creations, different modifications in which rationalities engender one another, oppose and pursue one another.[54]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

A history of the formations of subjective experience and the dominations to which that history submits. A treatment of rationality that holds it to be irreducible to subjective experience. Nietzsche and Canguilhem. And, in fact, both at the same time:

> I read Nietzsche by chance, and I was surprised to see that Canguilhem, the most influential historian of science in France at the time, was also very interested in Nietzsche and was thoroughly receptive to what I was trying to do.[55]

These are the elements of Foucault's rejection of phenomenology, a rejection that forms the basis for his later work.

Although others in this volume deal in greater detail with Foucault's later methodology, it is worth pausing for a moment over Foucault's later references to his rejection of phenomenology in his post-1962 works, mostly articulated in *The Order of Things*. This will, I believe, allow us to recognize two things. First, that indeed there is a break – a philosophical, not merely rhetorical, one – between the early works and the later ones, both as concerns methodology and content. But second, and perhaps as important as it is unremarked, that there is a continuity of spirit between the early and later works. Although Foucault does indeed turn toward an approach that is directly counter to that of phenomenology, it is not because he experiences a change of philosophical motivation. On the contrary, it is because of the continuity of that motivation that the rejection occurs. In the end, it is not phenomenology but genealogy that accomplishes the tasks Foucault sets for himself early in his career.

In his analysis of "Man and his Doubles" in *The Order of Things*, Foucault relegates the phenomenology-Marxism intersection to the "empirico-transcendental" doublet. This is the doublet that tilts between seeking the transcendental conditions of knowledge in *man* (italicized here to indicate the technical sense in which Foucault uses the term *l'homme*) while at the same time taking *man* as an empirical object. Thus the empirical is given a transcendental grounding that is in turn grounded on the empirical. Foucault writes, "Despite appearances to the contrary, it is evident how closely knit is the network that links thoughts of the positivist or eschatological type (Marxism being in the first rank of these) and reflections inspired by phenomenology."[56]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

How might this be? Both phenomenology and Marxism are sciences of *man*. They take *man* (not human beings, but *man* as the doubled source and object of knowledge) as their locus; they ground their analyses in *man*. Thus, what is wrong with Foucault's early writings is that he takes for granted what he should have put into question: *man* and his experience. *Man* is a specific epistemological category that operates in a specific (and vanishing) historical epistemological formation. The error of the early Foucault is to take this category as a given rather than to subject it to reflective, in this case historical, critique. The question to be asked is not "What is the nature (phenomenology) and destiny (Marxism) of man?" but instead, as Foucault says, "Does man exist?"[57]

Caught up in the empirico-transcendental doublet, phenomenology continually finds the ground beneath its feet to be shifting. If, as Husserl thinks, philosophy's task is always to begin again, this is because that which it seeks is always just a bit beyond it: "the *cogito* will not therefore be the sudden and illuminating discovery that all thought is thought, but the constantly renewed interrogation as to how thought can reside elsewhere than here, and yet so very close to itself."[58] Phenomenology is the modern science – the science of *man* – par excellence. It is that which seeks in human experience the ground of that experience, and thus continually oscillates between the empirical and the transcendental, the grounded and the ground, the cogito and the unthought, asking each to do the work of the other. "The phenomenological project continually resolves itself, before our eyes, into a description – empirical despite itself – of actual experience, and into an ontology of the unthought that automatically short-circuits the primacy of the 'I think.'"[59]

To abandon this project, to think past the category of *man* and the doublets to which it gives rise, requires a new methodology and a new object of study. The new methodology is first archaeological and then genealogical. Leaving aside the differences that may exist between these two methods, they share a rejection of the phenomenological method. It is historical analysis of the categories of knowledge of experience, rather than internal reflection on the constitution of that experience, that is the task facing us. If, as Nietzsche and Canguilhem teach us, our knowledge of ourselves is more constituted than constituting, then we must step back methodologically

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

from that experience in order to understand it. We must seek its nature elsewhere than within it.

This new methodology gives us a new object. It is no longer the experience of the subject that is to be interrogated, but the categories within which that experience is articulated. If, methodologically, archaeology and genealogy step back from the immersion in experience that characterizes phenomenology, by the same gesture they step back from the content of that experience in order to take as their own content the categories and structure of thought that phenomenology takes for granted. If phenomenology takes subjective experience as its object and description as its method, the later Foucault takes phenomenology (and other human sciences) as his object and history as his method. In this sense, the rejection of phenomenology could not be more complete.

I would like to suggest, however, and it can only be a suggestion here, that behind this rejection there is a continuity of spirit or motivation. Although the method and content shift radically, the underlying questions remain the same. Schematically, we can say that Foucault is driven, throughout the course of his career, by two questions that are, to his mind, related: Who are we? What might we be?

Phenomenology does not tire of asking the question of who we are. It is Husserl's question, and even more so Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's. And with the introduction of Marxism into the intellectual context of Foucault's early career, the question of who we might be is placed alongside it. This latter is what aligns French phenomenology with progressive politics. One can be a phenomenologist without asking what we might be, or without asking it from a progressive angle. But in its alignment in the 1950s with Marxism, phenomenology becomes not only a philosophy of understanding, but also a philosophy of liberation (broadly construed).

What changes as Foucault's career unfolds are not the questions but the approach to them. For the early Foucault, the question of who we are requires an ontological answer; for the later Foucault it requires a historical one. No longer must we understand the nature of human being in order to grasp who we are; now we must understand how we came to embrace one set of ontological categories as answering the question of who we are. "All my analyses," he says later, "are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence."[60] It is not the ontological categories but their history that matters.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The shift in approach to the first question is related in a shift in approach to the second one. The phenomenologically inspired Foucault sees the obstacle to asking the question of who we might be as a certain form of explanatory reductionism. Phenomenology resists reduces human experience to objective categories. It seeks to reanimate human experience, and thus places its focus on the living human subject. The later Foucault resists another kind of reductionism, one that might be called "categorial reductionism." It is the reduction of human experience to essential or ontological or natural categories. This reductionism, like the explanatory reductionism rejected by phenomenology, blunts our ability to ask the question of who we might be by severely circumscribing the answers available to us. However, it works not by reducing human experience to categories more appropriate to the objects of natural science, but by the very fact of categorizing it in some essential way. To reject categorial reductionism is to reject explanatory reductionism, but it is to do more than that. Whereas phenomenology's rejection of explanatory reductionism leads it to ask what the proper categories of human experience really are, Foucault's later rejection of categorial reductionism leads him to ask what the history of thinking there are proper categories of human experience amounts to.

In the end both the phenomenological-Marxist and the archaeological-genealogical projects are political, although in very different ways. The first seeks to recover what is proper to human living, the second to free human living from the idea of the proper. Nevertheless, there is a continuity in Foucault's trajectory. Finding one approach to the answers he seeks unsatisfactory, he develops another. But the same questions continue to haunt him throughout his career. It is no surprise, then, to hear him say in a later interview,

> My reading of what was called "existential analysis" or "phenomenological Psychiatry" was important for me during the time I was working in psychiatric hospitals and while I was looking for something different from the traditional schemas of psychiatric observation, a counterweight to them . . . existential analysis helped us to delimit and get a better grasp on what was heavy and oppressive in the gaze and the knowledge apparatus of academic psychiatry.[61]

As Foucault's thought matures, the character of what is "heavy and oppressive" changes. But what is at issue – who we are, who we might

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

be – remains the same. In the end, Foucault leaves phenomenology, but the spirit of phenomenology does not leave him.

NOTES

1 Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 45. Original French publication, 1954, 1962.
2 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970), xiv. Original French publication, 1966.
3 Michel Foucault, "The Return of Morality," interview with Gilles Barbadette and Andre Serla, trans. John Johnston, in Sylvere Lotringer, ed., *Foucault Live* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 326.
4 There are people who have made something of it. See, for example, Hubert Dreyfus, "Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault," available at: http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu~hdreyfus/html/paper_being.html (2002). Dreyfus's interpretation of Foucault generally relies on his interesting interpretation of Heidegger. See, for example, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
5 Michel Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," interview with Gerard Raulet, trans. Jeremy Harding, in Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 21.
6 For a good overview of this period in Foucault's life, see Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), chapter 4. Original French publication, 1989.
7 Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenological Psychology*, trans. John Scanlon (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977). These lectures were given in the summer of 1925.
8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), xiv. Original French publication, 1943.
9 Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 48–49. Original German publication, 1954.
10 Ludwig Binswanger, "The Existential Analysis School of Thought," trans. Ernest Angel, in Rollo May, Ernest Angel, and Henri F. Ellenberger, eds., *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (New York, Basic Books, 1958), 194. Original German publication of essay, 1946.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

11 Ibid., 204.
12 Ludwig Binswanger, "Dream and Existence," trans. Jacob Needleman, *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 9:1 (1984–1985): 88.
13 Ibid.
14 Michel Foucault, "Dream, Imagination, and Existence: An Introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's 'Dream and Existence,'" trans. Forrest Williams, in Rev*iew of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 19:1 (1984–1985), 32.
15 Ibid., 57.
16 Ibid., 39.
17 Ibid., 51.
18 Ibid., 45.
19 Ibid., 51.
20 Ibid., 53.
21 Ibid., 54.
22 Ibid., 42.
23 Ibid., 60.
24 Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987). The original translation was published by Harper and Row in 1976, but the later edition includes an introduction by Hubert Dreyfus, which offers his Heideggerian interpretation of the second part of the second edition.
25 Ibid., 10.
26 Ibid., 31.
27 Ibid., 41.
28 Ibid., 42.
29 Ibid., 46.
30 Ibid., 55.
31 Ibid., 56.
32 Michel Foucault, *Malade Mentale et Personalité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), 69. All translations from this edition are mine.
33 Ibid., 80.
34 Ibid., 81.
35 Ibid., 86.
36 Ibid., 88.
37 Ibid., 89.
38 Ibid., 100.
39 He also refers to this intertwining in other interviews. See, for instance, an interview in 1978 with D. Trombadori, where Foucault describes the intersection of phenomenological and Marxist discussions of science, noting, "This whole mix of problems and investigations prompted

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

people to ask questions about science and its history. To what extent could the history of science be put in question or confirm its absolute foundation in rationality . . . To what degree could Marxism . . . account for the history of the sciences . . . This dense set of problems I've summarily described – which constituted a meeting ground for the history of the sciences, phenomenology, and Marxism – was absolutely central then; it was like a little lens in which the different problems of the period were refracted." "Interview with Michel Foucault," interview with D. Trombadori, in James D. Faubion, ed., *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984, Volume 3: Power* (New York: New Press, 2001), 252.

40 Foucault, *Maldie Mentale et Personalité*, 110.
41 Ibid., 103.
42 Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 56.
43 Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 70.
44 Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 69.
45 Ibid., 78.
46 Michel Foucault, "Preface to *The History of Sexuality, Volume Two*," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984, Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 200. This is a draft of a preface that, in the end, was replaced by a different preface.
47 Ibid., 74.
48 Michel Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," 23–24. Didier Eribon corroborates this in *Michel Foucault*, 52.
49 Trombadori, "Interview with Michel Foucault," 246–247.
50 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingsdale, trans., Walter Kaufman, ed. (New York: Random House, 1967), 267.
51 For more on Foucault and Canguilhem's relationship, see Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, esp. 101–105. For the philosophical influence of Canguilhem (and Gaston Bachelard) on Foucault, see Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
52 Michel Foucault, "Life: Experience and Science," in James D. Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984, Volume 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* (New York: Free Press, 2000), 465.
53 Ibid., 466.
54 Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," 28–29.
55 Ibid., 23.
56 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970), 321. Original French publication, 1966.
57 Ibid., 322.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

58 Ibid., 324.
59 Ibid., 326.
60 Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in Luther Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 11.
61 Trombadori, "Interview with Michel Foucault," 257–258.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

JOEL WHITEBOOK

11 Against Interiority: Foucault's Struggle with Psychoanalysis

> I had been mad enough to study reason.
> I was reasonable enough to study madness.
>
> Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*

> Unreason becomes the reason of reason.
>
> Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*

> And how comfortless is the thought that the sickness of the normal does not necessarily imply as its opposite the health of the sick.
>
> Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

I

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*,[1] Foucault claimed to have definitively refuted the basic claims of psychoanalysis. However, a year after its publication, when a young acquaintance asked him to recommend a form of therapy, Foucault gave rather unexpected advice. Instead of suggesting something avant garde, like Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, he replied, "Freudian will be fine."[2] This incident – as well as a consideration of his oeuvre[3] – indicates the intensely conflicted and complex nature of Foucault's relation to analysis. Just as Moses haunted Freud "like an unlaid ghost,"[4] so Foucault could never successfully exorcise the specter of Freud. He kept returning to Freud throughout his career. Indeed, the persistence of Foucault's comings and goings with respect to the Freud led Derrida to remark sardonically that he was engaged in an "interminable and inexhaustible" *fort-da* game with the founder of psychoanalysis.[5]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

One source of Foucault's struggle with Freud is relatively straightforward: rivalry.[6] Whatever his antagonism towards psychoanalysis, the philosopher was honest enough with himself to admit the seeming boundlessness of Freud's creativity and the sheer magnitude of his achievement; and he was ambitious enough to try to make his mark by toppling one of the master thinkers of the twentieth century. If we just think of the topics Foucault tackled – the normal and the pathological, rationality and irrationality, the modern subject, the human sciences, sexuality and techniques of self-transformation – we can see that he was challenging the good doctor from Vienna on his own theoretical turf.

There is another, perhaps more profound, source for Foucault's difficulties with psychoanalysis, having to do with its very essence. Though it doesn't deny the importance of social reality, analysis confronts us with the formidable and often frightening task of turning inward and undertaking a prolonged exploration of our inner reality[7] in order to integrate our interior world into our everyday lives.[8] It must be admitted that there is something "unnatural" about the whole exercise, as it goes against the psyche's stubborn resolve to remain oriented towards the outside. (This is a key reason for the widespread hostility towards the field.) As Freud observes, "if someone tries to turn our awareness inward . . . our whole organization resists – just as, for example, the oesophagus and the urethra resist any attempt to reverse their normal direction of passage."[9]

The course of Foucault's early intellectual development moved from an avid interest in everything psychological to a radical *disavowal* of the significance of the psyche. In the years before the publication of *Madness and Civilization*, at the same time as he was pursuing his career as a philosopher, Foucault was thoroughly engrossed in exploring the realm of the psyche – the interior world. He was immersed in the study of the Ψ-disciplines (psychiatry, psychology, and psychoanalysis), both in their practical as well as theoretical dimensions. In fact, he seriously considered the possibility of a career in that domain.

At a particular point, however, because of a profound personal crisis, which we will consider below, Foucault abruptly turned away from his engagement with the inner world of the psyche. Until this

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

break, whatever criticisms he had of the psychological sciences – and they were significant – were made from within. He was, in short, a critical psychologist. Now, however, he condemned these sciences *in toto*. Central to this indictment was the charge that, historically and theoretically, these disciplines had constituted *Homo psychologicus – that is, a split subject with an inner world* – as their object.[10] Through a genealogical critique of psychology, which appeared in his first official publication, *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault hoped to nullify the challenge posed by the existence of an interior world and therewith the challenge of psychoanalysis. How did such a dramatic volte-face take place? What is its significance and why did Foucault try to cover it up?[11] These are the questions I would like to examine.

II

As a student at the Ecole Normale Superieure (ENS) – "a kind of monastery for boy geniuses"[12] – Foucault was already dissatisfied with the official philosophy of the "old university" and despaired at the prospect of becoming a professional academic.[13] Nevertheless, he complied with the expectation placed on every *normalien* and rigorously studied philosophy, passing the *agregation* and receiving his *licence* in philosophy in 1948.[14]

Foucault's dissatisfaction with academic philosophy – along with his own suffering – was a central factor leading to his immersion in the world of the psyche. While at the ENS, he attended monthly lectures where major figures in psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis discussed their field. He also sat in on case conferences at the famous Parisian psychiatric hospital, Sainte-Anne. With these pursuits, Foucault was "following a trajectory which led some of his contemporaries" at the ENS – most notably, Didier Anzieu and Jean Laplanche – into "a career in psychiatry or even psychoanalysis."[15] Furthermore, the fact that Foucault "asked Lagache whether a medical training was a necessary prerequisite for a career in psychology" indicates that he, too, was considering a career someplace in the field.[16]

Foucault's vigorous opposition to the idea of psychopathology, indeed to the very notion of diagnostic classification,[17] makes it difficult to discuss his own psychological difficulties. Nevertheless,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

something must be said about Foucault's state of mind during his years at the ENS. Though there is some dispute over the details, Foucault's major biographers – who are all basically sympathetic to him – and his former classmates agree that he was an extremely tortured young man.[18] The consensus is that Foucault was severely depressed at that time, and there are reports of suicide attempts and instances of self-mutilation.[19] His intellectual aggressiveness and contentiousness seem to have estranged him from his fellow students, causing him to withdraw into solitude. Foucault's father, an autocratic and sadistic surgeon – the father-doctor incarnate – received word of his son's precarious condition and arranged a psychiatric consultation for him, which actually took place at Sainte-Anne. As Eribon points out, this was the first time Foucault had the psychiatric gaze directed at him[20] – an experience that most likely had momentous consequences for the development of his thinking.

While it is not completely clear how Foucault's homosexuality was connected with his psychological difficulties, it is almost certain it had a profound effect. Didier Anzieu, a fellow student who later became a famous psychoanalyst, and Jacquline Verdeaux recall that he would "disappear from the ENS for days at a time," embarking on "some lonely sexual expedition," and would return in an "exhausted" and "very dejected" state.[21] Although the ENS had a relatively tolerant attitude regarding sexual matters, the society at large did not. Parisian culture in the 1950s – despite the city's renown for its blasé sexual urbanity – wasn't much different from what one found in most Western societies when it came to accepting homosexuality. As Eribon puts it, "Living with one's homosexuality was not easy in that period."[22] You had to endure a clandestine and dangerous existence and were always at risk of being found out.

The consideration of certain aspects of Foucault's psychological and sexual life immediately raises the danger of *pathography*, a danger Eribon is eager to combat. Although he is frank about the severity of Foucault's psychological difficulties and acknowledges that his theoretical preoccupations grew out of them, Eribon has no tolerance for the critics who seek to reduce Foucault's work to the pathological aspects of his personality as a way of discrediting it. Eribon correctly argues that "it is possible to see how an intellectual project is born in an experience that should perhaps be described as primary," and "how an intellectual adventure is created in the struggles of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

individual and social life."[23] The pertinent question, however, is not whether such primary experiences exist, for in important work, they are almost always present.[24] It is rather whether one remains "stuck in" them or is able "to think them through" and "go beyond them" in order to create works that can stand on their own merits.[25]

Eribon believes that Foucault accomplished this with his critique of reason and madness. When Foucault had the psychiatric gaze directed at him, Eribon argues, he turned the tables on the psychiatrist and demanded, "Do you know who you are? Are you sure of your reason? Of your scientific concepts? Of your categories of perception?"[26]

This turning of the tables can be viewed psychologically and theoretically. Today, I believe, most analysts wouldn't see challenges from their patients – which question their competence, their mastery of the countertransference, their own psychopathology. indeed their very humanity – negatively. On the contrary, analysts would see such questioning as necessary for advancing the psychoanalytic process and promoting their patients' autonomy. At the same time, this turning of the tables doesn't eliminate the necessity of reflecting on and elucidating the patient's own point of view. Furthermore, just as, psychologically, Foucault never put the patient/madman's position into question, so, using radical-sounding anti-foundationalist rhetoric, he stubbornly refused to reflect on his own theoretical position throughout his career. That is, the repudiation of self-reflection on the psychological plane was paralleled on the theoretical plane.

After leaving the ENS and receiving his degree in philosophy, Foucault continued to pursue both the didactic and the clinical aspects of training in psychology. He studied with Lagache at the Sorbonne and received a *licence*, that is, an academic degree from the Institut de Psychologie de Paris in 1950. He also pursued clinical work in several settings and was awarded a *Diplôme de Psycho-Pathologie* in 1952, the equivalent of a practical license in mental health. Thus, by 1952, Foucault possessed all the credentials necessary to become either an academic psychologist or a practicing clinician. Though clinical psychology did not yet exist as an independent discipline, Foucault, through contacts with friends, was able to cobble together something resembling a clinical internship at Sainte-Anne and in the psychiatric unit of the prison at Fresnes.

As it has for numerous psychiatric residents and psychology interns having serious problems of their own, working in an acute

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

inpatient setting seems to have precipitated a profound emotional crisis in Foucault's life. Without going into much detail, Foucault refers to the "malaise"[27] and the "great personal discomfort"[28] that resulted from his experience of working at Sainte-Anne. The situation appears to have centered on Roger, a patient of Foucault's, who was subjected to the ultimate act of therapeutic despair, namely, a prefrontal lobotomy, when he did not respond to treatment by other, less drastic means. Macey is no doubt correct when he says that "given Foucault's own depressive tendencies," the encounter with Roger "must have had a considerable impact." Not only does it seem to have derailed Foucault's plans to become a psychiatrist, but it also seems to have left him with an "indelible image of suffering."[29]

As a result of this experience – which was compounded by the break-up of his volatile relationship with the young avant-garde composer Jean-Paul Barraqué – Foucault ended his training as psychologist and departed Paris for Uppsala, Sweden, where Georges Dumézil helped him secure a position in the French department at the university. (He was simultaneously appointed to a cultural position as the director of the Maison de France in Uppsala.) Before leaving France, Foucault had signed a contract to write a history of psychiatry – as well as a history of death – with a small independent publishing house.[30] When he moved to Uppsala, he had the good fortune to discover in the Bibliotheca Walleriana "a trove of documents about the history of psychiatry."[31] The project on the history of psychiatry was never carried out as it was originally conceived. But the extensive research that Foucault pursued in the Swedish archives eventually took shape as *Madness and Civilization*, which he submitted as his thesis for the Doctor of Letters in France. He makes it clear that through the writing a book on the history of psychiatry his "malaise," the personal suffering he had gone through while working at Sainte Anne, was transmuted – sublimated? – into a piece of "historical criticism of a structural analysis."[32] With *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault's years of apprenticeship had come to an end, and "his lifelong project had begun to take shape."[33]

III

The argument of *Madness and Civilization* is based on a variation of what Foucault later, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, would

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

call the "repressive hypothesis." As he saw it, the rise of modern rationality involved the simultaneous expulsion of the mad from the community and the exclusion of madness from scientific rationality, as well as the systematic "cover-up" of this act of repression.[34] Once this twofold exclusion had taken place, madness became the deep disavowed truth of modern rationality, as unreason became the reason of an inverted world. The form of analysis, or, more accurately, of critique that is implied by the repressive hypothesis, is the "hermeneutics of suspicion."[35] Its job is to unmask the cover-up, retrieve the repressed material – the deep "truth" of madness – and use it as an "infrarational"[36] norm with which to criticize the modern world.

Foucault's narrative begins in the late Middle Ages. In what became a trademark of his brand of social theory, he traces the relation between developments in architectural and urban space on the one hand and institutional and conceptual space on the other. After the plague had run its course in Europe, the houses that had domiciled its victims remained standing in the *périphérique* surrounding the walls of the town. Because these "haunting" structures served as a reminder of what the plague had meant, they contributed to "a great disquiet"[37] that took hold in Europe in the fifteenth century. Foucault seems to suggest that, by some sort of unspecified compulsion, these "*empty place[s]*"[38] of negativity could not remain vacant indefinitely, but had to be occupied.

Just as individuals externalize the "bad" parts of themselves outside the boundaries of the ego, Foucault seems to be saying, the late medieval town "extrojected" its intolerable members, the mad, beyond its portals and tried to contain them and their significance in the abandoned lazar houses. However, unlike those that would follow in modernity, these acts of exclusion were not yet absolute. Symbolically, the walls of the city, which is to say, the boundaries of organized communal life, were relatively porous. Though the mad physically occupied an area beyond the city gates, they were *included* in the town's communicative nexus. Indeed, the mad were not simply tolerated, but – in the traditions of the sacred fool, the possessed shaman, and the blind soothsayer of many premodern cultures – were valued for their unique wisdom and contribution to the spiritual "thickness of . . . the human world."[39] In the institutionalized limit experiences of festivals, carnivals, and Saturnalia – where the norms

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of everyday existence are suspended and the established mores subjected to mockery and derision – medieval society institutionalized regularized exchanges with unreason. As opposed to the "classical age" that later silenced it, late medieval society was engaged in the "dramatic debate"[40] with madness.

The first major turning point in Foucault's narrative occurs in Paris in 1657, the year of the Great Confinement – an event that came to stand for all the subsequent acts of exclusion that followed in modernity. Approximately one percent of the population was rounded up "almost over night"[41] and incarcerated in the *hopitaux generaux* – the precursor of the asylum, which replaced the vacated lazar house as the sociophysical space for housing the mad. Similar roundups occurred, according to Foucault, in the *Zuchthäusern* of Germany and the workhouses and bridewells in Britain. Incarcerated in this new setting, which was more of a penal than a medical institution, the madman was expelled from the communicative nexus of the community and ceased to be a potential interlocutor with whom one could engage in a profound dialogue. He ceased, that is, to be "an eschatological figure . . . at the limits of the world" and was reduced to an object of fear and contempt that had to be physically isolated and conceptually objectified. Madness came to be seen as the radical and devalued other of an enlightened reason, a reason that claimed to have *purified* itself of all irrational contaminants. Once the "great debate" between reason and madness was silenced, and normalizing rationality – "*which is a monologue of reason about madness*" – had established its hegemony, "*modern man no longer communicate[d] with the madman*."[42] Therewith, according to Foucault, the "classical experience of madness is born."

The second major turning point in Foucault's narrative occurs in 1794, when the French psychiatrist Pinel freed the inmates at Bicêtre from their shackles. According to conventional history, this act, part of the reform movement that rode the crest of the French Revolution, is unambiguously progressive – a major step forward in the humane treatment of the mad, and marks the birth of the modern enlightened psychiatric hospital. Indeed, Charcot – who considered himself a republican – thought it so significant that hanging in his lecture hall he had a painting of Pinel shattering a patient's manacles.[43] Foucault, however, finds something deeply objectionable, indeed ominous, in the new psychiatric humanism. What

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

passed for benevolent liberation and claimed to base itself on positive science, he argues, was in fact "*moralizing sadism*."[44] External constraints were simply replaced with internalized ones, the "mind-forg'ed manacles"[45] of conscience – and madman now coerced into redirecting his own gaze inwards, at his own internal world. "The free terror of madness," Foucault writes, was replaced by "the stifling anguish of responsibility," his fear and guilt organized into "a consciousness of himself."[46] And if patients failed to conform to the requirements of the institution, the manacles were reapplied.

Foucault's objection to the inwardly directed gaze rests on the unstated assumption that self-observation is, by its very nature, violent. Because *le régard* is considered intrinsically malevolent, there is no possibility of a non-objectionable split between an observing and an observed part of the self and a form of benign self-exploration. There is no place in Foucault's thinking for the distinction between an observing ego, motivated by epistemophilic curiosity – the necessary precondition for a psychoanalytic process – and the continuous scrutiny of a sadistic superego.[47] Despite his rebellion against Sartre, Foucault adheres to the master's "paranoid ontology of the gaze."[48] The loving sparkle in the mother's – or lover's – eye[49] has no place in Foucault's thinking, only the panoptic gaze of the persecutory father

Foucault also finds difficulties with the persona of the psychiatrist. Despite the trappings of positivist science, the psychiatrist gains his therapeutic efficacy not as a scientist, but as a *homo medicus*, – a wise, moral, and paternal figure thought to possess esoteric knowledge and magical powers. In psychoanalytic terms, Foucault claims that the therapeutic successes achieved by nineteenth-century psychiatry did not result from the application of scientifically validated technique but from the manipulation of the positive paternal transference to the figure of the omnipotent doctor. And whereas psychiatric technique was basically "thaumaturgical" rather than scientific, the aim of the treatment was moral rather than medical. Not only is the psychiatrist the psychic stand-in for the bourgeois father-doctor, the goal of the treatment is to adjust the patient to the norms and behavior of respectable bourgeois life. The asylum "denounces everything that opposes the essential virtues of society . . . [and] sets itself the task of the homogeneous rule of morality, its rigorous extension to all those who tend to escape from it."[50] Bourgeois normality, in short, is equated with psychic health.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Once madness had been silenced and normalizing rationality had won the day, only a handfull of extraordinary individuals were able to reestablish contact with what Foucault considers the deep transcendent truth of madness. The names of these "noble heirs of Rameau's nephew" – Sade, Hölderlin, Van Gogh, Nerval, Nietzsche, and Artaud – make up the roster of Foucault's *pantheon maudit*. Though, as LaCapra observes, it is clear that Foucault wants to "join his voice to theirs," he is generally content to "invoke their names in a litany of transgression" and doesn't engage their work in any significant detail.[51] Looked at more closely, however, Foucault seems to be of two minds regarding his heroes. And his divided attitude defines the fundamental split in *Madness and Civilization*. At times, he applauds them for their commitment to *the project of transgression*, that is, to "an unrestrained aesthetic of the transgressive, traumatizing, quasi-transcendent sublime."[52] Because of their unique talents, sensitivities, passions, and even madness, these exemplary individuals are, through eschatological limit experiences, able to project themselves beyond the boundaries of the modern epistemé and directly recapture the uncontaminated experience of madness. (Foucault is well aware of the *aporia* involved with such a conception.) In this case, the transcendent "truth" of madness can be used as a norm with which to criticize bourgeois modernity *in toto*. The tables are turned and the inverted universe set aright: "The world that thought to measure and justify madness through psychology must justify itself before madness."[53] At other times, however, Foucault seems to praise his heroes for having reestablished *the dialogue with unreason*. Such a dialogue would have a salutary effect on both reason and unreason or madness – he never clearly distinguishes between the two. On the one side, it would undo the exclusion and stigmatization madness has suffered in modernity. On the other, reason would become richer, broader, and suppler by reintegrating the madness it had split off and disavowed. It should be stressed that, for such a dialogue to take place, *both partners – the representatives of reason and unreason – must be willing to place their positions on the table and submit them to scrutiny*.

Which is the proper program – the project of transgression or the dialogue with unreason? Foucault is never able to make up his mind about this question, which is at the heart of *Madness and Civilization*. And his indecision, in turn, determines the oscillations of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

his *fort-da* game with Freud. Although he is too sophisticated to be unaware of the theoretical and political difficulties involved in the transgressive program and the idealization of madness – and claims to give it up in later works – Foucault was forever tempted to affirm the project of transgression. And because of this temptation, he wasn't able to sustain his endorsement of the dialogue with unreason – which means of Freud and psychoanalysis. (Indeed, after *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault dropped the the idea of such a dialogue completely.) Foucault's praise for Freud occurs when he is in an affirmative mode vis-à-vis the dialogue with unreason. The founder of psychoanalysis is then joined together with the heirs of Rameau's nephew – especially Nietzsche – and together they are seen as the only ones to have reestablished the debate with madness, which was broken off after the middle ages. The relevant text deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

> This is why we must do justice to Freud. [Unlike the other psychiatrists], Freud went back to madness at the level of its *language*, reconstituted one of the essential elements of an experience reduced to silence by positivism; he did not make a major addition to the list of psychological treatments for madness; he restored, in medical thought, the possibility of a dialogue with unreason. . . . It is not psychology that is involved in psychoanalysis: but precisely an experience of unreason that it has been psychology's meaning, in the modern world, to mask.[54]

In a perceptive reading of this passage, Derrida detects a trace of antagonism even in Foucault's apparent praise for Freud. And this antagonism defines Foucault's negative posture towards the psychoanalyst. Derrida points out that the phrase "one must do justice to" suggests the necessity of "correcting an impulse" to commit an injustice. "One is . . . recommending resisting a temptation," in this case, *to subsume Freud under normalizing psychiatry*. Derrida writes that "since it is still necessary to call for vigilance . . . such a temptation must still be threatening [to Foucault] and liable to reemerge.[55]

When Foucault is in his other mode – of championing the project of transgression – this temptation to locate Freud in the history of normalizing psychiatry is exactly what emerges. In this case, Freud is not situated on the side of Foucault's transgressive heroes but on the side of "the immemorial figures of the Father and the Judge, of Family and Law, in the order of Order, of Authority and Punishment," as

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Derrida puts it.[56] Moreover, when Foucault praises Freud for having broken with hospital psychiatry, it is basically a backhanded compliment. That is, although he praises Freud for having "demystified" most of the structures of the psychiatric asylum, he argues that the one feature of the asylum Freud retained – and even intensified – was in fact the most central and pernicious: "He exploited the structure that enveloped the medical personage; he amplified its thaumaturgical virtues, preparing for its omnipotence a quasi-divine status." Which is to say, although the psychoanalytic situation abandons the external features of the asylum, it comes to concentrate almost exclusively on "the doctor–patient couple,"[57] that is, the transference. Whereas earlier Foucault had praised Freud for having "restored . . . the possibility of a dialogue with unreason," he now argues that psychoanalysis, because it concentrates on the father-doctor transference, is unable "to hear the voices of unreason, nor to decipher in themselves the signs of the madman."[58]

The analytic setting, which intentionally isolates and intensifies the transferential relationship, serves in turn to increase the "moralizing sadism" of the process. The analyst's position behind the couch turns him into an absolute unobserved Observer, and his "pure and circumspect Silence"[59] transforms him into an unreachable Judge. Thus psychoanalysis' advance over medical psychiatry consists, as Derrida puts it, in having achieved "*confinement without confinement*,"[60] which is a dubious form of advancement indeed.

IV

Although the dialogue with unreason is an "enticing" idea, the nature of such a dialogue, as LaCapra observes, remains an "obscure matter." In fact, there is a question whether it "it is a dialogue in any fathomable sense" of the term. What's more, as I have noted, Foucault doesn't provide much help in elucidating the idea, contenting himself to evoke it in a largely "prophetic" manner.[61] Nevertheless, despite the shortcomings of Foucault's account of the dialogue with unreason, the idea can provide a useful point of departure for two interrelated discussions. First, the idea suggests a program for a non-rationalistic critical theory, which incorporates the valid kernel of the project of transgression without falling into the idealization of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

it. And second, the notion can help us develop a normative conception of psychoanalysis. I would like to pursue that second suggestion here.

We must consider the possibility, alluded to by LaCapra, that the dialogue with unreason is an incoherent idea. A number of major philosophers have argued that it is self-contradictory to believe that reason can gain access to an extra-discursive referent like madness in order to carry on a dialogue with it,[62] Derrida, whose critique is perhaps the best known, maintains that "dialogue" is a misnomer for the exchange between reason and its "contrary" that Foucault is aiming at. Not without cause, Derrida claims that, by definition, the term "dialogue" denotes a process that is "interior to logos in general" – that is to say, it is an intra-linguistic affair.[63] Whatever its exact nature, Derrida insists that the break Foucault is attempting to describe must be a "cleavage" or "*dissension*" within logos.[64] To dismiss Foucault with technically correct yet rather obvious transcendental-type arguments, however, isn't particularly enlightening. As with all serious thinkers, it's only worth engaging Foucault if one is willing to grant that there is something important in what he is doing. Anyway, Foucault is too sophisticated not to know that his enterprise is, strictly speaking, indefensible – indeed even "impossible."[65] But pursue it he does. His "audacity,"[66] for which Derrida is even forced to admit a certain admiration, involves the attempt to return – both historically and conceptually – to a "*zero point*" where reason and madness are not clearly distinguished.[67] Such a zero point is, by its very nature, prior to the creation of science and is therefore not "*controlled by . . . the teleology of truth nor the rational sequence of causes, since causes have value and meaning only beyond the division*."[68]

But if Foucault isn't attempting to provide a strictly discursive argument in *Madness and Civilization*, what is he trying to do? An observation he makes in his discussion of Descartes' *Meditations* may help to provide an answer. The *Meditations*, as Foucault sees them, aren't simply a discursive undertaking, but an experiential exercise, lying at the "intersection of demonstrative and ascetic" – which is to say, cognitive and affective – "webs." Their purpose isn't simply to persuade readers through rational arguments. They also try to involve readers in an *experience* in which their natural attitude is subverted and their inner dynamics realigned so that they come to see

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

things in a new way. Foucault, I would maintain, is attempting the same sort of thing in *Madness and Civilization*: attempting to induce a particular experience in the readers, which will transport them back to that zero point. Indeed, he says as much when he refers to it as his "experience book." And if the book employs hortatory and prophetic rhetoric – rather than cool argument – the purpose is to bring about a limit experience in the reader. *Madness and Civilization* is itself a thaumaturgic work.

The idea of a limit experience, as it is understood within the project of transgression, is eschatological. It doesn't unfold over time but seeks to reach the "Absolute" all at once – to have it "shot from a pistol."[69] Psychoanalysis, in contrast, is a *methodical limit practice*. It doesn't try to catapult itself beyond the boundaries of the thinkable and the sayable in a single act, but, through daily clinical work, it seeks to expand those limits from within and integrate preverbal material and affectively driven experience into consciousness, language, and psychic structure.

Foucault's inability to appreciate the nature of psychoanalysis results, to a large degree, from his hostility to its concentration on "the doctor–patient couple," that is, on the transference. *For the transference is the medium in which the encounter with unreason takes place*. Situated at the intersection between discursive and affective webs, psychoanalytic practice induces its own particular process, namely, a transference regression, which – like shamanistic possession, hysterical disassociation, Mesmerism, and hypnosis – can be located in "the history of the trance."[70] The regressive transference neurosis churns up unreason, the affectively saturated material of archaic mentation – so that it can be experienced, understood, and worked through.[71] Thus, analysis isn't merely an interpretive enterprise, "interior to logos," in which one linguistic proposition is translated into another. It is rather an undertaking where nonpropositional *forces*, the forces that are unleashed in the transference, do violence to propositional structures.[72]

A paradoxical requirement lies at the heart of clinical psychoanalysis. An authentic analytic process requires that a certain type of madness, the transference-madness, be induced in the patient. Without it, analysands' defensive structures remain intact and the archaic strata of their psyches are never reached. But if the transference-madness becomes so intense that it overwhelms the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

ego's functioning, it passes over into a transference-*psychosis*, which puts the ego's observing functioning out of commission so that analysis cannot proceed. In short, too little madness, the analytic process never gets off the ground; too much madness, it comes to a halt. This state of affairs places extremely taxing, indeed, almost contradictory demands on analysands, namely, they must have the capacity to give themselves over to the transference-madness without it spilling over into a transference-psychosis – at least for any prolonged period.

There is something peculiar about an encomium to madness that criticizes psychoanalysis for concentrating on the transference. Because the transference is as André Green argues,[73] one place where madness can still be encountered – indeed must be encountered, if an analysis worth its name is going to occur – in a relatively undiluted form. It is also odd that Foucault, the critic of disenchanted reason, faults psychoanalysis for its involvement with "thaumaturgy." How else could madness – the Other of a disenchanted world – possibly manifest itself, except in conjunction with magic?[74]

Green points out that before psychiatry set out to transform itself into a strict science, the term "madness" had been part of its vocabulary. But as the discipline became progressively normalized, "madness" came to be viewed as an imprecise everyday concept, associated with such dubious topics as witchcraft, possession, and demonology, topics that had no place in a mature scientific discipline. "Madness" was therefore largely dropped from the psychiatric lexicon and replaced by the more technical "psychosis."

Green insists, however, that a concept of madness, as distinct from psychosis in the technical sense, is still necessary for understanding important aspects of everyday life and clinical experience. Like Foucault, he identifies madness, which, for him, is closely related to passion, with *hubris* – an excessiveness that always contains the threat of formlessness, chaos, and violence. But unlike Foucault, he explains that excess in psycho-physiological terms, that is, in terms of the force of the drives. The extremity and even violence of mad-passionate states – which have their origins in the "original madness"[75] of the child's erotic tie to his or her first love object – result from an upsurge of the drives of such intensity that it cannot be contained and disrupts ego functioning. Though it may manifest itself in the malfunctioning of thought,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

madness isn't primarily "a disorder or reason,"[76] but a malady of uncontainable affect. In its less extreme forms, madness-passion upsets routinized everyday perceptions, judgments, and behaviors, giving rise to the extravagances, recklessness, foibles, and creativity without which life would be a lackluster affair. Only when madness transgresses a certain limit does it not only interfere with, but also overwhelm the ego's functioning in general – including its ability to observe and represent – and result in psychosis in the strict sense.

Foucault's criticisms of the objectifying and instrumental nature of psychiatric diagnostics are often well taken, but they generally don't apply to analysis. What Foucault disregards when he tries to consign Freud to the tradition of medical psychiatry – remember, Freud wanted to protect psychoanalysis from the physicians no less than from the priests – is that analysts aren't primarily concerned with the question of diagnosis, but of *analyzability – or workablity*, as many analysts would put it today. In fact, many analysts agree with Foucault's criticisms. Is a prospective patient capable of meeting the arduous and knotty demands outlined above: can she or he be an interlocutor in the analytic dialogue with unreason – working to understand archaic mentation and affective states and putting them into words?

A consideration of the Foucault–Derrida debate can help us to understand why Foucault could never fully endorse the dialogue with unreason. Underlying their disagreement is the fact that Foucault and Derrida operate with different conceptions of madness. For Derrida madness is something like *acute hallucinatory psychosis*, which still presupposes the existence of a representing subject, however impaired. The psychosis consists in the fact that the representations that are in the madman's consciousness are delusional. Derrida can then argue that, in taking up the case of dreaming – which can be seen as a "normal" form of hallucinatory psychosis – Descartes has in fact included madness in the *Meditations*. But this conception isn't radical enough for Foucault. He grants Derrida that the Cartesian meditator takes up and considers certain mad phenomena: delusions of being someone or something else, perceptual hallucinations, and so on. Foucault's problem is that a *subject still remains, who can take up, represent, and consider anything at all* – no matter how delusional or hallucinatory the representations. *Nothing short*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of the fragmentation of the representing subject will satisfy him. For Foucault, madness means *acute fragmentary psychosis*. This is the stringent criterion that Foucault insists on when he claims that the *Meditations* exclude madness. But the dissolution of the representing subject – of the observing ego –would mean the destruction of the interlocutor who can participate in the psychoanalytic dialogue with unreason as I am describing it.

Although the psychoanalytic dialogue with unreason is a mutual enterprise, involving the intense participation of both partners, it isn't symmetrical. The analyst, the representative of *logos*, retains a degree of privilege. This is a point where the partisans of unreason can legitimately lodge an objection. They can argue that the situation is rigged and that by asking unreason to enter into a dialogue with reason, one is asking it to surrender to the demands of *logos* at the start. Marcel Gauchet and Gladys Swain provide a sophisticated and nuanced response to this objection.[77] They argue that, even if their intention was to spread the virtues of the bourgeoisie, when the humanist psychiatrist-therapists attempted to communicate with their patients, they entered a radically novel situation. In talk therapy, one cannot be assured that the preconditions for communications are ever in place. The two partners of the therapeutic dyad must work out their shared understanding on their own, without any preestablished "banisters."[78] Both individuals, Gauchet and Swain argue, are split subjects, with one foot planted in their own private world, their *cosmos idios*, and one in the world of consensually validated reality, the *cosmos koinonia*. The difference is that the patient is further withdrawn from the realm of intersubjective meaning, whereas the psychiatrist-therapist remains more firmly planted in it.[79]

In this situation, the creation and expansion of a domain of shared meaning is the precondition and the goal of treatment in that therapists must form communicative ties, therapeutic alliances, with their patients not only for the work to progress, but simply for it to get under way. To do this, they must capitalize on whatever area of overlap there is between their patient's subjective world and their own, and use this as a staging ground for expanding a realm of shared understanding. In the process, the conditions for mutual understanding are continually open for mutual interrogation and clarification. The creation and expansion of shared meaning is also is the goal of

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

treatment insofar as the patient's emergence from the *cosmos idios* and progressive entry into the mutually created *cosmos koinonia* is a central aim.

The whole idea of a therapeutic as opposed to some other type of relationship only makes sense on the assumption that the relationship between analyst and analysand is asymmetrical. Although analysts are split subjects like their patients, they are more firmly planted in the world of consensual meaning. Those who idealize madness – for example, the surrealists R. D. Laing and the Foucault of *Madness and Civilization* – don't only reject the asymmetry claim on the grounds that it retains the privileged authoritarian position of the psychiatrist-therapist. I believe they want to go further and maintain that the relationship is asymmetrical, but in the opposite direction. That is, implicitly or explicitly, *they believe that the delirious discourse of the patient is the true discourse*. And by idealizing madness, they spare themselves the effort of trying to understand it. Although Foucault asks the psychiatrist-therapist to interrogate his or her own position and reason, he is not willing to insist that the mad also call their discourse into question. This is another way of understanding why he wasn't able to embrace the dialogue with unreason – in which both partners' positions would be put on the table – but had to stick with the project of transgression.

But, as Gauchet and Swain argue, if therapists are to remain therapists, they must not allow their laudable desire to respect their patients' dignity to let them be coerced into simply affirming the truth of the patient's delirious discourse. They must remain representatives of the *cosmos koinonia*. In fact, Gauchet and Swain maintain that if therapists "were to abdicate complacently in the face of the derangement that has the upper hand with" patients or "go along" with their assertion of the superior truth of their "certitudes," they would "be misunderstanding and ridiculing" them. For the therapist would be acting as if there were not, within the patient, "a human being suffering frightfully from his all-absorbing empty certitudes," yearning to escape the anguish of his or her loneliness and join the human community. Therapeutic skill consists in maintaining "two positions at once." Clinicians must know how to reach individuals who are largely "outside of reason" by entering into the same desires, fantasies, and anxieties they share with them. And they must know how to remain representatives of the *logos* at the same time.[80]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

This is not to say, however, Foucault's criticisms of psychoanalysis are entirely without merit. Beginning with Freud, analysts have not always been exemplary in their willingness to examine their own positions and the "power relation" within which an analysis "unfolds."[81] Freud, a product of nineteenth-century patriarchal culture, argued in fact that the positive transference to the father-doctor is "unobjectionable" and ought to be left unanalyzed. Whereas he saw the rejection of suggestion as the feature that separated psychoanalysis from all other forms of psychotherapy, he contradicted himself and recommended that the positive transference should be exploited, for it is "the vehicle of success in psychoanalysis as it is in other methods of treatment."[82] Furthermore, in a piece of wishful thinking, Freud – who took natural science as his ideal – maintained that analysts can largely purify themselves of the contaminations of the countertransference, which means of their own wishes, conflicts, and pathology. Thus they would be able to function as blank screens and neutrally observe their patients' transferences as they unfold. These ideas have, for the most part, been rejected since Freud's death – especially in the last thirty years.

With the rejection of the blank screen, the question of countertransference – of the nature of the therapist's subjective position, which Foucault raised when he turned the tables on the psychiatrists – has recently moved to the center of many psychoanalytic discussions. The field had warded off the subject for many years because of its troublesome implications concerning the objectivity, authority, and even health of the analyst – because, that is, it forces analysts to put their own selves on the line. Indeed, the topic of countertransference calls into question the very distinction that Foucault finds so offensive – namely, between the normal, healthy doctor and the sick patient. Heinrich Racker, a pioneer in the study of the topic, writes that countertransference debunks the myth that

> analysis is an interaction between a sick person and a healthy one. The truth is that it is an interaction between two personalities, in both of which the ego is under pressure from the id, the superego, and the external world; each personality has its internal and external dependencies, anxieties, and pathological defenses; each is also a child with its internal parents; and each of these whole personalities – that of the analysand and that of the analysts – responds to every event of the analytic situation.[83]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Anyone who has digested these facts sufficiently would have great difficulty maintaining the posture of the detached, authoritarian, and purely objective expert who has been cleansed of all psychopathology, a posture that, unfortunately, has often characterized much analysis over the years. To acknowledge the significance of the countertransference means the analyst's behavior, personality, and pathology must be grist for the psychoanalytic dialogue with unreason. Today most analysts believe that it is advisable to analyze as many of the imagos of the powerful parental figures of childhood as possible in order to maximize a person's autonomy and maturity. And the imago of the father-doctor is central among them. But the recognition of the countertransference doesn't require that the authority of the analyst and the asymmetry of the analytic setting must be given up. It has, however, certainly forced the field into a widespread and difficult debate over the meaning of these concepts.

V

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, Foucault attempts to exorcise the specter of Freud once and for all. He doesn't, however, try to accomplish his goal through a frontal encounter with the substance of the Freudian position. Psychoanalytic texts are rarely discussed and Freud is hardly mentioned. Instead, Foucault attempts an end run around Freud, trying to trump psychoanalysis, as a theoretical and practical project, through an archaeological reduction of its significance. Ten years earlier, in *The Order of Things*,[84] he had briefly presented psychoanalysis in a positive light, as a critical counter-science that could guide the archaeological attack on humanism. Now, however, it is seen as an invidious form of humanism, which must itself become the object of archaeological critique. Freud isn't even granted the grandeur of a dangerous adversary – of the devil – who must be vanquished, but is reduced to a bit player in a much larger drama. Likewise, psychoanalysis isn't viewed as a revolutionary science that transformed the modern *Zeitgeist*. It is seen, instead, as a rather minor episode within what Foucault calls "the deployment of sexuality." In a roundtable discussion, the analyst Jaques-Alain Miller confronted Foucault with the thesis that the philosopher was using "a complex strategy" that aimed at erasing "the break that is located with Freud."[85] And Foucault didn't deny it. In a revealing

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

exchange, Miller presses Foucault on the arbitrary nature of his archaeology of psychoanalysis:

> MILLER: It's a matter of appearances, is that what you are telling us?
> FOUCAULT: Not a delusive appearance, but a fabrication.
> MILLER: Right, and so it's motivated by what you want, or hope, you're. . . .
> FOUCAULT: Correct, and that's where the polemical or political objective comes in.[86]

Foucault's choice of the deployment of sexuality as his master narrative is, in other words, unabashedly decisionist. With his "history of the present," Foucault has dropped all aspirations of disinterested scientific objectivity and feels free to adopt whatever starting point suits his political agenda – in this case, the nullification of the importance of psychoanalysis.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, which sees the Victorian era as the apotheosis of a repressive culture, Foucault claims that nineteenth-century bourgeois society was "a society of blatant and fragmented perversion."[87] He arrives at this rather unlikely conclusion through his analysis of the "deployment of sexuality." Beginning in the eighteen century, the growing capitalist economy required a predictable and manageable population, which could reliably supply workers for its factories and consumers for its goods. This led power – which, became "bio-power" in the process[88] – to intervene into the biological substratum of society, that is, into reproduction, sanitation, nutrition, health, and family life, in a way that was historically unprecedented. The human sciences – for example, criminology, social work, and modern psychiatry – were created and new means of social monitoring like diagnostic categorization, case dossiers, and statistical analysis were devised to guarantee the normalized homogeneous population required by the interests of the bourgeoisie. Central among the new fields was the *Scientia Sexualis*, the science of sexuality, which, according to Foucault, purports to be a legitimate positive science that studies the biological dimension of human sexuality, but in fact is an ideological pseudo-science aimed at social engineering. "A normalizing society is," Foucault argues, "the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life."[89]

With his thesis of the "perverse implantation,"[90] there is an externalizing gesture at the heart of Foucault's argument. Psychoanalysis traces perverse sexuality to *internal* sources, namely, to the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

instinctual-unconscious life of the individual. They represent the continuation of the polymorphous perversity of infantile sexuality into adult life. With their source in the schema of psychosexual development, which has its *Anlagen* in the child's inherited constitution, perverse impulses are ubiquitous and part of our biological endowment. Foucault, on the other hand, sees perverse sexuality as coming *from the outside*: It is implanted in the individual by the deployment of sexuality. In an obvious allusion to the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis, Foucault argues that, in the nineteenth century, there was a society-wide "incitement to discourse" in which everything having to do with sex "had to be told." Foucault seems to be connecting the pornography of *My Secret Life*, the arcane tomes of sexologists like Kraft-Ebbing, and the clinical interviews of the psychiatrists and social workers in order to argue that there was a "veritable discursive explosion" which overstimulated the population and created a hypersexualized society.[91] This sounds more like today's Rio de Janeiro than Manchester, England, in the nineteenth century.

This wholesale stimulation of sexuality fulfilled a specific function for the apparatus of power. Foucault maintains that by first implanting this sexuality in the population, power could later extract it "from people's bodies,"[92] manipulate it, and channel it for its own purposes.[93] Foucault traces these practices back to the "a power relation"[94] in the thirteenth century, when the Church ordered all Christians "to kneel at least once a year and confess to all their transgressions, without omitting a single one."[95] But Foucault argues that the wishes, fantasies, and dreams confessed by the penitents weren't intrinsic; they didn't derive from the inner world of their unconscious-instinctual lives. They therefore didn't represent deep and difficult truths, rooted in biology, and emanating from the depths of the personality. Rather, those transgressive proclivities were implanted in the penitents by the priests as a way of manipulating them.

Foucault uses his analysis of the confession in an attempt to condemn psychoanalysis by insinuation. His strategy, as Jaques-Alain Miller recognizes, is to subsume psychoanalysis under the normalizing practices that extend from pastoral power to the apparatus of sexuality "by drawing on one key aspect, relevant for the purpose of inclusion in archaeology, which is summed up in

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

the syntagma: 'talking about sex'."[96] "Talking about sex" is, however, a rather undifferentiated concept that can subsume an array of radically heterogeneous and even contradictory phenomena. Telling children about the sinfulness of masturbation or premarital sex is entirely different from informing them about the importance of practicing safe sex. This undifferentiated analysis is made possible by the deficiencies of Foucault's genealogical approach. It is possible to grant – as Freud recognized[97] – that certain elements of psychoanalysis can be traced historically to the practice of confession and that the two institutions therefore bear a certain formal resemblance to each other without at the same time equating them. The identification of antecedents and formal similarities doesn't establish identity of function. It is particularly malicious for Foucault to put Freud, the "Godless Jew," militant anti-cleric, and champion of sexual enlightenment, on the same side as his arch-enemy, the Catholic Church.

It is necessary to recognize how far Foucault's constructivism actually goes. He wants to completely deny the existence of a biological dimension to human sexuality. This is apparent in his discussion of the *Scientia Sexualis*. Foucault doesn't simply argue – like many left-wing Freudians, feminists, and gays – that although our sexual identity rests on a biological substratum, the largest portion of our sexual life is socially constructed and therefore contingent and open to historical reconfiguration. He claims instead that the existence of such a biological substratum is *virtually an illusion*.[98] It is a construction of "the deployment of sexuality." The new *Scientia Sexualis*, motivated by power, must posit the existence of sex, which supposedly exists by nature, to legitimate itself. "Sex," in other words, is the pseudo-object of the pseudo-science of sexuality. It is, as Foucault puts it, "an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality."[99] "Sexuality," in contrast, is

> the name given to a historical construct, not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge/power.[100]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Sexuality, in short, is completely constructed and comes from the outside.

If "sex," understood as a biological concept, is invalidated, then psychoanalysis is deprived of one of its basic tenets, namely, "the repressive hypothesis."[101] Analysis, in both its conservative and left-wing versions, envisions a structure in which societal power must repress sexual desire. However, whereas the conservatives see this relation as transhistorical and immutable, the progressives view it as a historically contingent structure – indeed, as the product of capitalism – which can and ought to be replaced. It is part of Foucault's evasiveness that he doesn't directly confront Freud's version of the repressive hypothesis, canonically formulated in *Civilization and its Discontents*, directly, but instead attacks the cruder position of the Freudian leftists – who made up a good part of his milieu. He wants us to think that by refuting the Freudian left he has refuted Freud.

But Foucault's refutation of the Freudian left itself isn't successful. Foucault claims that by focusing on the struggle against repression, that is, on sexual emancipation, the Freudian left allowed itself to be duped by the deployment of sexuality. Its idea that there is a fundamental opposition between sex and power – and "that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power"[102] – is mistaken. Rather than being outside and opposed to power, sex is, as we have seen, itself created by power – by the deployment of sexuality – to serve its own ends. The Freudian left's attack on repression remains within the deployment of sexuality and at best amounts to a tempest in a teapot. The truly radical program, according to Foucault, would seek to "dismantle" the deployment of sexuality itself.[103]

But dismantle it in the name of what? "The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment," Foucault answers," ought to be "bodies and pleasures."[104] The difficulty is, however, that "bodies and pleasures" is another one of those Foucauldian terms which, although evocative, has little content. Foucault's most extensive remarks on the topic – and they are scant – appear in his Introduction to the memoirs of Herculine Barbin, a nineteenth-century French hermaphrodite. Foucault begins with the question "Do we *truly* need a *true* sex?" – by which he means, Do we need *determinate* sex that can be unambiguously situated in a distinct scientific,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

medical, or legal category? Against "modern Western society," which has consistently answered this question in the affirmative, Foucault answers that "one might have imagined that all that counted was the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures."[105] Thus, whatever else it might mean, "bodies and pleasures" appears to denote the opposite of categorically determinate sex. For Foucault, Herculine represents that state of categorical indeterminacy – "the happy limbo of non-identity"[106] – that exists prior to the imposition of sexual determinacy. Indeed, the upshot of his Introduction is the lionization of pre-categorical and indeterminate – that is, polymorphous – sexuality, which is counterposed to the "true sex" that is imposed on the individual by the normalizing grid of the deployment of sexuality, that is, by power.

Foucault tries to indict psychoanalysis as a coconspirator in this "game of truth," which tries to force sexual nonidentity into a classificatory scheme. He observes, more or less accurately, that "psychoanalysis has rightfully rooted its cultural vigor" in the idea that "our sex harbors what is most true in ourselves" and that "we must not deceive ourselves concerning" it. But he then goes on to imply that "discovering the truth about our sexuality" really means "discovering that we have one true sex," thus again lumping the analysts together with the normalizers. Most psychoanalysts would probably agree that a desirable outcome of an analysis is the appropriation of an individual's sexual identity through the deep exploration of his or her unconscious and past. However, a "true" identity, in this sense, is not something that is monolithic, unequivocal, and established once and for all; the notions of infantile sexuality, constitutional bisexuality, and the component instincts make that impossible. Rather, it is an ongoing task – something that must constantly be synthesized and re-synthesized out of myriad identifications with both sexes and with elements from all the stages of psychosexual development. In other words, successful identities must be highly differentiated unities that individuals continually integrate and reintegrate for themselves.

More generally, whereas Foucault wants to hoist Freud on the petard of naturalism and essentialism, he misses the decisive feature of the latter's position. Dana Breen argues that Freud's theory of sexuality defies the binary choice between biological naturalism

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and essentialism versus historical constructivism:

> It is part of the complexity of Freud's work that his theory has been seen by some as ascribing an inescapable biological destiny to man and woman, while others have understood him to uphold the revolutionary belief that, psychologically speaking, we are not born man or woman, and that masculinity and femininity are constructed over a period of time and are relatively independent of biological sex.

Breen goes on to maintain that this "duality" is not the result of confusion or indecision on Freud's part but is produced by "an inherent tension existing at the heart of the matter." This is the reason, moreover, "why this opposition is not going away and why the debate is still alive half a century after [Freud's] death."[107] To use Foucauldian language, human beings are biological-symbolic doublets – "sensible-intelligible hermaphrodites"[108] – and the relation between the two terms of the doublet is fundamentally contentious and will always be subject to debate.

Foucault presents himself as a tough-minded anti-utopian who has outgrown the naive illusions of the *ultra-gauchists*. But he is in fact even more utopian than the Freudian left. As Peter Dews argues, Foucault's rejection of the repressive hypothesis – conceived of as the opposition between power and its repressed or excluded other – is more apparent than real, not "abolished, but simply displaced."[109] By placing bodies and pleasures in the position of the violated other of the apparatus of sexuality – but not acknowledging that he is doing it – Foucault attempts to finesse his central dilemma. On the one hand, he still retains an extra-discursive, counter-norm to power, which, as Dews argues, a critique of power logically requires. And, to his credit, Foucault still wants to criticize power. On the other hand, by leaving the notion of bodies and pleasures so utterly indeterminate, he believes he has avoided the dangers of naturalism and essentialism.

Bodies and pleasures assume the character of pure, unformed matter that can be voluntarily shaped and reshaped – constructed – without constraint. This provides him with the requisite material for the aesthetic fashioning of the self at will, independently of historically instituted codes. But Foucault has basically lifted this scheme from perhaps the most preeminent of Freudian leftists,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Herbert Marcuse. Whereas Marcuse envisioned the repression of polymorphous perversity by the Reality Principle, Foucault's pictures the violation of bodies and pleasures by the apparatus of sexuality. And though Foucault claims to reject utopianism – the omnipotent denial of our finitude – what could be more utopian than the infinite malleability of the body and sexuality? Or as Jacques-Alain Miller asks, what could be more utopian than this "body outside sex,"[110] that is, outside nature, which can be endlessly refashioned at will?

NOTES

1 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1975).

2 James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 282. Furthermore, his friend and biographer Didier Eribon tells us that, throughout his adult life, Foucault was plagued by the question of whether to undertake an analysis. See Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 42.

3 In one of his earliest works, the introduction to Binswanger's *Dreams and Existence*, Foucault tried to stand Freud's theory of dreams on its head, thereby undermining the very foundation of psychoanalysis (Michel Foucault, "Dream, Imagination and Existence, An Introduction to Binswanger's *Dreams and Existence*," trans. F. Williams, *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 19 [1984–1985]: 47–54). This is something he repeated in the last volume he completed, *The Care of the Self* (Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*: *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3*, trans. Robert Hurley [New York: Pantheon, 1986], chapter 1). Then in *Madness and Civilization*, his attitude toward Freud was divided down the middle (Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard [New York: Pantheon, 1965], which is an abridged translation of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* [Paris: Gallimard, 1961]). On the one side, he praised the founder of psychoanalysis for having reestablished the "dialogue with unreason" after it had been silenced by the rise of modern psychiatry. But on the other, he identified Freud with the repressive, authoritarian, and patriarchal psychiatrists. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault appeared to have the highest regard for psychoanalysis. Along with linguistics and anthropology, he praised it as one of the critical counter-sciences, which were sounding the deathknell for humanism and the human sciences. The (pseudo-) science he

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

was praising, however, was the structuralist psychoanalysis of Lacan, which, with its denial of meaning, autonomy and development, is not, I would maintain, the psychoanalysis of Freud (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon, 1970), 373–387). Finally, in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, he reversed his position again. Psychoanalysis was now seen as the very embodiment of humanism, which itself had to be uprooted with archaeological critique. With this critique – and, even more importantly, with the supposed "refutation" of the repressive hypothesis – Foucault claimed to have nullified psychoanalysis once and for all.

4 Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., James Strachey et al., eds. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953–1974), vol. XIII, 103.

5 Jacques Derrida, "'To Do Justice to Freud': The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis," trans. Pascale-Anne Brault et al., *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Winter 1994):242. See also John Forrester, "Michel Foucault and the History of Psychoanalysis," in *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 286–316.

6 The received interpretation has it that Sartre was Foucault's principal adversary, and there is no doubt Foucault saw him as a major opponent, especially early in his career. The hostility towards Sartre, however, was not unique to Foucault. It was something he shared with most of the members of his philosophical cohort. Structuralism's and poststructuralism's assault on Sartrean humanism – with its emphasis on meaning, history, and the transparent subject – provided the conceptual arena in which the ascendant philosophical generation sought to displace the master. Although it concerned some of the same issues, Foucault's struggle with Freud was more distinctly his own. It not only lasted longer than whatever quarrel he had with Sartre, but also reached deeper into the conceptual and emotional sources animating his thinking.

7 I am purposely not using Freud's technical term "psychic reality" here. For Foucault wasn't only objecting to the exploration of psychic reality as Freud defined it, but of the interior realm – of which psychic reality is a part – in general.

8 See Hans Loewald, *Psychoanalysis and the History of the Individual* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978), 19ff.

9 Quoted in Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, "'No Greater, Richer, More Mysterious Subject . . . Than the Life of the Mind': An Early Exchange of Letters between Freud and Einstein," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 76 (1995): 117.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

10 *Homo psychologicus*, in turn, became the prototype for "man" in Foucault's work and psychiatry the prime example of the human sciences.

11 For a useful account of Foucault's attempt to suppress the history of his apprenticeship as a young psychologist see Hubert Dreyfus, "Foreword," in Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

12 Miller, *Passion of Michel Foucault*, 45.

13 See David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (New York: Pantheon, 1994), 35ff.

14 At the same time as he was pursuing the official route, however, Foucault's dissatisfaction with the "professional philosophers" also led him to the Surrealists. What drew him to these avant-garde intellectuals was their interest in limit experiences and the deconstruction of the subject. Rather than trying to create rigorous systems, thinkers like Nietzsche, Bataille, Blanchot, and Klossowski "tried to reach the point of life which lies as close as possible to the impossibility of living, which lies at the limit or the extreme" (Michel Foucault, "The 'Experience Book'," in *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*, trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito [New York: Semiotext(e), 1991], 30–31). For our purposes, it is important to emphasize that the notion of deconstruction of the subject is incompatible with the study of psychology, for the dissolution of the subject deprives psychology of its object of investigation.

15 Macey, *Lives of Michel Foucault*, 36–37.

16 If Foucault had his reservations about becoming an academic philosopher, he also had his doubts about the field of psychology: "His opinion of his chosen discipline [i.e., psychology] was not favorable. It was he argued, well known that a psychology graduate knew nothing and could do nothing because the revision required for all his certificates could easily be done sitting in the garden on a summer's afternoon. Nor did he have a particularly high opinion of the psychology courses taught in the provincial universities; in his view, they were remarkable mainly for their soporific properties." Macey, *Lives of Michel Foucault*, 46.

17 See especially Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 131.

18 As Eribon observes, the École Normale wasn't the most benevolent environment one could imagine. He describes it as a downright "pathogenic milieu." Not only was "the most absurd, the most eccentric behavior" looked up to as a sign of individuality, but the intellectual competition and pressure to demonstrate one's brilliance, which must have been especially difficult for an awkward *Provençal* from Poitiers like Foucault,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

was constant and fierce. In one eighteen-month period alone there were reported to have been eleven suicide attempts among the students. See Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 25ff; Miller, *Passion of Michel Foucault*, 45–47, 54–56; and Macy, *Lives of Michel Foucault*, 27ff.

19 His biographers disagree over their reliability.

20 Eribon, *Foucault*, 28.

21 Macey, *Lives of Michel Foucault*, 28. For a somewhat different account of Foucault's relation to his homosexuality during this period see Miller, *Passion of Michel Foucault*, 55–56.

22 Eribon, *Foucault*, 27.

23 Ibid., 28. I would put it even more strongly. It is difficult to imagine where the passion that drives an individual to confront and endure the anguish that is involved in all genuine creative endeavors could originate, if not in such primary personal experiences.

24 If the fact that an individual suffered from psychological afflictions discredited his or her research into the workings of the human mind, there never would have been a credible student of the human psyche. It is almost a truism that all the great investigators of human psychopathology – Freud and Ferenczi no less than Lacan and Bion – entered the field to try to make sense out of their personal suffering. And the realm where they made their greatest contributions was generally determined, but also ultimately limited by the nature of their conflicts. For example, Freud – whose personal struggles centered on the relationship with his schlep of a father, was the master theorist of the Oedipus complex – was tone deaf when it came to the early relationship to the mother. Likewise, where Winnicott was acutely sensitive to pre-Oedipal experience and discovered the realm of transitional phenomena, the significance of the father plays a relatively minimal role in his thinking.

25 Although Eribon makes the correct case, there is something peculiar about using this argument to defend Foucault. Not only does Foucault fail to provide any arguments to show how his approach can avoid the genetic fallacy, it is clear that, for him, a genealogical analysis is meant to discredit the cultural work it is directed at. Like Nietzsche – at least as Foucault construes him – his attitude is "derisive and ironic." By demonstrating their lowly origins, genealogy is "capable of undoing every infatuation" with the so-called higher things. Thus with regard to his genealogical critique of psychoanalysis, Foucault tries to reduce Freud's work to the nineteenth-century power relations that created the apparatus of sexuality. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Donald F. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

1977), 139–164. For an alternative, non-deflationary interpretation of Nietzschean genealogy see Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 35, and Raymond Geuss, "Nietzsche and Genealogy," in *Morality, Culture and History: Essays on German Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1–28.

26 Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 28.

27 Michel Foucault, "The Minimalist Self," in L. Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 6.

28 Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self," in L. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 11.

29 Macey, *Lives of Michel Foucault*, 57. It appears, moreover, that Foucault entered psychoanalysis briefly during this period, but terminated the treatment "in a fit of pique when his therapist went on vacation." See Miller, *Passion of Michel Foucault*, 62.

30 Macey, *Lives of Michel Foucault*, 61.

31 Miller, *Passion of Michel Foucault*, 96.

32 Foucault, "Minimalist Self," 6. In "Truth, Power, Self," he also states that "after three years I left the job and went to Sweden in great personal discomfort and started to write a history of these practices [*Madness and Civilization*]," 11.

33 Miller, *Passion of Michel Foucault*, 92.

34 Dreyfus, "Foreword," xxviiii.

35 See Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay in Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970), 32–36.

36 Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 109.

37 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 13.

38 Ibid., 6.

39 Ibid., 22.

40 Ibid., xii.

41 Ibid., 66.

42 Ibid., x–xii (emphasis in the original).

43 "In the hall in which he gave his lectures there hung a picture which showed 'citizen' Pinel having the chains taken off the poor madmen in Salpêtrière. The Salpêtrière which had witness so many horrors during the Revolution had also been the scene of this most humane of all revolutions." Sigmund Freud, "Charcot," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., James Strachey et al., eds.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

(London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953–1974), vol. III, 18.

44 Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 3 (emphasis in the original).

45 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 247.

46 Ibid., 247. A central reason for Foucault's hostility to Sartre was the latter's emphasis on conscience and responsibility. Indeed, for Foucault, Sartre's philosophy represented a form of "terrorism." Miller, *Passion of Michel Foucault*, 38.

47 As Christopher Norris observed, at the heart of Foucault's critique of Freud, as well as of Kant – indeed, at the heart of his critique of the humanist paradigm – is a protest against the notion of conscience. That is, he objects to the notion of a moral agency in the psyche, which is created through the internalization of external authority, and through which, for Kant and Freud at least, the subject gains his or her autonomy. And the normative lacuna in Foucault's thinking results from the fact that although he repudiates the notion of conscience, he does not conceptualize an alternative moral agent to put in its place. Christopher Norris, "'What Is Enlightenment?': Foucault on Kant," in *The Truth About Postmodernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993), 67. A revised and shortened version of this article appears as "'What Is Enlightenment?': Kant and Foucault," in Gary Gutting, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 159–196. For the topics this essay is concerned with, however, the longer version is much more relevant.

48 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 408.

49 See Daniel N. Stern, "Acting versus Remembering in Transference Love and Infantile Love," in Ethel Person et al., eds., *On Freud's "Observations on Transference Love"* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 177. Jay also points out that "With characteristic ascetic rigor, Foucault thus resisted exploring visions reciprocal, intersubjective, communicative potential, that of the mutual glance. *Le regard* never assumed for him its alternative meaning in English as well as French: to pay heed to or care for someone else. The "care of the self" which he explored in his final work included a visual dimension only to the extent that it involved a 'certain manner of acting visible to others.' But the ethical cum aesthetic self-fashioning he found so compelling did not go beyond a kind of dandiacal display, which left out more interactive affective ties, such as those in the family." Jay, *Denigration of Vision*, 414–415.

50 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 258.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

51 Dominick LaCapra, *History and Reading: Touqueville, Foucault, French Studies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 140.
52 Ibid., 167.
53 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 289. See also H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 11. It should be pointed out that the transgressive project is structurally related to the repressive hypothesis. Once it is assumed that the deep transcendent truth of modernity is repressed or excluded by power, the attempt to liberate it and assert it against power becomes a logical option.
54 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 198. Consider also: "[Madness] entered a phase of silence from which it was not to emerge for a longtime; it was deprived of its language; and although one continued to speak of it, it became impossible for it to speak of itself. Impossible at least until Freud, who was the first to open up once again the possibility of reason and unreason to communicate in the danger of a common language, every ready to break down and disintegrate into the inaccessible." Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 69.
55 Derrida, "'To Do Justice to Freud'," 236.
56 Ibid., 238.
57 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 277.
58 Ibid., 278.
59 Ibid., 278.
60 Derrida, "'To Do Justice to Freud'," 261 (emphasis in the original)
61 La Capra, *History and Reading*, 130, 140. For an attempt to clarify the ambiguities surrounding the concept of unreason see Gary Gutting, "Foucault and the History of Madness," in Gary Gutting, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 56.
62 See, for example, Ian Hacking, "The Archaeology of Foucault," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, (New York: Blackwell, 1978), 1–26; Richard Rorty, "Foucault and Epistemology," in David Couzens Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (New York: Blackwell, 1978), 41–50; Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), chapters 9 and 10: and Herbert Schnädelbach, "The Face in the Sand," in Axel Honneth et al., eds., trans. William Rehg, *Philosophical interventions into the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 311–340.
63 Derrida, "Cogito," 38–39 (emphasis in the original). I also recognize that the idea of a dialogue isn't entirely accurate in this context. However,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

none of the alternatives I have considered – "the exchange with unreason," "the encounter with unreason," or, more ponderously, "the *Auseinandersetzung* with unreason" – are any more satisfactory. I have therefore decided to stick with the notion of a dialogue until I find a better alternative.

64 Derrida, "Cogito," 38–39 (emphasis in the original).

65 Ibid., 33.

66 Ibid., 34.

67 The notion of a zero point is important, for it suggests the existence of a frontier realm in which the usual opposition of the logo-ontological tradition – between incoherent delirium and determinate thinking – isn't firmly in place. See LaCapra, *History and Reading*, 132. See also Joel Whitebook, "Weighty Objects: Adorno's Kant-Freud Critique," in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 69–70.

68 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, xi.

69 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Preface, 8, #29.

70 The term is Octave Manoni's. It is quoted in Mikkel Borch-Jacobson, *The Emotional Tie: Psychoanalysis, Mimesis, and Affect*, trans. Douglas Brick et al. (Stanford Calif: Stanford University Press, 1992), 114.

71 Foucault, the student of the relation between institutional arrangements and forms of rationality, might have seen the psychoanalytic consulting room as a new institutional setup that constituted a novel form of rationality and practice.

72 See Jean François Lyotard, "The Dream-Work Does Not Think," in Andrew Benjamin, ed., *The Lyotard Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989), 19ff.

73 See André Green, "Passions and Their Vicissitudes," in *On Private Madness* (Madison, Conn: International Universities Press, 1986), 214–252.

74 See Joel Whitebook, "Slow Magic: Psychoanalysis and the Disenchantment of the World," *The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 50 (Winter 2002): 1197–1218.

75 Green, "Passions and Their Vicissitudes," 244–245. This is to be distinguished from the Kleinian notion of a psychotic core.

76 Ibid., 223.

77 See Marcel Gauchet and Gladys Swain, *Madness and Democracy: The Modern Psychiatric Universe*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), chapter 7. Among other things this important book is meant to be a rebuttal of *Madness and Civilization*.

78 See Hannah Arendt, *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, Melvin H. Hill, ed. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1979), 314.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

79 Jonathan Lear conceptualizes psychopathology as an *idiopolis*. See Jonathan Lear, "An Interpretation of Transference," in *Open Minded* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 69.
80 Gauchet and Swain, *Madness and Democracy*, 190–191.
81 Forrester, "Foucault and the History of Psychoanalysis," 306, n. 48.
82 Sigmund Freud, "The Dynamics of Transference," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., James Strachey et al., eds. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953–1974), vol. XII, pp. 106–107.
83 Heinrich Racker, "The Meanings and Uses of Countertransference," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 26 (1957): 307–308.
84 Foucault, *Order of Things*, 373–380.
85 Michel Foucault et al., "The Confession of the Flesh," in Colin Gordin, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 211–212.
86 Ibid., 212.
87 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 130.
88 Ibid., 140–144.
89 Ibid., 144.
90 Ibid., chapter 2.
91 Ibid., 17–20.
92 Ibid., 48.
93 The only place where this peculiar argument has real bite is with regard to modern advertising as it developed in the twentieth century. There, in a process that has gone to mind-boggling extremes in our own day, power does indeed increasingly stimulate sexuality to serve its own purposes, namely, to sell its commodities.
94 Forrester, "Foucault and the History of Psychoanalysis," 306, n. 48. See also John Forrester, "Contracting the Disease of Love: Authority and Freedom in the Origins of Psychoanalysis," and "What the Psychoanalyst Does With Words: Austin, Lacan and the Speech Acts of Psychoanalysis," in: *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida*.
95 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 60
96 Miller, "Michel Foucault and Psychoanalysis," 59.
97 See Forrester, "Foucault and the History of Psychoanalysis," 299.
98 Thomas Laqueur observes that "under the influence of Foucault, various versions of deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and poststructuralism generally," the biological body "threatens to disappear entirely." *Making Sex: Body Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 12.
99 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 106.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

100 Ibid., 105–106.
101 Ibid., Part I.
102 Ibid., 157.
103 Ibid., 131.
104 Ibid., 157.
105 Michel Foucault, "Introduction," in *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century French Hermaphrodite*, trans. Richard McDougall (New York: Pantheon, 1980), vii.
106 Ibid., xiii.
107 Dana Breen, "General Introduction," in Dana Breen, ed., *The Gender Conundrum* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.
108 Schnädelbach, "The Face in the Sand," 317.
109 Peter Dews, *The Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (New York: Verso, 1987), 168.
110 Jacques-Alain Miller, "Michel Foucault and Psychoanalysis," in *Michel Foucault Philosopher*, trans. Timothy J. Armstrong (New York: Routledge, 1992), 63.

In this essay, I cash in on a promissory note, made in *Perversion and Utopia: A Study of Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1995), to take up the question of "the dialogue with unreason" as it relates to psychoanalysis. The current article draws on two earlier publications: Joel Whitebook, "Freud, Foucault and 'The Dialogue with Unreason'," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 25:6 (1999): 29–66, and Joel Whitebook, "Michel Foucault: A Marcusean in Structuralist Clothing," *Thesis Eleven* 1 (November 2002): 52–70.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

12 Foucault's Modernism

> More than simply an event that affected our emotions that gave rise to the fear of nothingness, the death of God profoundly influenced our language; at the source of language it placed a silence that no work, unless it be pure chatter, can mask. Language thus assumes a sovereign position; it comes to us from elsewhere, from a place of which no one can speak, but it can be transformed into a work only if, in ascending to its proper discourse, it directs its speech toward this absence. In this sense, every work is an attempt to exhaust language; eschatology has become of late a structure of literary experience, and literary experience, by right of birth, is now of paramount importance.
>
> Michel Foucault, "Le 'non' du père"

MODERNISM

The word "modernism" is most often used as a covering term for the period of Western literary and artistic innovation that extends from the late nineteenth century until about the 1960s, although arguably it is a conceptually more complex and open-ended phenomenon – a type of historical disposition (which might condition philosophy or politics as well as art) characterized by a belief in the inevitable and even desirable obsolescence of human traditions, institutions, and conventions, and perhaps even the concept of the human itself. Nietzsche's name comes to mind. In fact as a concept "modernism" has seldom been adequately clarified. The *International Review of Modernism* urges the method of "thick description" as an approach to the subject because modernism is made of heterogeneous cultural

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

practices invisible to views from above.[1] As Fredric Jameson says, modernism is not so much a concept as it is a "narrative category" in which topics like nineteenth-century realism, self-reflexive language, and the impersonality of the artist get articulated and rearticulated in multifarious ways.[2] It is certainly the case that modernism is defined more often by examples than by theories – serial music, nonlinear writings like Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, antiaesthetic objects like Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, as well as avant-garde groups like the Surrealists whose aim was often less to produce works of art than to develop new forms of experience and new dimensions of human subjectivity. In English the term "high modernism" is reserved for overshadowing monuments like Joyce's *Ulysses* and Pound's *Cantos*. I'm not sure there is a corresponding term among the French, who are apt to take their guidance less from Proust's *Grand Œuvre* than from the theater visionary Antonin Artaud, who thought that the task of the artist is not to produce masterpieces but to set in motion processes that dislocate rational, integrated, or otherwise settled forms of consciousness.[3] On a certain view modernism is made of events, not of works. A *museum* of modern art might arguably count as a defeat of modernism.[4]

In what follows I would like to examine some of the ways in which Michel Foucault's early writings provide resources for addressing the question of modernism. Of course, this is as much as to ask whether there is a concept of modernism that has a substantive place in Foucault's thinking. "Modernism," after all, is not really a term in his vocabulary, and when he does address the topic explicitly (as in one of his appreciations of Pierre Boulez), he refers only very generally to "the work of the formal," where the idea is to approach music, past or present, as Boulez does: "make it so that nothing remains fixed" – in other words, "make it new" (Ezra Pound's motto and to this day the watchword of modernists and postmodernists alike) (*DEIV*, 221/*AME*, 232). However, Foucault's early texts on Hölderlin, Raymond Roussel, Georges Bataille, and Maurice Blanchot address in interesting ways one of the fundamental problems of modernist poetics, namely the relationship between literary or poetic language and the limits of experience, or more exactly between the *materiality* of language (its resistance to signification) and the transformations of subjectivity that this materiality puts into play (or perhaps exhibits) in the form of noncognitive experiences – experiences that Foucault

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

characterizes variously in terms of death, absence, exteriority, and (interestingly) freedom. What Foucault means by these or any of his terms of art is never self-evident; his rule of language is to "make it so that nothing remains fixed" ("I am an experimenter," he said, "and in this sense I write in order to change myself and in order not to think the same thing as before") (*DEIV*, 42/*P*, 240). Roughly his idea is that the experience of language is a very different thing from the use of it. Experience is neither empirical nor intentional; it is an exposure of the subject to what it cannot grasp and in the face of which it cannot keep itself intact.[5] This notion (or region) of experience appears to be where Foucault's interest in literature begins, namely with the mythological identity of poetry and madness, which Foucault interprets as a certain experience of the alterity of language and in turn as a kind of writing that is no longer productive of works in the Aristotelian sense of logically integrated and translucent structures (that is, beautiful objects of art). Madness is, in Foucault's famous phrase, the "absence of the work."[6] As we shall see, this absence is not nugatory; it defines a theory of the *incompletion* or fragmentariness of the work of art that Blanchot summarizes with the word *désœuvrement* (worklessness).[7] It also leads to an interesting question of what the relationship might be between Foucault's early inquiries into the modernist themes of impersonality and fragmentation, and his later research into what he calls an "ethics of the self," where the idea is to constitute oneself, in a strong modernist sense, as a "work of art." By a "strong modernist sense" I mean that for Foucault "work" is an interminable project (more verb than noun, as in "daily work"): It is not something to be finished but something to be experienced in the way that Foucault regards each of his books as an experience rather than as a constituent of an œuvre: "however erudite my books may be, I've always conceived of them as direct experiences aimed at pulling myself free of myself, at preventing me from being the same" (*DEI*, 43/*P*, 241–242).

TWO GENEALOGIES

Within a French context we might find some useful orientation by distinguishing between two early forms of modernism – Baudelaire's and Mallarmé's, where the one has to do with a certain antithetical but nevertheless intimate or proximate way of inhabiting the modern

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

urbanized, rationalized world, whereas the other is defined by a certain antithetical relationship with language, where language is no longer a system for framing representations but has its own autonomy – its own modality of being that is irreducible to the functions that logic, linguistics, or philosophy of language attribute to it.

It was Baudelaire who gave the term *modernism* (or *modernité*) its first formal articulation. Here modernism concerns what one might call the relocation of the artist from his classical (or neoclassical) position as a mediator of universals to that of the close observer of the local and ephemeral – of what is *modern* in the sense of recent, short-lived, and superficial as against what is natural, essential, permanent, and true. "Modernity," says Baudelaire in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" (1863), "is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and immovable."[8] Baudelaire's modernist occupies the point of view of the street, that is, the point of view of the *flâneur* or idler who registers, with a detective's eye, the random and seemingly trivial details of his environment. Here the romantic theory of genius is turned on its head: Whereas the genius is a transcendental agent of world making, the modernist is a figure of nonidentity, a sensibility on whom nothing of the passing show is lost but who is himself transient, anonymous, and ironic, someone who makes himself blend imperceptibly into the scene that he traverses (*ŒII*, 686–687/*SW*, 393–394). Baudelaire's model of the modernist is Constantin Guys (1805–1892), whose chief forms of composition are the illustration and the sketch, and whose mode of existence is that of the "man of the crowd" (*ŒII*, 687/*SW*, 395). M.C.G., as Baudelaire refers to him, aspires to invisibility. Baudelaire explains that "when [Guys] heard that I was proposing to make an assessment of his mind and talent, he begged me . . . to suppress his name, and to discuss his works only as though they were the works of some anonymous person" (*ŒII*, 688/*SW*, 395). Likewise M.C.G. "does not like to be called an artist" (*ŒII*, 689/*SW*, 397). An artist is a stock figure of the studio, the tavern, or the bedroom, any of which he might seldom leave, whereas Guys is driven by a child-like curiosity to wander the streets and arcades and to remember in detail whatever catches his eye – dandies, fashionable women, soldiers, prostitutes, carriages, horses, beggars, trifles in the shop window. Like the dandy, the modernist possesses "a subtle understanding of all the moral mechanisms of the world," but where the dandy is detached

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

and *blasé*, the modernist "is dominated . . . by an insatiable passion, that of seeing and feeling" (*ŒII*, 691/*SW*, 399). His "excessive love of visible, tangible things, in their most plastic form, inspires him with a certain dislike of those things that go to make up the intangible kingdom of the metaphysician" (*ŒII*, 691/*SW*, 399). The temporality of modernism, its *donnée*, is the here and now, and of course this is never the same.[9]

There are two points here: (1) In Baudelaire's modernism the unfinished and even disposable artwork replaces the museum piece (the oil painting, for example), even though the museum and the artbook will later find places for such things as caricatures, drawings, and studies. The idea is that the modernist artwork shares in the impermanence of what attracts it. (2) Baudelaire characterizes modernism not just formally in terms of a certain kind of work, but also ethically and, indeed, aesthetically in terms of a certain kind of displaced subjectivity – an impersonal and refractory subject without an interior (a subject turned inside out). The Baudelairean subject exists outside itself in a condition of fascination:

> The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd. For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense, and impartial spirits, who do not lend themselves easily to linguistic definitions. The observer is a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes. . . . It is an ego athirst for the non-ego, and reflecting it at every moment in energies more vivid than life itself, always constant and fleeting. (*ŒII*, 691–692/*SW*, 399–400)

In contrast to the carnivorous spirit that one associates with the philosophical subject (Hegel's, for example), the modernist subject allows itself to be absorbed by its world, even at the cost of its own continuity, integrity, or substantive identity. In "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," Walter Benjamin (citing Baudelaire in order to describe him) writes,

> Empathy is the nature of the intoxicant to which the *flâneur* abandons himself in the crowd. "The poet enjoys the incomparable privilege of being

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

himself and someone else as he sees fit. Like a roving soul in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes. For him alone, all is open; if certain places seem closed to him, it is because in his view they are not worth inspecting."[10]

As Benjamin says, Baudelaire was, strictly speaking, never himself; he was a repertoire of Parisian types:

Flâneur, apache, dandy and ragpicker were so many roles to him. . . . Behind the masks which he used up, the poet in Baudelaire preserved his incognito. He was as circumspect in his work as he was capable of seeming provocative in his personal associations. The incognito was the law of his poetry. His prosody is comparable to the map of a big city in which it is possible to move about inconspicuously, shielded by blocks of houses, gateways, courtyards. (*GS*, 600/*CB*, 97)

The genealogy of the Baudelairean modernist can be traced back to Keats's concept of the poet's "negative capability" ("the poet has no character"; he creates by transforming himself into whatever is not himself), and to the romantic ironists of Jena (Friedrich Schlegel in particular), whom Kierkegaard accused of "transcendental buffoonery": The ironist, says Kierkegaard, has no *an sich*; he merely "lives poetically,"[11] reinventing himself as he goes (if "himself" is the word). More important, this genealogy can be traced forward to the later Foucault, whose project is not the Kierkegaardian ethic of self-transparency but the Baudelairean aesthetic of self-creation. Citing Baudelaire in "What Is Enlightenment?" (1984), Foucault writes,

Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not "liberate man in his own being"; it compels him to face the task of producing himself [*la tâche de s'élaborer lui-même*]. (*DEIV*, 571/*EST*, 312)

But this production is not a form of objectification. Foucault retains from Baudelaire the ironic themes of alterity and anonymity: As Foucault says in a late interview, the subject of self-creation is "not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself" (*DEIV*, 718/*EST*, 290). Rimbaud's great line, "Je est une autre," is also Foucault's.[12]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The displacement of the subject is also a key to Mallarmé's poetics, but his terms are different. At the level of experience, Mallarmé describes this event very dramatically in the language of negative theology – once as a struggle with God whose defeat or disappearance the poet experiences as a kind of ecstasy, but also (what perhaps amounts to the same thing) as a mystical encounter with *le Néant*, a quasi-Hegelian concept of absolute purity that enraptures the poet and, paradoxically, annihilates him as an experiencing subject: "My thought has thought itself through and reached a pure idea," Mallarmé writes in a famous letter. "What the rest of me has suffered during that long agony is indescribable. But, fortunately, I am quite dead now."[13] One might think of this as a phenomenological death (as against empirical, etc.) because for Mallarmé poetry begins at the limit of phenomenological experience. Poetry as a work of lyric expression that gives intentional form to experience now gives way to a conception of poetry as the work of language, where the words of language are no longer to be construed as signs but have become, mysteriously, agents of their own activity. This is the upshot of a passage from Mallarmé's "Crise du vers" (1896):

> The pure work implies the elocutionary disappearance of the poet, who yields his initiative to words, which are mobilized by the shock of their inequality; they light up with reciprocal reflections like a virtual stream of fireworks over precious stones, replacing the perceptible respiration of the old lyric breath, or the enthusiastic personal control of the sentence.
> [*L'œuvre pure implique la disparition éloqutoire du poëte, qui cède l'initiative aux mots, par le heurt de leur inégalité mobilisés; ils s'allument de reflets réciproques comme une virtuelle traînée de feux sur des pierreries, replaçant la respiration perceptible en l'ancien souffle lyrique ou la direction personnelle enthousiaste de la phrase.*][14]

How is it possible for language to become its own agent? Mallarmé does not provide a systematic answer to this question, but he does come to think of the poem as a material construction of words, a work of writing (*l'écriture*) in which the letters of the alphabet form the crucial matrix, since they are capable of endless combinations and so (like the Kabbalist's scriptures) potentially contain all of creation – hence Mallarmé's idea that the world was meant to exist in a splendid book (*Œ*, 378). In his last years Mallarmé tried to describe the material properties of this *Grand Œuvre*, in which not

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

only the written words but also the white space of the page and the fold in the middle of the book would be essential to the aesthetic of the whole. (The book of course could not be written, but Mallarmé gave us a fragment of it in *Un coup de dés*.)

LITERATURE AS SUCH

It is this Mallarméan aesthetic that Foucault invokes near the end of *Les mots et les choses* (1966) when he speaks of the emergence of "literature as such," which is a complex event in the history of language. (Foucault confidently locates it at the end of the eighteenth or early in the nineteenth century, but it is also an event whose terminus has never been fixed.) Whereas for the Renaissance language was a rich, cornucopian environment of words and things, modernity thematizes language as an object of knowledge for logic, linguistics, philology, and eventually for various philosophies of language (including, finally, structuralism). The project of modernity is to make language (like everything else) conceptually transparent and convertible to use. Foucault's idea is that "literature as such" (one could just as well call it "literary modernism") is something like the rebellion of language against this attempt to reduce it: "Literature is the contestation of philology . . . : it leads language back from grammar to the naked power of speech, and there it encounters the untamed, imperious being of words." We'll see in a moment what "the untamed, imperious being of words" entails. At the least it means that literature is refractory to models, categories, criteria, and rules of every sort. It is no longer a genre distinction but is more event than work:

> it breaks with the whole definition of *genres* as forms adapted to an order of representations, and becomes merely a manifestation of a language which has no other law than that of affirming – in opposition to all other forms of discourse – its own precipitous existence; and so there is nothing for it to do but to curve back in a perpetual return upon itself, as if its discourse could have no other content than the expression of its own form; it addresses itself to itself as a writing subjectivity, or it seeks to re-apprehend the essence of all literature in the movement that brought it into being; and thus all its threads converge upon the finest of points – singular, instantaneous, and yet absolutely universal – upon the simple act of writing. At the moment when language, as spoken and scattered words, becomes an object of knowledge, we see it reappearing in a strictly opposite modality: a silent, cautious,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

disposition of the word upon the whiteness of a piece of paper, where it can possess neither sound nor interlocutor, where it has nothing to say but itself, nothing to do but shine in the brightness of its being. (*MeC*, 313/*OT*, 300)

This is an uncompromising description of the autonomy (or, more exactly, heteronomy) of literature, but it needs careful reading. Sometimes this passage is brought under the sign of a formalist or structuralist conception of literature as a self-operating system of rules and relations capable of generating from within itself an infinity of possible utterances. Certainly this construction captures something, particularly in view of the essential formalism of European poetics (and most of linguistics) after Mallarmé and Saussure: the Russian Formalists, the Prague Structuralists, Emile Benveniste, and so on down through the Tel Quel group. But this is not exactly Foucault's idea. In a number of contexts (and this is a thesis that he never modifies) he says that in modernity literature "ceased to belong to the order of discourse and became the manifestation of language in its thickness [*épaisseur*]." Literature is no longer an expression of the subject, but neither is it a function of "the pure formalism of language" (*DEI*, 502/*EWII*, 265). Literature just *is* the "thickness" of language: It is the disclosure of "the being of language" – a phrase that Foucault summons repeatedly, but almost always as a way of marking a conceptual limit: The "being of language" is precisely what cannot be objectified or thematized; it can only be *experienced* in its materiality, alterity, or exteriority – terms that Foucault often gathers together under the figure of *écriture* (as when language "addresses itself to itself as a writing subjectivity," where a *writing* subjectivity is different from one composed of intentions).

The "being of language" is not an easy idea. Early in *Les mots et choses* the term is introduced by way of an astonishing assertion that "language . . . exists in its raw and primitive being [*être brut et primitif*], in the simple, material form of writing, a stigma upon things, a mark imprinted across the world which is part of its most ineffaceable forms" (*MeC*, 57/*OT*, 42). Raw language? The idea seems like a joke at structuralism's expense, but Foucault means what he says: In modernity literature "separated itself from all other language with a deep scission . . . by forming a sort of 'counter-discourse,' and by finding its way back from the representative and signifying function of language to this raw being that had been forgotten since the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

sixteenth century" (*MeC*, 59/*OT*, 44). "Raw being" is just what is uncontainable within any system, but which at the same time the system cannot exclude.[15] In his essay on Blanchot, "La pensée du dehors" (1966), Foucault says that "the event of literature" is "no longer discourse and the communication of meaning, but a spreading forth of language in its raw state, an unfolding of pure exteriority" (*DEI*, 519/*AME*, 148).

Pure exteriority means: an outside not correlated with an inside, not the object of a subject, but instead an outside that cannot be objectified, fixed, or determined and so held in place or at bay. Imagine the boundary between outside and inside as porous or floating – a boundary defined by invisible infiltration and exodus rather than by lines and checkpoints. Kantian theory (in most of its versions) pictures art and literature as occupants of a differentiated ream of the aesthetic – a region sealed off from the world of cognition and action, if not from the supervision of philosophy. Adorno's aesthetic theory pictures the work of art as a formal construction irreducible to the materials of which it is made and therefore external to the realm of commodities in which it may nevertheless be made to circulate, but of which it remains essentially critical.[16] Foucault's thinking is closer to the modernist (or postmodern) poetics of the North American "language poets," for whom the materiality of language – which includes the social and historical as well as the nonsemantic dimensions of language – is a region to be explored through often extravagant and theatrical forms of experimental writing, but also, at the limit of poetic experience, in *sound poetry*, in which vocal and buccal noises are no longer in the service of grammatical forms.[17] As it happens, much of modernism is made of noise.[18] Think of noise as an instance of exteriority.

NOISE

Writing is a "raw and naked act" (*DEI*, 556/*AME*, 173). Its rawness means (roughly) that it takes place outside the subject, outside the order of things, outside the order of discourse, but perhaps in the way the uncooked is "outside" the definition (but not the experience) of the human. Exteriority is not another world, not a totally differentiated state against which sameness or identity could be measured. On the contrary, it is a dimension of anarchic experience (experience

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

on the hither side of principle and rule) to which the subject and, indeed, the order of discourse or of things are constantly exposed. The difficulty of the outside is keeping it there.

The basic argument of *L'ordre du discours* is not difficult to follow, but perhaps it is not always followed out to the end. The order in question refers of course to various complex forms of cultural organization – taboos, analytic systems of exclusion (as between reason and madness, truth and falsity), disciplines of learning motivated by a "will to truth," fellowships of discourse that determine who has the right to speak about what, and assorted myths (the founding subject, the originating experience, the authority of universals): in short, a vast system of constraints and procedures whose task is to control discourse, "to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" (*OD*, 11/*AK*, 216). Naturally the question is: What does this last line mean? What is discourse, exactly, and in what does its "ponderous, awesome materiality" consist? The question is complex because, on the one hand, discourse is not another word for language or speech. By the time of *L'Archéologie du savoir* (1969) the concept of language has been folded into that of discourse, so there is no more talk of "the raw being of language." Discourse is made of institutions, rules, practices, objects, events (as well as gaps and voids), but it is nothing in itself:

> The existence of systems of rarefaction does not imply that, over and beyond them lie great vistas of limitless discourse, continuous and silent, repressed and driven back by them, making it our task to abolish them and at last restore it to speech. Whether talking in terms of speaking or thinking, we must not imagine some unsaid thing, or an unthought, floating about the world, interlacing with all its forms and events. (*OD*, 54/*AK*, 229)

On the other hand, however, discourse is still *something* – not, to be sure, an entity, ideal or otherwise: not, for example, a Heideggerian *Sage*, but *something* that remains (like language) external to the social forces that try to regulate it:

> What civilization, in appearance, has shown more respect towards discourse than our own? Where has it been more and better honoured? Where have men depended more radically, apparently, upon its constraints and its universal character? But, it seems to me, a certain fear hides behind this apparent veneration of discourse, this apparent logophilia. It is as though these taboos,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

these barriers, thresholds and limits were deliberately disposed in order, at least partly, to master and control the great proliferation of discourse, in such a way as to relieve its richness of its most dangerous elements; to organize its disorder so as to skate round its most uncontrollable aspects. It is as though people had wanted to efface all trace of its irruption into the activity of our thought and language. There is undoubtedly in our society, and I would not be surprised to see it in others, though taking different forms and modes, a profound logophobia, a sort of dumb fear of these events, of this mass of spoken things, of everything that could possibly be violent, discontinuous, querulous, disordered even and perilous in it, of the incessant, disorderly buzzing of discourse. (*OD*, 51–53/*AK*2, 28–29; translation amended)

Discourse is not transcendent, that is, it is not outside the order of things, but neither is it altogether containable within it. Discourse is never fully digestible. Imagine *logophobia* (initially) as a fear of the sheer *excess* of discourse, its hypertrophic existence not in some far-off wilderness but as a kind of anarchy that threatens from within every effort of speaking or the will to truth. As if discourse had about it a kind of rawness, thickness, or alterity after all. Discourse does not exist outside of the systems that try to reduce it, but it must be thinned out or "rarefied" in order for these systems to be productive. Discourse is made possible by being parsimonious ("*everything* is never said" [*AS*, 141/*AK*, 118]); but evidently not everything about it can be eliminated – for example, what to make of that "incessant, disorderly buzzing"?

One of Foucault's favorite stories is Kafka's "The Burrow," in which an unidentified creature constructs an immense underground labyrinth (a *Burgplatz*) to protect itself against its enemies, but one day its domain is invaded (or pervaded) by an indeterminate, irregular, "almost inaudible" noise, a sort of whistling or murmuring that comes from nowhere, is uniformly everywhere, and cannot be got rid of. In "Le langage à infini" (1963), Foucault associates this noise with death as a kind of omnipresent absence that concentrates our attention – *and* enlists our response (and note, for the record, what kind of response): It is a

disquieting sound that announces from the depths of language the source against which we seek refuge and toward which we address ourselves. Like Kafka's beast, language now listens from the bottom of its burrow to this inevitable and growing noise. To defend itself it must follow its movements,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

become its loyal enemy, and allow nothing to stand between them except the contradictory thinness of a transparent and unbreakable partition. We must ceaselessly speak, for as long and as loudly as this indefinite and deafening noise – long and more loudly so that in mixing our voices with it we might succeed – if not in silencing and mastering it – in modulating its futility [*inutilité*] into the endless murmuring we call literature. (*DEI*, 255/*AME*, 94–95)

What to make of this "incessant, disorderly buzzing"? Foucault's idea is that we make *literature* out of it, as if literature were the effect of a dialogue, collaboration, or complicity between language and – what? – a "pure exteriority": death, absence, infinity (whatever it is, it is untheorizable in the nature of the case). Anyhow something terrifying lies outside our grasp as cognitive subjects but not outside our experience – specifically a *literary* experience, or more exactly an experience of ceaseless, interminable speech. (We'll come back to this experience.)

Foucault discourages the psychoanalytic diagnosis that, in poetry, we suffer from a "return of the repressed."[19] But discourse has the structure of a fold in which the excluded remains internal to the game. This figure (the internal alien) seems basic to Foucault's thought from beginning to end (it is his self-image). The logophobia of discourse, for example, echoes the "grande peur" that Foucault discusses in *Folie et déraison*, specifically the *obsessive* awareness of madness that is one of the consequences or even functions of reason, and which expresses itself (irrepressibly, or against all reason) in the form of fantastic or grotesque images memorialized by Goya and Sade – and, later, in different ways, by Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche, Roussel, and Artaud (*HF*, 451–55/*MC*, 206–211). We can confine the mad and institute rules to exclude folly from the discourse of reason, but the language of madness – "violent, discontinuous, querulous, disordered" – nevertheless articulates itself within discourse itself, if only as a disruption or deformation of the processes of signification, or as "the endless murmuring we call literature," causing, as one might expect, a redoubling of efforts to render discourse transparent, efficient, productive, and correct. Here thoughts fly to Habermas's antimodernist theory of "communicative reason" – "a noncoercively unifying, consensus-building force of a discourse

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

in which the participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favor of a rationally motivated agreement."[20] Foucault, mistrustful of the very idea of rational consensus as a reductive program of normalization, sides with the ousiders. In *L'ordre du discourse* he makes it a public announcement:

> All those who, at one moment or another in our history, have attempted to remould this will to truth and to turn it against truth at that very point where truth undertakes to justify the taboo, and to define madness; all those, from Nietzsche to Artaud and Bataille, must now stand as (probably haughty) signposts for all our future work. (*OD*, 22–23/*AK*, 220)

The future work in question is, of course, *Surveiller et punir* (1975) and the first volume of the *Histoire de la sexualité* (1976). But perhaps more important for an understanding of Foucault's modernism would be his editorial projects in which outsiders (a "deranged" murderer, a hermaphrodite) are allowed to speak in their own voice – *Moi, Pierre Rivière* (1975) and *Herculine Barbin* (1978). Foucault situates these texts, after all, not in the history of madness (or of the prison, clinic, or s*cientia sexualis*), but in a history of literature whose Homer is the Marquis de Sade, and whose theme is the imagination or exploration of extreme experiences (*DEI*, 255–57/*AME*, 95–96).

EXPERIENCE

In philosophy experience is arguably the most impoverished and useless of concepts. The *cogito*, for example, is incapable of experience for the simple reason that nothing is allowed to approach it. The cogito is precisely that to which nothing can happen except what originates within itself. Doubt innoculates it against the outside. Nothing is certain except that nothing questions its existence. Everything is preformed at the expense of what is singular and irreducible. Experience from this standpoint reduces at best to observation (which works nevertheless as a mode of reflection). Thus in the Age of Reason the experience of madness is not an experience of being mad but an experience of reason affirming itself in the face of unreason – an experience which, strictly speaking, remains entirely abstract until acted upon.[21] Hegel is the first to think of experience as "the subject's

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

subjectness."[22] Experience (*Erfahrung*) is a movement – a reversal, a destitution, even a violence – that consciousness must undergo to purify itself of whatever is not itself.[23] But like art, *Erfahrung* is meant to become a thing of the past. Experience means: the subject overcoming its subjectness.

Foucault's interest, by his own account, is in *subjectness* – an interest that it might not be possible to reward with a theory, since the point of this interest (as Foucault says) is to break with theory, namely the philosophies of the subject, derived from Hegel, that dominated French intellectual culture during his school days. Not that a phenomenology of *subjectness* is out of the question or even undesirable – this is, after all, what Sartre tries for in his account of the look, and it is what Emmanuel Levinas accomplishes with his early descriptions of fatigue, insomnia, and the experiences of poetry, Cubism, and the *il y a* (the ontological archetype of exteriority).[24] But the early Foucault (or, for all of that, the middle and the late) was not a theorist. The genre of his early essays is that of the arcane review that reworks the ideas of others in a baroque prose of paradox and indirection (thus emulating, and often exceeding, the "extreme forms of language in which Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, and Pierre Klossowski have made their home" [*DEI*, 240/*AME*, 76]). These early essays are (whatever else they are) experiments in "nondiscursive" language.[25] Perhaps they have not had many admirers, but I think one can argue that these experiments are satirical rather than, say, merely decadent: They are aimed against the institutional figure of the philosopher and the propositional style of his discourse, where the idea is that transparency is a good in itself. In his essay on Bataille Foucault writes,

> The breakdown of philosophical subjectivity and its dispersion in a language that dispossesses it while multiplying it within the space created by its absence is probably one of the fundamental structures of contemporary thought. This is not the end of philosophy but, rather, the end of the philosopher as the sovereign and primary form of philosophical language.
> [*L'effondrement de la subjectivité philosophique, sa dispersion à la intérieure d'un langage qui la dépossède, mais la multiplie dans l'espace de sa lacune, est probablement une des structures fondamentales de la pensée contemporaine. Il ne s'agit pas d'une fin de la philosophie. Plutôt de la fin du philosophe comme forme souveraine et première du langage philosophique.*]
> (*DEI*, 242/*AME*, 79)

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

The point would be to think of Foucault's early occluded style as a practice of desubjectivation; the form of his language, whatever one's reaction to it, is an application of his argument against reductive (phenomenological) consciousness. In his essay on Blanchot Foucault says that, grammatical appearances aside, "I speak" does not have the structure of the *cogito* because the one entails an experience of language that the other, in its angelic purity, escapes:

> "I think" led to the indubitable certainty of the "I" and its existence; "I speak," on the other hand, distances, disperses, effaces that existence and lets only its empty emplacement appear. Thought about thought . . . has taught us that thought leads us to the deepest interiority. Speech about speech leads us, by way of literature as well as perhaps by other paths, to the outside in which the speaking subject disappears. (*DEI*, 520/*AWE*, 149)

To which Foucault adds, "No doubt, that is why Western thought took so long to think the being of language: as if it had a premonition of the danger that the naked experience of language poses for the self-evidence of the 'I think'" (*DEI*, 520/*AWE*, 149). What kind of experience is "the naked experience of language"? (We have already had an inkling: not, evidently, an aesthetic experience but an experience of – or *with* – noise.)

The guiding figure in Foucault's early work is Georges Bataille, who had, for example, cross-dressed Heidegger as a Surrealist in an early essay (1933) on *le moi* as the subject of sacrifice – "The *me* accedes to its specificity and to its integral transcendence only in the form of the 'me' that dies." The *moi* is not just *Dasein* heroically acknowledging its fate; the *moi* is "avid" for death: It embraces the cross, not in the form of Christian piety or asceticism, but as an erotic experience "that must and can be lived as the death of the *me*, not as respectful adoration but with the avidity of sadistic ecstasy, the surge of a *blind* madness that alone accedes to the *passion* of the pure imperative."[26] This ecstasy before death is a premier example of what Bataille will later call the *inner-* or *limit-experience*, that is, an experience of rapture in which the interior is simply taken away or evacuated by what it experiences; it is, in Bataille's formulation, experience "at the extreme limit of the possible."[27] This is the form of experience that Foucault appropriates as a way of breaking with phenomenology:

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

experience that tries to reach a certain point in life that is as close as possible to the "unlivable," to that which can't be lived through. What is required is the maximum of intensity and the maximum of impossibility at the same time. (*DEIV*, 43/*P*, 241)

This experience, Foucault adds, "has the function of wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself, or that it is brought to its annihilation or its dissolution. This is a project of desubjectivation" (*DEIV*, 43/*P*, 241).

Here one should recall Mallarmé's experience of *le Néant*, which is a prototype of the limit-experience: It is (1) an experience of the death or disappearance of God, (2) an experience of death of the subject, and (3) an experience of the heteronomy of language as that which fills the space of the evacuated poet. Foucault engages these themes for the first time in "Le 'non' du père" (1962), a review of Jean LaPlanche's *Hölderlin et la question du père* in which Foucault's main purpose is to recover the pre-analytic kinship of poetry and madness. The "extreme limit of the possible" that Hölderlin experiences in the father's absence and in the disappearance of the gods is, to be sure, an experience of psychosis, but (as part of the "project of desubjectivation") Foucault reconfigures this event as an experience of language:

The Father's absence, manifested in the headlong rush of psychosis, is not registered by perceptions or images, but relates to the order of the signifier. The "no" through which this gap is created does not imply the absence of a real individual who bears the father's name; rather, it implies that the father has never assumed the role of nomination and that the position of the signifier, through which the father names himself and, according to the Law, through which he is able to name, has remained vacant. It is toward this "no" that the unwavering line of psychosis is infallibly directed; as it is precipitated inside the abyss of its meaning, it invokes the devastating absence of the father through the forms of delirium and phantasms and through the catastrophe of the signifier. (*DEI*, 200/*AME*, 16)

The father's *non* is at once an echo and an erasure of the father's *nom*: It is an event (a "catastrophe of the signifier") that can only be registered materially in writing. In Lacanian terms, *langue* (*nom du père*) has turned into *lalangue* (*non du père*):

a zone is created where language loses itself in its extreme limits, in a region where language is most unlike itself and where signs no longer

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

communicate, that region of an endurance without anguish: "*Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos*" ("A sign we are, meaningless").

Hölderlin himself is no longer the lyric subject who gives form to a work of expression; his work is now, paradoxically, the interruption or disruption of lyric form:

> The expansion of this final lyric expression is also the disclosure of madness. The trajectory that outlines the flight of the gods . . . is indistinguishable from this cruel line that leads Hölderlin to the absence of the father, that directs his language to the fundamental gap in the signifier, that transforms his lyricism into delirium, his work into the absence of a work. (DEI, 201/*AME*, 17).

The difficulty is how to understand "*le lien entre l'œuvre et l'absence d'œuvre*"(*DEI*, 203/*AME*, 19). Foucault never addressed this relation except in tortuous paradoxes, but there are two contexts to which it alludes.[28] The first is Bataille's concept of *dépense*, that is, the principle of loss or expenditure without return that defines an economy that is heterogeneous and subversive with respect to capitalism or the market economy of exchange and accumulation. *Dépense* means free or unconditional expenditure, as in the wearing of jewels, sacrificial cults, gambling, kinky sex, gifts, works of art – and, notably, modern poetry:

> The term poetry, applied to the least degraded and least intellectualized forms of the expression of a state of loss, can be considered with expenditure [*dépense*]; it in fact signifies, in the most precise way, creation by means of loss. Its meaning is therefore close to that of *sacrifice*. . . . [For] the rare human beings who have this element at their disposal, poetic expenditure ceases to be symbolic in its consequences; thus, to a certain extent, the function of representation engages the very life of the one who assumes it. It condemns him to the most disappointing forms of activity, to misery, to despair, to the pursuit of inconsistent shadows that provide nothing but vertigo or rage. The poet frequently can use words only for his own loss; he is often forced to choose between the destiny of a reprobate, who is as profoundly separated from society as dejecta are from apparent life, and a renunciation whose price is a mediocre activity, subordinate to vulgar and superficial needs. (*VE*, 120)

Poetry as "creation by means of loss" means that poetry is a "nonproductive expenditure" of language. Poetry is language that "ceases to be symbolic in its consequences." This is what is meant when it is

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

said that poetry is the *materialization* of language; poetry is what is figured in the etymology of *Dichtung*: The word *poetry* means thickness, density, impermeability. But notice that under this description poetry also constitutes for the poet a heterogeneous existence with respect to the order of things, namely that of the "reprobate," outsider, or misfit: Sade, Baudelaire, Kafka.

In the late 1940s Maurice Blanchot had already characterized poetry as an interruption or deferral of the movement of signification that produces meanings, concepts, statements, and works.[29] Poetry belongs to a different temporality from that of dialectical, propositional, or narrative language. These logical forms of language are messianic: They are movements toward a future, a completion or *pleroma* in which everything will coincide with itself without excess or deficiency (*s* is *p*). Poetry is heterochronic: It belongs to the *entre-temps* – the between-time or *meanwhile* (the interval, the caesura, the pause, break, or parentheses).[30] But it is not just that in poetry time breaks off; rather a breach opens between *arché* and *telos*: Imagine the past receding from what was never present, while the future, like the messiah, never arrives. This temporality is (in Blanchot's words) "interminable, incessant," as in a vigil or illness; it is not that of a project, development, and product (*EL*, 20/*SL*, 26). Poetry in this event ceases to be *poiesis* or the making of works; it is "foreign to the category of completion" (*EI*, 229/*IC*, 153). In his essay on Blanchot Foucault describes this temporality in characteristically arabesque terms:

> For a long time it was thought that language had mastery over time, that it acted both as the future bond of the promise and as memory and narrative; it was thought to be prophecy and history; it was also thought that in its sovereignty it could bring to light the eternal and visible body of truth; it was thought that its essence resided in the form of words or in the breath that made them vibrate. In fact, it is only a formless rumbling, a streaming; its power resides in dissimulation. That is why it is one with the erosion of time; it is depthless forgetting and the transparent emptiness of waiting. (*DEI*, 538/*AME*, 167).

Forgetting, waiting, attention, affliction, suffering, exhaustion, fascination, abandonment, dying, madness – and poetry: One could add to this list, especially if one recalls Emmanuel Levinas's ethical theory ("passivity more passive than all passivity"), but these are the

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

canonical forms of experience explored by Bataille and Blanchot. In some of his most interesting pages Foucault singles out Bataille's obsessive image of the eye upturned in ecstasy, and the corresponding transformation of language that this condition makes possible:

> It indicates the moment when language, arriving at its confines, overleaps itself [*fait irruption hors de lui-même*], explodes and radically challenges itself in laughter, tears, the eyes rolled back in ecstasy, the mute and exorbitated horror of sacrifice, and where it remains fixed in this way at the limit of its void, speaking of itself in a second language in which the absence of a sovereign subject outlines its essential emptiness and incessantly fractures the unity of its discourse. The enucleated or rolled-back eye marks the zone of Bataille's philosophical language, the void into which it pours and loses itself, but in which it never stops talking – somewhat like the interior, diaphanous, and illuminated eye of mystics and spiritualists that marks the point at which the secret language of prayer is embedded and choked by a marvelous communication that silences it. Similarly, but in an inverted manner, the eye in Bataille delineates the zone shared by language and death, the place where language discovers its being in the crossing of its limits – the nondialectical form of philosophical language. (*DEI*, 247/*AME*, 83–84)

The "nondialectical form of philosophical language" is the language of an anarchic temporality in which there is neither an end (*telos*) nor origin (*arché*), unless it is a beginning that begins endlessly again and again. It is a language that "never stops talking" – one thinks at once of Beckett's *Unnamable* or of Blanchot's "infinite conversation." The paradoxical relation between the work and the absence of the work is not a relation that ends in silence; it is a relation of interminability, like the "incessant, disorderly buzzing" of language that, as Foucault has it, we "modulate" into literature. The writer who cannot stop writing (Sade, Balzac, Kafka – or, for that matter, Sartre or Derrida) is no longer a sovereign subject or philosopher; he has been folded into *littérature comme telle* as into a heteronomous event of writing.

As Blanchot argues throughout much of his work, but particularly in *L'espace littérature* (1955),

> the writer's mastery is not in the hand that writes, the "sick" hand that never lets the pencil go – that can't let it go because what it holds it doesn't really hold. . . . Mastery always characterizes the other hand, the one that

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

doesn't write and is capable of intervening at the right moment and putting the pencil aside. Thus mastery consists in the power to stop writing. (*EL*, 19/*SL*, 25)

This was Rimbaud's achievement. But *l'écriture* is a mode of *subjectness* with respect to "the interminable, the incessant" (*EL*, 20/*SL*, 26):

To write is to enter into the affirmation of the solitude in which fascination threatens. It is to surrender to the risk of time's absence, where the eternal starting over reigns. It is to pass from *Je* to *Il*, so that what happens to me happens to no one, is anonymous insofar as it concerns me, repeats itself in an infinite dispersal. To write is to let fascination rule language. (*EL*, 31/*SL*, 33)

This means that the experience of language is not a first-person experience; it is an experience of obsession – of being besieged or gripped by language as by something that cannot be got rid of, like the imminence of death. Here would be the place to give close attention to one of Foucault's most recondite essays, "Le langage à infini," with its enigmatic reflections on the sources of poetry and writing in an "essential affinity" between language and death:

Headed toward death, language turns back upon itself [*Le langage, sur la ligne de la mort, se réflechit*]; it encounters something like a mirror; and to stop this death which would stop it, it possesses but a single power – that of giving birth to its own image in a play of mirrors that has no limits. (*DEI*, 251/*AME*, 90)

Hence the garrulousness of the mad and the interminability of writing, the repetitious structure of poetry and the gratuitous proliferation of literature, which is simply a mirror-play in which language duplicates itself to infinity:

The possibility of a work of language finds its original fold in this duplication. In this sense, death is undoubtedly the most essential of the accidents of language (its limit and its center): from the day that men began to speak toward death and against it, in order to grasp and imprison it, something was born, a murmuring that repeats, recounts, and redoubles itself endlessly, has undergone an uncanny process of amplification and thickening, in which our language is today lodged and hidden. (*DEI*, 252/*AME*, 91)

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

FREEDOM

There is no doubt that from a philosophical standpoint the desire to break with the sovereignty of the philosophical subject – to *disappear* as a subject by way of various forms of subjectness or limit-experiences – is completely incoherent. One might as well desire to be mad, or dead. Yet the point is surely that the intention here is not to be a lunatic; one doesn't take Artaud as a "signpost" in order to be incarcerated and subjected to shock treatments. The idea is rather to conceptualize subjectivity in a new way – to frame the subject without recourse to the canonical concepts of cognition, self-identity, autonomy, and rational control.

Let me conclude by briefly distinguishing between two conceptions of freedom in Foucault's later writings. One is fairly traditional; it has to do with the possibility of autonomy and agency within the mechanisms of normalization or the "games of truth" by which individuals are socially formed. The other might be called a "post-subjectivist" concept of freedom.

In a late interview, "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté" (1984), Foucault makes the somewhat surprising statement that "the mad subject is not an unfree subject" (*DEIV*, 719/*EST*, 291). To be sure, the mad person is constituted as such by the system in which he finds himself, if "himself" is the word. Even when I judge myself to be mad, I do so within disciplinary frameworks in which, as Ian Hacking puts it, my madness or abnormality is one of "the ways for people to be."[31] So I am what I am under a description that fits, never mind what it leaves out. However, we know that Foucault came to rethink the nature of these frameworks in a self-critical way. In this late interview, for example, Foucault's idea is that the mad person is constituted as such not within a *fixed* system of brute coercion but within a system of "power relations" that are porous and flexible: "these power relations are mobile, they can be modified, they are not fixed once and for all." That is, these relations are not only alterable, but unstable and, indeed, anarchic. In particular this means that

> power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free. If one of them were completely at the other's disposal and became his thing, an object on which he could wreak boundless and limitless violence, there wouldn't be any relations of power. Thus, in order for power relations to come into play,

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

there must be a certain degree of freedom on both sides. (*DEIV*, 720/*EST*, 292)

A condition of relations of power, Foucault says, is the possibility of resistance. "The idea that power is a system of domination that controls everything and leaves no room for freedom cannot be attributed to me" (*DEIV*, 721/*EST*, 293).

Well and good. But Foucault the modernist is different from Foucault the liberal. In this same interview from 1984 Foucault distinguishes between freedom and liberation, where the one is understood as an ethical relation of the self to itself, whereas the other means something like the breaking of "repressive deadlocks" that alienate the self from itself (*DEIV*, 710/*EST*, 282). Foucault says he is suspicious of the notion of liberation to the extent that it implies the emancipation of a human nature that exists beneath or apart from the social forms of subjectivation that constitute the individual, or alternatively that it implies an ideal of authenticity that one would try to reach like a goal or affirm under the existentialist motto that "man makes himself." The relation of the self to itself cannot be understood on the model of grasping, achieving, or making something. It is not a relationship with one thing, but an open-ended "play" among "different forms of the subject":

> You do not have the same type of relation to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship. Undoubtedly there are relationships and interferences between these different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject. In each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself. And it is precisely the historical constitution of these various forms of the subject in relation to games of truth that interests me. (*DEIV*, 718–719/*EST*, 90–91)

So it would be a fact that one's relation to oneself is irreducible to a principle of identity. More interesting still, the practice of self-formation is, to borrow Blanchot's words, "foreign to the category of completion." This is because the practice of self-formation is always historically situated, not governed by norms, but by what is possible in the situation in which we find ourselves – rather as in the history of art, where anything is possible, but not everything is possible at every moment. The task of self-creation, Foucault says, is not "a search for formal structures with universal value" but requires

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

"a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subject of what we are doing, thinking, saying." The point of this investigation, however, is not self-recognition, self-knowledge, or self-identity; it is to "separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do or think" (*DEIV*, 574/*EST*, 315–316). In other words, "make it so that nothing remains fixed." As Foucault says, "we are always in the position of beginning again" (*DEIV*, 575/*EST*, 317).

The relation of the self to itself is thus a relation of freedom, not of truth. In this context, however, freedom is not autonomy but heteronomy, not self-possession but self-escape. Foucault's conception here is comparable to what Emmanuel Levinas calls "finite freedom." In his text on "Substitution" Levinas writes,

> in the irreplaceable subject, unique and chosen as a responsibility and a substitution [of one for the other], a mode of freedom, ontologically impossible, breaks the unrendable essence. Substitution frees the subject from ennui, that is, from the enchainment to itself, where the ego suffocates in itself due to the tautological way of identity.[32]

It would be an interesting project to explore the symmetries between Foucault's ethical subject and Levinas's. It appears that they have the same formal structure of "the other in the same." Of course, Levinas's subject is Jewish, whereas Foucault's is, genealogically and by choice, Greek. Where the one is a movement toward the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, the other is a movement toward the self. But neither one is a recursive movement. "Je est une autre," says "the masked philosopher."

ABBREVIATIONS

Foucault Abbreviations

AK *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

AME *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*. Volume II. Ed. James D. Faubion. New York: The New Press, 1998.

AS *L'Archéologie du savoir*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969.

DE *Dits et écrits*. 4 vols. Ed. Daniel Defert, et al. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

EST *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–84*. Volume I. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 1997.
FD *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. Paris: Plon, 1961.
MC *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York, Vintage Books, 1965.
MeC *Les mots et les choses*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996.
OD *L'ordre du discours*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1971.
OT *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.
P *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*. Volume III. Ed. James D. Faubion. New York: The New Press, 2000.

Baudelaire Abbreviations

ŒII Charles Baudelaire. *Œuvres complètes*, II. Ed. Claude Pichois. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.
SW Charles Baudelaire. *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*. Trans. P. E. Charvet. London: Penguin Books, 1972.
CB Walter Benjamin. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. London: NLB, 1973.
GS Walter Benjamin. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999.

Blanchot Abbreviations

EI Maurice Blanchot. *L'entretien infini*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1969.
EL Maurice Blanchot. *L'espace littéraire*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1955.
IC Maurice Blanchot. *The Infinite Conversation*. Trans. Susan Hanson. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
SL Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

NOTES

1 *The International Review of Modernism* is an on-line journal available at http://www.modernism.wsu.edu/.
2 Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), 119–121. Jameson distinguishes (as many do) between *modernity*, understood as a project of enlightenment, and *modernism*, which Jameson takes to be, alternatively, a reactionary process, a counter-enlightenment that repeatedly invites description in negative terms, but also, in its early stages, a utopian adventure

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

(129–138). Compare Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique* 22 (Winter 1981): 3–14, in which "aesthetic modernity" – a revolt against "all that is normative" – is opposed to the authentic modernity of the Enlightenment that tried to develop scientific reason, a morality based on universal principles, and the autonomy of the individual, but which remains "incomplete" precisely because of a preoccupation with the aesthetic dimensions of modernity. Some purchase on these semantic problems can be gained by consulting the journal, *Modernism/modernity* – see, for example, Susan Friedman's essay, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," *Modernism/modernity* 8.3 (September 2001): 493–513.

3 See Antonin Artaud, "No More Masterpieces," in *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 82–83: "I propose then a theater in which violent physical images crush and hypnotize the sensibility of the spectator seized by the theater as by a whirlwind of higher forces. . . . A theater that induces trance."

4 For Heidegger, works that hang in exhibitions or collections are mere art objects, not works – that is, they no longer *work* as events that open up time and history: "Whenever art happens – that is, whenever there is a beginning – a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again." A museum is a place where nothing can happen. Heidegger's monumental Greek temple tends to disguise the fact that "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" is *the* classic work of modernist aesthetic theory. See Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 77.

5 Heidegger, for example, speaks of "undergoing an experience with language [*mit der Sprache eine Erfahrung zu machen*]" that is not an event that occurs in the speaking of it. See "Der Wesen zur Sprache," *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen, Germany: Günther Neske, 1959), 61. *Erfahrung* entails the sense of undergoing a journey, trial, or transformation. It is not a term of agency but, if anything, one of suffering.

6 See the final chapter of *Folie et déraison*, in which Artaud's madness is characterized as "the *absence* of the work of art," but this absence is not a negation but paradoxically (and obscurely) a kind of reversal or exchange: "Artaud's *œuvre* experiences its own absence in madness, but that experience, the fresh courage of that ordeal, all those words hurled against a fundamental absence of language, all that space of physical suffering and terror which surrounds or rather coincides with the void – that is the work of art itself: the sheer cliff over the abyss of the work's absence" (*FD*, 662/*MC*, 287). See "Le 'non' du père" (*DEI*, 201/*AME*, 17) and "La folie, l'absence d'œuvre" (*DEI*, 412–420).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

7 See Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), 48–49 (*The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982], 46).

8 Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, II, Claude Pichois, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 695. Hereafter *ŒII*. Charles Baudelaire,"The Painter of Modern Life," in *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. P. E. Charvet (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 403. Hereafter *SW*.

9 Presumably modernist art is an art of the beautiful like any other, but in Baudelaire's analysis this is less clear in fact than it is in principle. Beauty, to be sure, "is always and inevitably compounded of two elements," one "eternal and invariable," the other "circumstantial," but the one seems effaced by the other in Baudelaire's paradoxical formulation: "Beauty is made up, on the one hand, of an element that is eternal and invariable, though to determine how much of it there is extremely difficult, and, on the other, of a relative circumstantial element, which we may like to call, successively or at one and the same time, contemporaneity, fashion, morality, passion. Without this second element, which is like the amusing, teasing, appetite-whetting coating of the divine cake, the first element would be indigestible, tasteless, unadapted and inappropriate to human nature" (*ŒII*, 695/*SW*, 392). As if the eternal dimension of beauty were, in itself, ugly. At any rate there is little attention paid to the eternal and variable in Baudelaire's essay; it is not really a dimension in which he has any interest. The idea is rather to discover in the ephemeral a new source of aesthetic interest.

10 Walter Benjamin, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, I.2, Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, eds. (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1974), 558. Hereafter *GS*. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1973), 55. Hereafter *CB*.

11 Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1989), 281.

12 Recall the opening lines of Foucault's inaugural address: "I would really liked to have slipped imperceptibly into this lecture, as into all the others I shall be delivering, perhaps over the years ahead. I would have preferred to be enveloped in words, borne away beyond all possible beginnings. At the moment of speaking, I would like to have perceived a nameless voice long preceding me, leaving me entirely to enmesh myself in it, taking up its cadence, and to lodge myself, when no one was looking, in its interstices as if it had paused an instant, in suspense, to beckon me" (*OD*, 7/*AK*, 215).

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

13 See Stephane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, I (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 259. Leo Bersani provides a very interesting commentary on Mallarmé's account of his experience in *The Death of Stéphane Mallarmé* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

14 Stephane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry, eds. (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 366. Hereafter *Œ*.

15 See Jean-Jacques Lecercle's *Philosophy through the Looking-Glass: Language, Nonsense, Desire* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Press, 1985) and *The Violence of Language* (London: Routledge, 1990). Lecercle's idea (following Jacques Lacan, but also an assortment of eccentric writers on language like Lewis Carroll, Jacques Brisset, and Louis Wolfson) is that language is a formal system (*la langue*), but it is pervaded by a remainder or surplus (*lalangue*) that makes possible wordplay; poetry; logophilia, or the language of schizophrenics; glossolalia, or speaking in tongues; and other "infelicities" of speech. "The main characteristic of language is *excess*: More meaning creeps into the sentence than the author intended, echoes and involuntary repetitions disturb the careful ordering of linguistic units. Phrases are analysed, and re-analysed, symptoms and word plays proliferate. But to this excess there corresponds a *lack*: the absence of the central all-mastering subject who means what he says and says what he means. . . . The utterance is full of involuntary admissions, echoes of other voices, traces imposed by the structure itself, distortion and displacement which irretrievably conceal the truth" (*Philosophy through the Looking-Glass*, 80).

16 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 225–229.

17 See Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein, eds., *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984). See Charles Bernstein's ars poetica, "Artifice of Absorption," in *A Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 9–89, and Steve McCaffery, "Writing as a General Economy," in *North of Intention* (Toronto: Roof Books, 1986), 201–221, esp. 214–215: "sound poetry is a poetry of complete expenditure in which nothing is recoverable and useable as 'meaning.' Involved is a decomposition of both an operative subject and the historical constraints of a semantic order." For a concise history of twentieth-century sound poetry, see Steve McCaffery, "Voice in Extremis," in *Prior to Meaning: The Protosemantic and Poetics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 161–186.

18 See Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

19 See Julia Kristeva, *La revolution du langage poétique: L'avant-garde à la fin du XIX* siècle (Paris: du Seuil, 1974); available in English in

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

a truncated version, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

20 See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 314. See also Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984/1987), I, 94–101; II, 93–111.

21 In an alternative preface to volume II of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault writes, "in *Madness and Civilization* I was trying . . . to describe a locus of experience from the viewpoint of the history of thought, even if my usage of the word 'experience' was very floating" (*DEIV*, 581/*EWI*, 202). How the "eighteenth century" experiences madness is continuous with how it constructs it. But experience also means how the mad experience their madness, which Foucault takes up in the final chapter of *Madness and Civilization*, and which, as he says, forms a threshold for future work.

22 See Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 113–114: "Experience is now no longer the term for a kind of knowledge. . . . Experience designates the subject's subjectness."

23 See Hegel's introduction to the *Phenomenology, Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1970), vol. 3, esp. 72.

24 See Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), esp. 52–67; and also "Reality and Its Shadow" (1948), in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), esp. 3–4.

25 In "Foucault as I Imagine Him" Maurice Blanchot recalls Roger Callois' allergic reaction to Foucault's early prose: "Foucault's style, in its splendor and precision, perplexed him. He was not sure whether this grand baroque style didn't ultimately ruin the singular knowledge whose multiple facets – philosophical, sociological, and historical – irritated and exalted him. Perhaps he saw in Foucault an alter ego who would have made off with his heritage." Maurice Blanchot, *Foucault/Blanchot*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Zone Books, 1987), 64.

26 Georges Bataille, "Sacrifices" (1933), in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 132–134. Hereafter *VE*.

27 See Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 39: "The extreme limit of the 'possible' assumes laughter, ecstasy, terrified approach towards death; assumes error, nausea, unceasing agitation of the 'possible' and the impossible and, to conclude . . . the state of supplication, its absorption into despair." The best commentary on Bataille's concept of experience is

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Blanchot's, "The Limit-Experience," from which the citation above is taken, and which includes the following: "It must be understood that possibility is not the sole dimension of existence, and that it is perhaps given to us to 'live' each of the events that is ours by way of a double relation. We live it one time as something we comprehend, grasp, bear, and master (even if we do so painfully and with difficulty) by relating it to some good or to some value, that is to say, finally, by relating it to a Unity; we live it another time as something that escapes all employ and all end, and more, as that which escapes our very capacity to undergo it, but whose trial we cannot escape." Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 207.

28 See "La folie, l'absence d'œuvre" (1964): "Hence . . . that strange proximity between madness and literature, which ought not to be taken in the sense of a relation of common psychological parentage now finally exposed. Once uncovered as a language silenced by its superposition upon itself, madness neither manifests nor narrates the birth of a work (or of something which, by genius or by chance, could have become a work); it outlines an empty form from where this work comes, in other words, the place from where it never ceases to be absent, where it will never be found because it had never been located there to begin with. There, in that pale region, in that essential hiding place, the twinlike incompatibility of the work and of madness becomes unveiled; this is the blind spot of the possibility of each to become the other and of their mutual exclusion" (*DEI*, 419). An English translation appears in *Critical Inquiry*, 21:2 (Winter 1995): 296–297.

29 See Maurice Blanchot, "Littérature et la droit à la mort" (1948), *La part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 312–317 (Literature and the Right to Death, in *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995], 322–328).

30 The figure, or structure, of parentheses deserves more attention than it has received. It is a kind of pure middle into which additional middles can be endlessly inserted, and so constitutes the basic form of the holotext. An especially interesting use of this form is to be found in Raymond Roussel's poem, *Nouvelle Impressions d'Africa*, a poem in four cantos, each which is made of a series of parenthetical interruptions – four or sometimes five parentheses within parenthesis ((((())))) – so that the first lines of each canto are suspended until the last lines. To read the poem as a semantic construction one has to work back and forth from end to beginning, until one arrives at a middle made, for example, of lists that theoretically could have been allowed to lengthen indefinitely. See Foucault's discussion of this poem in *Raymond*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Roussel (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), chapter 3; *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, trans. Charles Ruas (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 29–47.

31 See Ian Hacking, "Making Up People," in Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery, eds., *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986), 223.

32 Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 124.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

JANA SAWICKI

13 Queering Foucault and the Subject of Feminism

> Each of my works is part of my own biography.[1]
>
> I've always conceived of [my books] as direct experiences aimed at pulling myself free of myself, at preventing me from being the same.[2]
>
> I don't write for an audience. I write for users, not readers.[3]
>
> Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is . . . It is a challenge to what is.[4]
>
> Michel Foucault

Nietzsche once said: "I am not a man; I am dynamite!" – an image that suggests that in overcoming ascetic ideals he was destroying himself as well.[5] Despite the influence of Nietzsche and his own interests in self-overcoming, when referring to his own work Foucault preferred the less explosive metaphor of the toolkit. Foucault invited his readers – after all, in order to *use* him we must *read* him – to pick up what they found usable and ignore or discard the rest.

To be sure, self-overcoming was a central feature of Foucault's project as he described it toward the end of his life. Moreover, in the Nietzschean vein, he privileged critique over efforts to establish procedures and norms necessary to legitimate social and political order – destabilizing rather than securing our identities as human beings. In referring to his works as part of his biography, he was suggesting not only that the problems he targeted were based on his own experiences, but also that the very practice of doing archival research and writing genealogies altered his self-understanding – his works

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

literally "worked" to transform the self. Thus, one of the aims of his work, and one of the purposes for which his tools were designed, was to enable subjects (himself included) to get free of certain ways of thinking and doing by undergoing an encounter with historical difference and contingency.[6] In effect, Foucault was engaged in a sort of political therapy – therapy for himself and for those of his readers interested in expanding possibilities of personal experience and practice within established social orders. One aim of Foucault's work was to alleviate humanly produced suffering associated with processes of "normalization," or what he ultimately referred to as "the government of individualization."[7] He believed his critical approach could produce effects (in the form of other genealogical research as well as political activism) that might lead to the alleviation of suffering – to making some people's lives more tolerable.

Whereas commentators on Foucault have certainly addressed the toolkit metaphor, its implications for his reception by feminist social and political theorists have not been fully explored. After all, if we take his suggestion about how to understand his texts seriously, couldn't we become less preoccupied with worries about consistency in his early, middle, and late writings – with discovering the authentic "Foucault" in the oeuvre – and simply use them insofar as they seem helpful for the critical tasks at hand? Might we also stop looking in his text for an alternative to extant emancipatory and explanatory theories and focus more on the meta-theoretical impulse expressed in his predilection for "problematizing" theories rather than producing them? Foucault offered an alternative understanding of theories as heuristics or tools for engaging specific and local problems. His "theory" of power was neither normative nor explanatory. If this is the case, then it will not be surprising if we find that the tools that he provides are limited. In effect, differences among feminists over the value of his work would reduce to differences in our respective senses of what problems we want to address, what each of us thinks is most important and useful to do.

In what follows I address two important feminist receptions of Foucault's work – that of feminist critical theorists and the "queer" poststructuralist feminist theory of Judith Butler – in order to highlight the most salient criticisms and contributions that have been produced by encounters with his work in the context of recent debates between critical theorists and poststructuralists. The most

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

incisive critiques of Foucault by critical theorists – his alleged normative confusion and failure to offer a theoretical account of and normative support for agency, resistance, and social change – important as they may be to the project of developing normative emancipatory theory, ignore Foucault's characterization of his works as simply tools.[8] Butler imaginatively extends Foucault's concept of power to account for the production of gendered subjects and expands on his claim that resistance is internal to power. Yet insofar as her aim is to produce a psychoanalytic theory of subjection rather than a genealogy of the subject, she tends to treat Foucault as an explanatory theorist of power and subjection rather than a genealogist of the subject. Furthermore, although Butler, like Foucault, writes to address the suffering of the "abnormals" – those rendered "queer," morally suspect, unfit for citizenship, or unintelligible within hegemonic understandings of humanity, she suppresses this particular eccentricity, namely, the "queerness" of his approach to critique.

FEMINIST RECEPTIONS, FEMINIST CONTENTIONS

The Anglo-American feminist reception of Foucault's work spans two decades and has resulted in the publication of several anthologies and extensive studies as well as a series of influential essays.[9] There are several reasons that Foucault's critical philosophy has been attractive to feminist social and political theorists. Among the prominent poststructuralists (Derrida, Lacan, Deleuze), Foucault stood out insofar as his writings represented interventions in specific struggles of oppressed groups such as homosexuals, prisoners, and mental patients. His analyses of forms of disciplinary power exercised outside the confines of the narrowly defined political realm of the modern liberal state overlapped with second-wave feminist insistence on the recognition of "personal politics" or the politics of everyday life. His emphasis on the regime of "sexuality" in which bodies and subjects become targets and vehicles of normalizing "biopower" converged with feminist interests in identifying forms of social control associated with the rise of the human sciences and institutions associated with them (for example, medicine, mental health, social work, and so on). Foucault shared with feminists a sense of the importance of resurrecting "subjugated knowledge," ways of thinking and doing that have been eclipsed, devalued, or rendered invisible within

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

dominant apparatuses of power/knowledge. Furthermore, Foucault's critique of Enlightenment humanisms (both liberal and Marxist) and universalistic and essentialist appeals to a foundational subject of knowledge and history echoed radical challenges that feminists had already posed to fundamental epistemological, metaphysical, and political assumptions of modern emancipatory thought. Finally, during the early 1980s participants in the so-called "feminist sex wars" appealed to Foucault's critique of the regime of sexuality in challenging prevailing feminist orthodoxies about the role of feminism in advancing women's sexual freedom.[10] His writings on the history of sexuality have had a significant impact on the direction of queer theory as well.[11]

Among the first feminist receptions of Foucault were those that relied principally on descriptions of the emergence of "biopower" in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*.[12] Foucault's term "biopower" refers to two interrelated forms of power associated with the emergence of the sciences of "Man" and the institutions related to them. The first, disciplinary power, targets individual bodies and operates in the context of institutional practices such as hierarchical observation and examination. The second, regulatory power, focuses on the "species body" and is inscribed in policies and interventions governing the health and welfare of populations. It is by now well known that disciplinary power refers to a type of power that operates by attaching individuals to normative self-understandings and practices that render them docile and useful at the same time. Disciplinary power "subjects" individuals in both senses of the term: It subordinates them and makes them subjects in a single stroke. Foucault put it this way:

> This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him.[13]

It is productive, not repressive; in other words, it establishes limits through the production of discourses and subjects as well as the creation of institutions and technologies of the body designed to normalize populations and thereby secure the "unity" required in liberal societies. It grasps its objects at the level of their bodies and desires; in objectifying them it also creates the conditions of their

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

subjective possibilities – their range of possible self-understandings. As "subjected," individuals depend on the authority of experts and are bound to categories, practices, and identities (delinquent, homosexual, and so on) that emerge within the normalizing panoptic disciplines that Foucault described in this phase of his work.

In a ground-breaking appropriation of Foucault's genealogical work "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," Sandra Barky uses Foucault's accounts of the rise of disciplinary power to address the micro-political production of gendered embodiment.[14] In this essay, she corrects a deficiency that many feminists have found in his descriptions of disciplinary power, namely, its gender-blindness. The production process that she describes is that of specifically feminine forms of embodiment – practices such as dietary and fitness regimens as well as expert discourses on how to walk, talk, style one's hair, care for one's body, and wear clothing and make-up. These technologies of self "subject" women by developing norms and competencies, not simply by taking power away. Women become attached to them insofar as they involve acquiring skills, and more importantly, because they are tied to a central component of normative feminine identity, namely, sexual attractiveness. Accordingly, one reason many women may be reluctant to embrace feminist critiques of the "fashion/beauty complex" is that abandoning normative femininity threatens women with de-skilling and challenges their very sense of identity.

Compelling as it is, Bartky's descriptions of a disciplined women – in effect, an account of women's complicity in their own oppression – reproduces a dimension of Foucault's account of the normalizing effects of the "disciplines" that many commentators (feminist and nonfeminist) regard as problematic, namely, its pessimistic suggestion that modern power functions by producing subjects, not simply repressing them. Insofar as Foucault represents subjects as effects of power/knowledge apparatuses, as complicit in perpetuating normalization, the questions arise: How can individuals and groups resist the pernicious power relations that constitute them? Moreover, left without an appeal to any substantive account of the "human" as a basis for resistance or normative conviction, how can we distinguish between "progressive" and "reactionary" movement toward change, legitimate and illegitimate critique?[15]

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

FOUCAULT AND FEMINIST CRITICAL THEORY

This last critical angle has been developed most powerfully by feminist critical theorists.[16] In a thorough and insightful analysis of Foucault's middle writings, Nancy Fraser raises important questions about Foucault's ability to contribute to feminist critical theory. She argues that his critique of modern power is normatively confused, that it "ends up, in effect, inviting questions that it is structurally unequipped to answer."[17] For example, she claims that Foucault doesn't distinguish between better and worse forms of constraint. She asks: Doesn't distinguishing the pernicious from the benign require some appeal to norms? Another feminist critical theorist, Amy Allen, elaborates on Fraser's critique when she claims that Foucault's analysis of power is limited because he does not distinguish between different forms of power such as "power over," "power to," and "power with."[18] Allen regards all three as essential to normative feminist critical theory insofar as we need accounts not only of oppression and domination, but also of our collective capacities to resist and alter power relations.

Even more problematic, according to Fraser, is Foucault's antihumanist rhetoric. He does not clarify whether his is a *philosophical* rejection of the foundationalist and universalist metaphilosophical ideals of Enlightenment humanism (i.e., autonomy and freedom) or a *practical* rejection of them as wholly bound up with modern practices of domination. She states, "on the one hand, he never directly pronounces in favor of rejectionism as an alternative to dialectical social criticism; but, on the other hand, his writings abound with rhetorical devices that convey rejectionist attitudes."[19] If he is doing the former, then he is merely a crypto-normativist who relies on the emancipatory force of extant norms and practices without providing philosophical foundations for them. Alternatively, if he rejects Enlightenment humanism *tout court*, she asks, what grounds his own critique? What from Foucault's point of view would be wrong with a fully panopticized society in which "disciplinary norms . . . have become so thoroughly internalized" that they are not experienced as "coming from without"?[20] Fraser concludes that without normative appeals to ideals such as human dignity and symmetrical reciprocity, Foucault cannot distinguish between real and pseudo-autonomy – between autonomy and internalized

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

domination. In order to be able to identify what is problematic about a fully realized autonomous society, Foucault must offer us a "new paradigm of human freedom."[21]

Fraser believes that social criticism must involve distinguishing "better from worse regimes of social practices . . . identifying forms of domination . . . distinguishing fruitful from unfruitful, acceptable from unacceptable forms of resistance . . . suggesting not simply that change is possible but also what sort of change is desirable."[22] Yet this understanding of social criticism relies upon two assumptions that Foucault was challenging, namely, (1) that in order to be legitimate, critique must be based on a normative theory – that is, grounded in at least provisional universalizable rational and moral principles; and (2) that "real" autonomy amounts to submitting oneself to moral principles (such as dignity, reciprocity, and symmetry) necessary for securing and preserving freedom. In other words, achieving autonomy involves a commitment to democratic ideals of reciprocity and respect and to communicative and socialization processes designed to reproduce these core ideals. In effect, autonomy is linked in some sense to preserving social order – or at the very least to the preservation of a set of procedural norms believed to be necessary to ensure the perpetuation of democratic ideals.[23]

In later lectures and interviews Foucault offers a description of his project that clarifies his relationship to Enlightenment humanism and can be used to respond to Fraser's charges. Fraser fails to appreciate the "queerness" of Foucault's project – his effort, in his words, "to *open up* problems that are as *concrete* and *general* as possible, problems that approach politics from behind and cut across societies on the diagonal, problems that are at once constituents of our history and constituted by our history."[24] To approach politics "from behind" is to occupy an eccentric relationship to established political theories – to detach oneself from established political outlooks and identifications. Most important for present purposes is the particular form of problematizing he applies with respect to humanism. Rather than identify the Enlightenment with humanism, he places the Enlightenment in tension with, in a "set of complex relations with," humanism.[25] Foucault regards humanism as a varied set of themes and associated values that have emerged in Western societies since the seventeenth century. He claims, "what is called

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

humanism has been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics."[26] In another context he elaborates thus:

> What we call humanism has been used by Marxists, liberals, Nazis, Catholics. This does not mean that we have to get rid of human rights, but that we can't say that freedom or human rights has to be limited to certain frontiers. . . . What I am afraid of about humanism is that it presents a certain form of ethics as a universal model for any kind of freedom. I think that there are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future than we can imagine in humanism as it is dogmatically represented on every side of the political rainbow.[27]

Foucault makes clear here that the legacy of the Enlightenment he wanted to preserve was not "faithfulness to doctrinal elements," but rather critical inquiry into the limits of possibility in the present. He concludes, "this thematic [of humanism] can be opposed by the principle of a critique and a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy."[28]

Foucault situates his work within an alternative understanding of the Kantian tradition of critical philosophy out of which Fraser is operating – one that involves neither rejecting reason as intrinsically bound up with domination nor embracing the idea of the "progress of rationalization in general."[29] He regarded the idea of "rationalization in general," an idea he associated with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, as totalizing, preferring instead to address "specific rationalities" and thereby occupy a middle ground between liberal ideologies of progress on the one hand and nihilism on the other. Among the specific rationalities he challenged were normative understandings of what is necessary for critique to be legitimate: "Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is."[30]

In a compelling rational reconstruction of Foucault's work that closes the distance between Habermas and Foucault and renders him compatible with a revised feminist understanding of "critical theory," Amy Allen claims that, unlike Kant, Foucault's question was not "how to determine, through either transcendental or quasi-transcendental [i.e., Habermasian] argument, the legitimate limits

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

of reason [both moral and epistemological]," but rather

> how . . . do relations of knowledge and power [namely, those associated with the forms of humanism that emerge out of specific religious, scientific and political discourses and practices] both structure our experience of ourselves and of the world and at the same time provide resources for their overcoming.[31]

As Allen implies here, not only was Foucault interested in securing a place for another understanding of critique, but he was also operating with a different understanding of autonomy. Whereas for Kant autonomy required submission to the rational necessity of the categorical imperative, for Foucault it required an empirical inquiry into the historical limits of our self-understandings. His approach is Kantian in spirit, but not in form.[32] Foucault described it thus:

> It will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, thinking what we are, do or think. . . . [It] thereby seeks to give new impetus to . . . the undefined work of freedom.[33]

Inescapably situated within modernity, Foucault uses Kantian resources to push the idea of critique in a new direction – that of critiquing critique itself.

If autonomy is defined as our freedom to unearth what is contingent within what is represented as necessary, genealogy is the method for doing it.[34] Of course, genealogy is only part of the work of freedom. Once we grasp the contingency of the present modes of self-understanding, we confront the work of developing new cultural forms from materials available in our own culture. Foucault acknowledged our capacity to effect very specific changes through a practical attitude oriented toward testing the limits of the present. He described this attitude or ethos as that of a philosophical life "in which the critique of what we are is at the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them."[35] The goal of such experimental practices is to develop alternative ways of thinking and being that empower us without intensifying pernicious disciplinary power relations and the totalizing government of individualization that it serves. Insofar as the disciplines have subjugated

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

us by attaching us to specific identities, to specific notions of individuality, our autonomy is bound up with questionable mechanisms of social control. At the same time, if power is something exercised, and if we are capable of critical reflection upon the historical conditions that constitute us, we are also capable of distancing ourselves from ourselves, taking up and using the discourses, techniques, and practices that have constituted us in new ways. As Amy Allen puts it, "These techniques or practices are neither liberatory nor oppressive in themselves; what matters is how they are used, to what ends, in what sorts of circumstances."[36] In the final analysis, for Foucault, autonomy is not something secured within particular institutions and practices (*pace* Fraser), but rather something exercised in the form of ethical practices of self-making, that is, practices of freedom.

QUEERING FEMINISM, QUEERING FOUCAULT: FOUCAULT AND JUDITH BUTLER

Whereas feminist critical theorists have focused on Foucault's analytics of power and his critique of humanism and found them either normatively confused or limited, Judith Butler has found them richly suggestive for her efforts to offer an account of the normative and regulatory production of gender identity and the exclusionary effects of feminist humanisms that appeal to a "feminist subject" or to an essentializing category "women" to ground their theories and politics.[37]

Butler's accounts of gender as an effect of discourses and regulatory norms take as their starting point Foucault's claim in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I* that biopower produces individuals – individuals who understand themselves as subjects of a sexuality. An effect of the "deployment" of sexuality, the category of 'sex' is an historical construct that has provided a target and anchorage point for biopower – a fictional and causal unity imposed on a myriad of elements.[38] Modern individuals regard themselves as sexual subjects – as beings in whom desire, its objects, gender identities, sexual acts, sexual identities, pleasures, perversions, and so forth, are grounded in their "sex." The ideas that sex emerges from bodies, that one's sexuality is causally related to one's "sex," and that sexual energies must be constrained and channeled to ensure that they move along

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

a normal path are at the root of the repressive hypothesis that legitimates constraints on sexuality, but also covers up the productive dimension of the deployment of sexuality itself. Thus in her early work Butler highlighted the subversive quality of practices that expose the fictive aspect of sex – practices such as drag that can reveal the artificial and performative dimensions of gender.

Butler explicitly "queers" Foucault's analysis when she adds that although Foucault "does not quite claim it, the science of reproduction produces intelligible 'sex' by imposing a compulsory heterosexuality on the description of bodies" (67). Furthermore, drawing implicitly on Foucault's skepticism about the idea of a "true sex" in his introduction to the memoirs of the hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin, she makes the even stronger claim that "to qualify as legitimately human, one must be coherently sexed. The incoherence of sex is precisely what marks off the abject and the dehumanized from the recognizably human" (67). Yet Butler implies that his insights about the production of sexed humans is inadequate because it provides no account of the erasure or repression of "femininity" within androcentric economies of sexuality. She states, "If the coherent subject is always sexed as masculine, then it is constructed through the abjection and erasure of the feminine." Here she appeals to Luce Irigaray's claim that what we regard as "feminine" is a product a reflection or projection of the masculine – that the possibility of a femininity that represents something truly other to the masculine has not been realized. Foucault's analysis of the regulatory and normative production of sexed identities fails to recognize that "the feminine is precisely what is erased and excluded in order for intelligible identities to be in place" (68). Indeed, insofar as she supplements Foucault with a Derridean logic of identity and difference, Butler operates with an understanding of identity formation as inherently exclusionary.

Not that the goal of feminist politics is to liberate this foreclosed femininity. This, Butler recognizes, would be to fall into the trap of taking the idea of a true sex seriously, to redeploy the repressive hypothesis, and to reproduce the very "subjection" that both she and Foucault want to resist. In other words, attempts to enhance freedom that rest on demanding the right to our gendered or sexual identities are limited insofar as they remain caught within the regime of sexuality that has produced them. Thus, for example, Butler has

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

argued for feminist politics without a feminist subject. What is problematic about identity-based politics is their tendency to appeal to a prediscursive "I," to a stable identity, as their ground and reference point. They assume, as Butler puts it: "that an identity must first be in place in order for political interests to be elaborated and, subsequently, political action to be take" (*GT*, 142). Such a politics "presumes, fixes and constrains the very 'subjects' that it hopes to represent and liberate" (*GT*, 148). Here she echoes Foucault in seeking a form of politics and critique focused on unsettling identities insofar as they attach us to an oppressive regime of power/knowledge. She concludes, "Ontology is, thus not a foundation, but a normative injunction that operates insidiously by installing itself into political discourse as its necessary ground" (*GT*, 148). Accordingly, one of the aims of feminist politics must be to preserve the instability of its subjects by not preempting struggles about the very "subject" of feminism itself.

Butler is operating with a paradigm of subjectivity as a process of signification within a open system of discursive possibilities as well as an effect of that process. It is a regulated, but not determined, set of practices that constrain by enabling much in the same way that Foucault's productive power represses through production. At this point the question arises: How can individuals resist or alter a form of power that grips them at the level of their profoundly felt senses of self? How, Butler asks in a recent work, *The Psychic Life of Power*, do we explain the "double aspect of subjection" – the fact that as subjects we are both subordinated and agents of change?[39]

In her more recent work Butler provides a theory of subjection to account for our profound attachment to normative gender identifications as well as the possibilities for resisting them. Here she not only departs from Foucault, but she also argues that in order to explain not only our attachments to subjection, but also our capacity to detach ourselves from normative self-understandings and practices, he needs an explanation of the formation of the psyche – one that he in fact presupposes but fails to articulate.[40]

Butler situates herself "between Freud and Foucault." The subject is formed, she claims, when the will, in the face of constraint or prohibition, turns back upon itself. This turning back of desire directed outward culminates in the emergence of a self-conscious subject – a subject that comes to desire this very circuit of reflexivity itself, and

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

thus a subject vulnerable to subjection. Our sense of self is premised on a desire to be – a desire that depends upon recognition of others upon whom we depend for our survival. The terms of that recognition are not of our own choosing. Even when being recognized involves attaching to norms and social categories that are subordinating, individuals must assume them in order to be recognized, in order to have any social existence at all. Thus our original dependency coupled with a desire for existence renders us vulnerable to subordinating forms of subjection.

Yet the norms that condition our possibilities do not determine us even though they do define us and render us socially intelligible (that is, as male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, black or white, and so on). If the individual's entry into processes of signification (the symbolic) represents the birth of its subjectivity – its capacity to refer to itself as an "I," then entering this domain of signification inevitably limits one's possibilities for intelligible subject positions established within the framework of prohibitions, normative constraints, and ideals provided by others. At the same time Butler appeals to Lacan to argue that our entry into the symbolic also produces the psyche – that is, produces part of the individual that exceeds the limitations required to become an intelligible, coherent subject. She states, "the psyche, which includes the unconscious, is very different from the subject: the psyche is precisely what exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand to inhabit a coherent identity, to become a coherent subject" (86). The psyche represents a part of the individual that must be foreclosed in order for the individual to be recognized, hence, intelligible. This foreclosure produces a "constitutive outside" of the socially intelligible – an "outside" that "will always be that which negatively defines the social."[41] Whereas according to Butler, Lacan's law of the father is invariable, hence inevitably phallogocentric, Butler regards this "outside" as historically variable, not given.[42] Hence foreclosure does not determine once and for all the boundaries of social intelligibility.[43]

In Butler's reading the "bodies and pleasures" that Foucault appeals to as a rallying point for attacks on the regime of sexuality are a stand-in for the psyche – for the queerness in each of us that is defined out of social existence as we become recognizable within it. The possibility of transforming these processes lies in our capacity to

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

detach from our identities, in mobilizations of desire that go beyond the norms that secure recognition. In a revision of an earlier reading of Foucault's "bodies" she concludes that Foucault "finds the seeds of transformation in the life of a passion which lives and thrives at the borders of recognizability, which still has the limited freedom of not being false or true, which establishes a critical distance on the terms which decide our being."[44] Ultimately Butler envisions a form of politics premised on the possibility that social subjects not only fail to repeat the norms that govern them, but that they can consciously rework the terms of their subjection even if doing so is to risk punitive sanctions or, even worse, "social death." She acknowledges that hers is not a particularly optimistic outlook. Still it avoids both the naive assumption that we can take our desires, our attachments, at face value and the overly pessimistic view that we are trapped by power from the start.

Butler's understanding of subjection is remarkably Foucaultian in spirit. Yet I think it is important that Foucault never felt compelled to provide a theory of subjection such as hers – a theory that rests on an account of a desiring subject and that presumes that the logic of identity is inherently exclusionary. On the one hand, Butler's account of desire rids psychoanalytic theory of many features that Foucault found pernicious insofar as it is thoroughly historical and de-Oedipalized. On the other hand, insofar as Butler's impulse is to install a queer subject of history, a permanent principle of destabilization at the heart of the subject, it goes further than Foucault ever went. Perhaps Foucault's reluctance to offer such a theory can be explained by his questionable assumption that psychoanalytic accounts based on the desiring subject inevitably lend themselves to normalization. After all, Butler's theory of desire does not locate the "truth" about individuals in any substantive sense. In any case Foucault did not feel compelled to "ground" the possibility of resistance in a queer theory of subjection. Instead he wrote genealogies designed to incite rebellions against pernicious disciplinary productions, to produce an experience of their costs, and to open the space for an alternative tradition of critique as well as a revised understanding of autonomy. Perhaps he did not think that all identities must come at a cost. Perhaps that is why he targeted specific identities and merely described the historical conditions of their emergence.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

CONCLUSION

Neither feminist critical theorists nor poststructuralist feminists have taken Foucault's toolkit metaphor seriously. The Habermasian feminists have assumed that Foucault was offering a theory of power and the humanist subject with emancipatory intent and, accordingly, judged it as failing to be what it was never intended to be in the first place. Feminist poststructuralists such as Butler find Foucault's descriptions of the regulatory and normative functions of the category of sex to be richly suggestive for addressing the production of gendered subjects, but ultimately regard Foucault as limited insofar as he fails to deliver a theory of subjection – an ontological account of the production of subjects capable of reworking the terms in which they are subjected. In drawing attention to the queerness of Foucault's project Butler corrects a deficiency found in much of the commentary on his work.

That homosexuality has regularly been associated with immorality, pathology and criminality – three areas profoundly relevant to the experiences of homosexuals that Foucault addressed in his work – suggests that his vantage point as homosexual could be the linchpin that links all of his genealogical writings. Despite the rhetorical excesses of *Discipline and Punish*, as genealogist Foucault was not rejecting modernity or identity *tout court*. He was inquiring instead into the historical limits of our understandings and experiences of madness, criminality, and sexuality because he believed the costs of self-constitution within these fields of experience were too high. For Foucault "homosexuality" represented an historic opportunity and eccentric standpoint in the social field from which particular problems might be illuminated and alternative forms of life and self-understanding might emerge. He describes homosexuality as a "historical occasion to reopen affective and relational virtualities, not so much through intrinsic qualities of the homosexual, but because the . . . diagonal lines he can lay out in the social fabric allow these virtualities to come to light."[45] Because of their eccentric position in relation to confining norms and practices associated with compulsory heterosexuality and the reproductive family unit, Foucault believed that homosexuals might be in a position to create new pleasures, forge new relationships, experiment with new ways of living. He urged gays and lesbians not to *be*, but rather to *become*

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

homosexual – to realize its potential for altering our sense of the range of amorous relations and pleasurable experiences that might be possible.

Ultimately, though, I have argued that what makes Foucault's work queer is not merely his social location as homosexual, but his eccentricity as a philosopher. If disciplinary and normalizing power relations both constrain and enable subject formation, and if some of these enabling constraints produce unnecessary suffering by attaching individuals to particular identities, then the need arises for a type of theory that is designed to enable personal transformation. This may require developing strategies for reworking the conditions in which we find ourselves. Foucault's nominalist theory of power and his adaptation of genealogy are tools designed with these ends in mind. Foucault was attempting to devise new tools for critique and change, to advance a view of theory as a heuristic device.[46] He does not explain to us how subjects are formed. And rather than explain how it is possible to resist particular forms of subjection, he merely offers tools for doing it.

NOTES

1 Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power and the Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in Luther Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 11.

2 Michel Foucault, in James Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Michel Foucault, Volume 3: Power* (New York: New Press, 2000): 241–242.

3 Michel Foucault (1974), "Prisons et asiles dans le mécanisme du pouvoir," in *Dits et écrits*, vol. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 523–524.

4 Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 84.

5 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Random House, 1967), 326.

6 For an approach to Foucault that emphasizes the relationship between reading Foucault's genealogies and personal transformation, see Ladelle McWhorter's *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

7 In a lecture given at Dartmouth College in 1980 Foucault described his genealogy of the subject as an inquiry into "the techniques and practices that have formed the Western concept of the subject, giving it its

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

characteristic split of truth and error, freedom and constraint." He continues, "I think that it is [in a genealogy of the subject] that we will find the real possibility of constructing a history of what we have done and, at the same time, a diagnosis of what we are. This would be a theoretical analysis which has, at the same time, a political dimension. By this word 'political dimension,' I mean an analysis that relates to what we are willing to accept in our world, to accept, to refuse, and to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances." See "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self," *Political Theory* (May 1993): 223, n. 1. Thanks to my colleague Steve Gerrard for suggesting the term "political therapy."

8 Fraser also uses Foucault insofar as she finds his empirical work on discipline useful for analyzing the subordination of women within the late-capitalist welfare state. See "A Genealogy of *Dependency:* Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State," *Signs* (Winter 1994): 303–336. In *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1999), Amy Allen claims to do exactly what Foucault recommends, namely, use what she finds helpful, modify it, and discard the rest. Yet in this work she assumes Fraser's critique of Foucault and emphasizes his limitations as a critical theorist. For a more nuanced account of Foucault's relationship to the Enlightenment critique, one that I share, see Allen's *The Politics of Ourselves: Power, Autonomy and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming). Yet Allen suggests that Foucault's emphasis on strategic relationships as opposed to intersubjective ones makes him less useful for feminisms oriented toward providing normative accounts of the conditions for non-subordinating relationships between individuals, whereas I believe that Foucault is most interested in advancing the idea of *philosophy* as a strategic enterprise. This orientation toward the use of philosophy as a critical strategy has no consequences one way or another for possible modes of relating between individuals.

9 In speaking of a "feminist" reception of Foucault's work I am referring to the reception by feminist social and political theorists. Foucault's work has had a significant impact on feminists working in a wide range of fields including education, nursing, mental health, sociology, criminology, and so forth that I do not mention here. See the following works for a range of responses to Foucault by social and political theorists: Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, eds., *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988); Caroline Ramazanoglu, ed., *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism* (London: Routledge, 1993);

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Susan Hekman, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); Karen Vintges and Dianna Taylor, eds., *Feminism After the Late Foucault* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, in press); Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Lois McNay, *Foucault & Feminism: Power, Gender, and the Self* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999); Ladelle McWhorter, *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997); Margaret A. McClaren, *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002). The following noteworthy essays do not appear in the anthologies listed above: Monique Plaza, "Our Damages Their Compensation – Rape: The 'Will Not to Know' of Michel Foucault," *Feminist Issues* (Summer 1981): 25–35; Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions," *Praxis International* 1 (October, 1981): 272–287; Nancy Fraser, "Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'?" *Ethics* 96 (October 1985): 165–184; Nancy Fraser, "Foucault's Body Language: A Posthumanist Political Rhetoric?" *New German Critique* 1:3 (Fall 1984): 127–154; Linda Alcoff, "Feminist Politics and Foucault: The Limits to a Collaboration," in Arlene Dallery and Charles Scott, eds., *Crises in Continental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 69–86; Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?," in Linda Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 157–175; Shannon Winnubst, "Exceeding Hegel and Lacan: Different Fields of Pleasure Within Foucault and Irigaray," *Hypatia* (Winter, 1999): 13–37; Shane Phelan, "Foucault and Feminism," *American Journal of Political Science* 34:2 (May 1990): 421–440; Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in Carole S. Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 267–319.

10 See especially Vance, *Pleasure and Danger*.

11 For example, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge University Press, 1990), cited in the text as *GT*; David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Toward a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Leo Bersani, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Tim Dean, *Beyond Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

Press, 2000). Addressing the significance and importance of Foucault to queer theory is beyond the scope of this essay. Nonetheless, insofar as queer theory has emerged as a sort of anti-identity politics that attempts to resist the normalizing regime of sexuality and its hierarchical opposition between hetero- and homosexual, it parallels the emergence of skepticism about binary gender categories within feminism and is relevant to the issues raised here. Moreover, insofar as Foucault provided tools for resisting normalization, his work might also be regarded as queer in the most general sense of the term. Finally, Foucault's reluctance to come out as homosexual was certainly partly due to his belief that the identity "homosexual" was bound up with the regime of sexuality that he described in his three volumes on the history of sexuality. Thus we might regard him as queer in this sense as well.

12 For some examples of feminist work related to Foucault's critique of disciplinary and regulatory power that have influenced my work here see Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Susan Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology and the Crystallization of Culture," in Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, eds., *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 87–117; Jana Sawicki, "Disciplining Mothers: Feminism and the New Reproductive Technologies," in *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body* (New York: Routledge Press, 1991) 67–94; Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex"; and Nancy Fraser, "A Genealogy of *Dependency*."

13 Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 5.

14 See Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 63–82.

15 See David Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004) for a compelling account of the possibility of critique without normative foundations.

16 See Linda Nicholson, ed., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

17 Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power," in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 27.

18 Allen, *Power of Feminist Theory*, chapters 1 and 2.

19 Fraser, "Foucault: A 'Young Conservative?," 37.

20 Ibid., 49.

21 Ibid., 50.

22 Ibid., 43.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

23 See Amanda Anderson's "Debatable Peformances: Restaging Contentious Feminisms," *Social Text* 54 (Spring 1998): 1–24, for a related comparative analysis of the concept of autonomy in the works of critical theorist Seyla Benhabib and poststructuralist feminist theorist Judith Butler.
24 Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," in Paul Rabinow, ed. *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 377.
25 Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 45.
26 Ibid., 44.
27 Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self," 15.
28 Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," 44.
29 Foucault "Afterword: The Subject and Power," 210.
30 In a response to recent work by Nancy Fraser in which she offers a "rereading" of Foucault as providing limited resources for addressing the empirical realities of global capitalism, Thomas Lemke challenges her earlier critique of Foucault's lack of normative grounding by pointing out that "for Foucault norms themselves are part of the historical field under investigation and not outside it; they are less the measure or starting point than an object of analysis and the outcome of a conflict. Norms are not something laid out in advance of political struggles that guide and govern them; rather, they are constituted in struggles, are a part of them and a stake in them." See Thomas Lemke, "Comments on Nancy Fraser: Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization," *Constellations* 10:2 (2003): 174.
31 Amy Allen, "The Impurity of Practical Reason: Power and Autonomy in Foucault," in *The Politics of Ourselves: Power, Autonomy and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming), 32.
32 Ian Hacking has suggested that those who criticize Foucault for not grounding his critique "might start their critique with Kant." Hacking points out that Foucault follows Kant insofar as both regard ethics as something we impose upon ourselves and rely on a concept of freedom that is "necessarily outside the province of knowledge." He concludes that for both thinkers "there is nothing to be said about our freedom, except that within its space we construct our ethics and our lives." See "Self-Improvement," in David Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (London: Blackwell, 1986), 238. Allen refers to this essay as well.
33 Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?," 46.
34 In fairness to Fraser it is important to point out that in his Dartmouth lectures Foucault admits that in the middle writings he was

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

more focused on the means through which "subjects become objects of knowledge" and thereby "objects of domination." His rhetoric was more holistic as well. Yet in the course of researching Greco-Roman ethics he identified an array of techniques through which individuals have related to and transformed themselves throughout Western history – aspects of which continue in the present. Thus, he ultimately concluded that the genealogy of the subject (of subject formation as well as "subjection") must account for the interaction between technologies of domination and technologies of the self – between, in his words, the "subtle integration of coercion technologies and self-technologies" ("About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self," 204). In *The Politics of Ourselves* Amy Allen does an excellent job of an analyzing why this shift of emphasis is not tantamount to a disavowal of his earlier work on the death of the subject. When Foucault dispenses with the subject, he is speaking of the a priori subject. He countenances the existence of thinking, acting, willing subjects. He describes subjects as both made within relations of subjugation and yet capable of using those very same relations to turn them against themselves. As Allen puts it, Foucault wants to "reconceptualize, not eradicate subjectivity" ("Impurity of Practical Reason," 21).

35 Ibid., 50. I make this point in much the same way in "Foucault's Pleasures: On Desexualizing Queer Politics," in Karen Vintges and Dianna Taylor, eds., *Feminism and the Final Foucault* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

36 Allen, "Impurity of Practical Reason," 26.

37 Butler's relationship to Foucault's work has undergone significant changes over the years. I have highlighted only specific moments of this engagement here.

38 The word "sex" connotes both having a sex, that is, male or female, and being a sexual being.

39 Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 12.

40 She claims that Foucault "invests the body with a psychic meaning that he cannot elaborate within the terms that he uses." See *The Psychic Life of Power*, 95. Of course Foucault avoids the psychoanalytic terms she deems necessary because he regards a certain understanding of psychoanalysis as having played a central role in the regime of sexuality that he is exposing. Foucault's ambivalence toward psychoanalysis has only begun to be analyzed. For another effort to read him as compatible with Lacanian psychoanalytic insights see Tim Dean, *Beyond Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

41 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 206–207.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

42 This reading of Lacan is debatable. See especially Tim Dean, *Beyond Sexuality*.

43 In another context Butler elaborates: "Which signifiers qualify to unravel the subject and to threaten psychosis remains unfixed in this analysis, suggesting that what constitutes the domain of what the subject can never speak, know, and still remain a subject remains variable, that is, remains a domain variably structured by contingent relations of power." Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 204.

44 Judith Butler, "Bodies and power, revisited," *Radical Philosophy* 114 (July–August 2002): 19.

45 Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Michel Foucault, Volume. 1: Ethics*: *Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 138.

46 Thanks to Amelie Rorty for her helpful insights about the connection between Foucault's analysis of power as productive constraint and his metatheoretical position.

Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006

INDEX

abominations, 125
action, 262–270
Acton, Lord, 36
Adorno, Theodor, 244, 255, 357, 375
aesthetics, 144, 235, 270–274, 337, 343, 357; of existence, 161–164, 202, 225
agents, 46, 109–112
agonism, 44, 162
Alcoff, Linda, 396
Aldrovandi, U., 7, 82
alienation, 270–274, 297
alignments, 109–120
Allen, Amy, 384–393, 395, 396, 398, 399
Allo, Eliane, 147
Althusser, Lord, 37
Amoit, Michel, 94
analysis of wealth, 9
analytic of finitude, 176–204
Anderson, Amanda, 398
Andrews, Bruce, 375
Angel, Ernest, 308
animality, 55, 60–62, 69
Ansell-Pearson, Keith, 238
anthropological sleep, 93, 176, 199
anthropology, 93, 156, 185, 217, 338; counter-, 46; existential, 297
Anzieu, Didier, 314, 315
Apel, Karl-Otto, 256
a priori, physiological, 90; biological, 90; historical, 40, 176, 179, 188, 200
archaeology, 2, 5, 6–7, 9–10, 13, 14–15, 29–34, 35–39, 41, 45, 76–93, 176, 197, 202, 245, 300, 305–308, 331, 339; of psychoanalysis, 149
The Archaeology of Knowledge, 2, 4–5, 7, 13, 16–19, 23, 30, 32, 37, 96, 218
Archilochus, 25
archive, 30, 40
Arendt, Hannah, 263, 345
Ariosto, 75
Aristotle, 8, 44, 149
Armstrong, A. H., 147
Armstrong, Timothy, 26
art, 21, 24, 222, 225, 272, 348–350, 351–355, 373
Artaud, Antonin, 21, 321, 349, 360, 369, 373
artist, 23, 139
ascetics, 123–143, 144, 152, 189, 258, 324
Ashmore, Robert B., 170
askésis, 190; homosexual, 139, 144, 145
asylums, 97, 151, 323
ataraxia, 138
athlete, 208
atopos, 137
Attridge, Derek, 47
Augustine, St., 164, 208
autarkeia, 138
authenticity, 161, 218, 225
authorship, 1, 4
autobiography, 135
autonomy, 331, 384–388

Bachelard, Gaston, 33, 92, 303
Balzac, Honore de, 367
Barbadette, Gilles, 308
Barbin, Herculine, 24, 154, 164, 335, 361, 389
Barraqué, Jean-Paul, 317
Bartky, Sandra, 383, 397
Basil the Great, St., 168

Bataille, George, 22, 160, 213–215, 224, 228, 238, 281, 301, 340, 349, 361, 362, 363–367, 376
Baudelaire, Charles, 130, 350–353, 366, 374
Bauer, C., 173
Bauzée, Nicolas, 82
Beaudoin, Tom, 165
Beaufret, Jean, 221
Beckett, Samuel, 367
Beeghly, Erin, 237
Benhabib, Seyla, 276, 282, 398
Benjamin, Andrew, 345
Benjamin, Walter, 352, 374
Bennington, Geoff, 47
Bentham, Jeremy, 37, 42, 243
Berlin, Isaiah 2, 25
Bernauer, James, 172, 173, 209, 277, 278
Bernstein, Charles, 375
Bernstein, Richard J., 47
Bersani, Leo, 374, 396
Bethlem, 55, 59–60, 65
Bicêtre, 60, 72, 319
Bichat, F., 78
Binswanger, Ludwig, 30, 70, 150, 286–290, 293, 295; *Dream and Existence*, 70, 73, 217–218, 295, 302, 338
biography, 135
biology, 9, 34, 76, 82–85, 89
Bion, 341
biopolitics, 125, 154
bio-power, 202, 247, 332, 381–383, 388
The Birth of the Clinic, 2, 3, 4, 9, 13, 14, 21, 23, 32, 33, 42, 157
Blancot, Maurice, 160, 172, 213–214, 224, 228, 238, 301, 340, 349, 357, 362, 366–368, 370, 374, 376
body, 35–38, 97–98, 103, 153, 187, 269, 281, 294, 295, 334–338, 346, 391, 399
Bohman, J., 280
Boldt, Leslie Anne, 376
Bopp, F., 89
Borch-Jacobson, Mikkel, 345
Bordo, Susan, 397
Borges, J., 75
Boss, Medard, 287
Bossuet, J., 57, 65
botany, 88
Bouchard, Donald, 25, 27, 237, 274
Boulez, Pierre, 349
Bourdaloue, 65
Bourdieu, Pierre, 280
Bourgeoisie, 232, 332; family, 58; morality of, 57, 69
Brandom, Robert, 116–119, 121
Brault, Pascale-Anne, 339
Breen, Dana, 336, 347
Brentari, Diane, 148
Brick, Douglas, 345
Bridewell, 55
Brochier, J.-J., 72
Brulard, Henri, 75
Buffon, 82–83, 88
Bukharin, Nikolai, 167
Burke, Edmund, 242
Butler, Judith, 268, 281, 380–381, 388–393, 396, 398
Bynum, W. F., 71

Callois, Roger, 376
Calvin, John, 57, 65
Canguilhem, Georges, 7–9, 12–13, 14, 32, 212–215, 294, 301–304, 305, 310
Caputo, John, 26, 165, 173
care of the self, 165, 178, 187, 191–195, 258, 269, 272, 343
The Care of the Self, 2, 3, 14, 125, 128
Carr, David, 48, 308
Carrette, Jeremy, 164, 173
Carroll, Lewis, 375
Cartesianism, 93, 191–196, 197–200, 201, 252
Cascaito, James, 275
Cassian, 192
Cassirer, Ernst, 85
Castel, Robert, 70
category, Kantian, 34; moral, 57
Cavaillès, Jean, 91, 303
Cavell, Stanley, 139, 144–148
Cervantes, 74–75
Charcot, Jean-Martine, 319
Christianity, 125, 142, 149, 155–160, 165–169, 173, 191–196; Eastern, 166–169
Cicero, 136
Classical age, 11–12, 15, 17, 18, 33, 42, 52–56, 63–69, 80, 89
Clauswitz, 19

clinics, 97
cogito, 74–93, 194, 305, 361
colonialism, 87
communication, 252–257, 259
communicative action, 241, 260–262, 271, 278, 279
communicative reason, 360
Comte, Auguste, 74, 90
Conant, James, 147, 148
concepts, 7, 82, 96
Condorcet, Marquis de, 90
confession, 99, 100, 135, 153, 193, 196, 333–334; confessional practices, 166–169
confinement of the mad, 26, 52–62, 63, 319
connaissance, 113, 118, 219
consciousness, 231, 245
constraint, 384
Cook, Bradford, 94
creativity, 161
criminals, 38; criminality, 393
criminology, 33, 119
critical theory, 384–388
critique, 250, 261, 266–270, 277, 323, 339, 379–381, 386, 398; ideology critique, 269, 270–274
culture, 79, 216
Cuvier, G., 7, 8–9, 82–85, 89
Cynics, 39, 132, 281

daimón, 135–139, 146
Dallery, Arlene, 396
dandyism, 144
Darwin, Charles, 82–85, 88
Darwinism, 8; social Darwinism, 150
Daudin, Henri, 83–85
Dauenhauer, 47
Davidson, Arnold I., 143, 277
Davidson, Donald, 118, 121, 280
Dean, Tim, 396, 399
death, 23, 27, 140, 202, 292–301, 317, 350, 359, 363–368, 376; Foucault's death, 211; of man, 160–164, 245; social death, 392
de Jussieu, Antoine-Laurent, 82
Deleuze, Gilles, 163, 173, 224, 226, 231, 237, 312, 381
delinquency, 126
Demetrius, 203, 208
democracy, 244, 261, 272, 385
Descartes, R., 7, 8, 64–65, 74, 78, 80, 157, 188, 190, 197–199, 223, 324, 327
desire, 248, 390
Dewey, J., 1
Dews, Peter, 337, 347
Derrida, Jacques, 1, 180, 205, 312, 322, 324, 327, 339, 344, 367, 381
dialectics, 43, 77, 92, 252; of emancipation, 36, 44; Hegelian-Marxist, 111
dialecticians, 29
Diamond, Irene, 395
Diethe, Carol, 238
discipline, 37, 97–102, 246, 250; disciplinary mechanisms, 110; disciplinary power, 381–383; disciplinary power relations, 105, 387
Discipline and Punish 1, 2, 13, 14, 20, 23, 37, 51, 95, 97–102, 113, 123, 159–160, 163, 164, 188, 224, 233, 245, 361, 382, 393
disciplines, 4–5, 25, 51, 68, 86, 91, 96–102, 119, 188
discourse, 30–31, 38, 45, 51, 78, 89, 95, 97, 177, 190–191, 193, 202, 231, 255, 266, 278, 358–361, 388
discursive formations, 96–97
discursive practices, 36, 38
disease, 97
displacement, 37, 78
documentation, 109
domination, 232, 263, 264
Dowbiggin, Ian, 66
dreams, 150, 214–215, 218, 289–292, 338
Dreyfus, Hubert, 2–3, 25, 120, 206, 210, 216, 235, 239, 274, 280, 282, 308, 340, 342, 344, 397
Duchamp, Marcel, 349
Dumézil, Georges, 75–76, 124, 141–142, 147, 317

economics, 9, 34, 85, 89
ego, 135, 206, 286
egoism, 141
Einstein, Albert, 88
Elden, Stuart, 219
Ellenberger, Henri F., 308
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 139

empirico-transcendental doublet, 186, 198–199, 200, 249–250, 254, 304–306
Engler, 88
Enlightenment, 160, 166, 240, 259, 382
Enlightenment reason, 34
epic, 135
Epictetus, 138, 147
Epicureanism, 129, 132–133
episteme, 3, 9, 32–34, 44, 50, 79–93, 181, 245; Renaissance episteme, 176
epistemology, 5, 6, 92, 106, 120, 188, 196, 197–200, 201–204
epistemological breaks, 41
epoch, 31–34
Eribon, Didier, 214, 221, 236, 299, 308, 315–317, 338, 340
espagnolisme, 75
essentialism, Platonic, 34
ethics, 2, 6, 123–143, 145, 149–169, 201–204, 216, 350, 352–353; Christian ethos, 258; deontological ethics, 282; ethical substance, 152, 258; *ethos*, 257; virtue ethics, 282
ethnology, 87
event, 29, 30, 34, 40–41, 43, 44, 45, 56, 67, 78, 82, 266
evolution, 8–9, 82–85
Ewald, Francois, 38, 47
exagoreusis, 166
examination of conscience, 154
existentialism, 77, 149, 213
exomologesis, 166
experience, 38–39, 66, 74, 86, 119, 286, 301, 324, 349, 360, 361–368, 376

family, 155
fascism, 163
Faubion, James D., 310, 394
feminism, 379
Ferenczi, 341
Fichte, J., 181, 185, 206, 247
fiction, 268
Fine, Arthur, 117, 121
Flaubert, G., 21, 27
flesh, 153
Flynn, Thomas, 48, 165, 173, 209, 281
Folie et de raison, 360
formal mathematics, 86
Forrester, John, 339, 346
Frankfurt School, 243, 250, 275, 386
Fraser, Nancy, 120, 252, 276, 277, 281, 384–388, 395, 396, 397, 398
freedom, 151, 291–292, 350, 369–371, 384–388, 398
Free-thinkers, 57
French Revolution, 32
Fresnel, 88
Freud, Sigmund, 37, 156, 159, 163, 214, 218, 243, 289, 290, 294–295, 312–314, 322–323, 327, 330, 331–338, 341, 390
Friedman, Susan, 373

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 264–270, 279, 280
Galen, 7
Galileo, 8, 88, 287
Gall, F. J., 90
gaols, 55
Gauchet, Marcel, 328, 345
genealogy, 2, 6–7, 12–13, 14–15, 26, 29–30, 31, 34–39, 42, 107, 115, 151–154, 156, 163, 176, 202, 224–235, 238, 257–262, 266, 267, 277, 302, 305–308, 314, 341, 381, 387, 393–394, 399
geology, 30, 77
German idealism, 247
Gerrard, Steve, 395
Guess, Raymond, 342
Gillian, Garth, 277
Gilligan, C., 282
Glucksmann, Andre, 26
God, 136, 160, 245, 249, 348, 364
Goldhammer, Arthur, 94
Goldstein, James, 275
Goldstein, Jan, 26, 49–51, 67–68, 69, 70, 148
Golffing, F., 275
Gordon, Colin, 25, 51, 69, 71, 72, 171, 237, 274, 394
governance, 264
governmentality, 126–127, 259
Goya, F., 360
grammar, 5, 9, 76, 82, 91, 355
Green, André, 326, 345
grid, 85–86
Groethuysen, Bernard, 136
Grubrich-Simitis, Ilse, 339
Guattari, Felix, 163, 173, 312

Gutman, Huck, 311, 394
Gutting, Anastasia, 28
Gutting, Gary, 26, 48, 73, 120, 310, 342
Guyénot, Emile, 82
Guys, Constantin, 351

Habermas, Jürgen, 36, 44, 120, 149, 170, 240, 360, 373, 376, 386
Häberlin, Paul, 237
Hacking, Ian, 50, 71, 101, 120, 121, 150, 170, 344, 369, 378, 398
Hadot, Pierre, 124, 128–134, 136–139, 143–148
Halperin, David, 23, 27, 148, 396
Hamelin, Paul, 217
Han, Béatrice, 205, 219, 221, 237
Hanson, Susan, 377
Haraway, Donna, 122
Harding, Jeremy, 308
Hartsock, Nancy, 122, 396
Hazard, Paul, 85
Hegel, G. W. F., 1, 73, 182, 185, 199, 201, 206, 211, 214, 221, 223, 242, 247, 301, 345, 352, 361, 376
Heidegger, Martin, 1, 12, 17, 18, 199, 210–235, 252, 280, 284, 287–288, 292, 363, 373, 376
Hekman, Susan, 396
Heller, Thomas C., 378
Hempel, C. G., 7
The Hermeneutic of the Subject, 197
hermeneutics, 2, 17, 35, 41; of desire, 156, 177, 188, 191–195, 197, 258, 279; of oneself, 153; of suspicion, 318
Hill, Kevin, 218
Histoire de la folie a l'âge classique, 49–69, 74, 78, 293, 299, 301
historian, 49–56, 63–69; of culture, 29; new, 6; philosophical, 2; traditional, 29
historical method, 6
historicism, 117
historicity, 218
history, 6, 25, 29–46, 77, 228, 252, 266, 268, 293, 294, 300, 302, 306; of concepts, 13, 14, 15; epochal conception of, 219, 221–223; of experience, 13, 14, 15; Foucault's histories, 6–16; historical analyses, 149; idealist approach to, 65–68; of knowledge, 212, 224; of madness, 11, 49–69; of morals, 226–234; postmodern, 34; post-structuralist, 43; of the present, 10, 14, 15, 45, 134, 145, 165; of punishment, 20; of rationality, 212–215, 222; of reason, 212, 224; of sexuality, 29, 152, 154–160, 214; social and political history, 26; of subjectivity, 176–204, 212–215, 224; of truth, 177, 237
history and philosophy of science, 6, 26
The History of Madness, 2, 3, 4, 7, 13, 14, 21, 23, 32
The History of Sexuality I, 2, 3, 14, 19–20, 21, 23, 38, 95, 99, 123, 125, 188, 225, 230–232, 257, 312, 317, 331, 361, 382
Hobbes, Thomas, 102, 112
Hofstadter, Albert, 373
Hölderlin, F., 321, 349, 360, 365
Hollingsdale, R. J., 310
Hölzl, M., 173
Homer, 135
homosexuality, 58, 100, 133–134, 144, 145, 165, 251, 315–317, 381, 393–394
Hong, Edna H., 374
Hong, Howard V., 374
Honneth, Axel, 278
Hópital Général, 59
Horkheimer, Max, 244, 255, 275
hospitals, 97
Hôtel de Dieu, 59
Howard, Richard, 69
Hoy, David, 71, 120, 143, 170, 274, 277, 279, 280, 397, 398
Hullot-Kentor, Robert, 375
humanism, 41, 77, 149, 221, 240, 275, 290, 331, 339, 343, 382, 384–388; anti-humanism, 240, 277, 384
human sciences, 95, 96, 151, 340
Hume, David, 93
Hurley, Robert, 70, 238, 274, 310
Husserl, Edmund, 91, 180, 181, 185–186, 199, 206, 218, 223, 286–288, 290, 292, 294, 305, 306
Hutton, Patrick, 72, 311, 394
Huygens, C., 80, 88

idealism, 73, 243
illness, 126
individual, 154–160, 382–383; history of, 135
individualism, 39
Ingram, David, 275, 280, 282
interpretation 1–6, 24, 35, 74, 79, 302; Foucault's self-interpretation, 4–5, 284
intensity, 22–24
Iranian Revolution, 152
Irigaray, Luce, 389
Isocrates, 169

Jay, Martin, 343
Jameson, Fredric, 276, 349, 372
Jean-Aubry, G., 349
Jesus of Nazareth, 169
Joas, Hans, 278
Johnston, John, 236, 308
Jordan, Mark, 165, 174
Joyce, James, 349
judicative, 31, 38

Kafka, F., 27, 359, 366, 367
Kahn, Douglas, 375
Kant, Immanuel, 1, 2, 7, 12, 17, 75, 85, 89–93, 116, 149, 150, 160, 177–179, 185, 188, 197–200, 221, 223, 241, 247, 248, 249, 259, 265, 266, 343, 357, 386–387, 398; Kantian philosophy, 89; Kant's *Anthropology*, 179–181
Kaufmann, J. Nicolas, 278
Kaufmann, Walter, 239, 283, 310
Keats, J., 353
Kelly, Michael, 120
Kharkhordin, Oleg, 174
Kierkegaard, Søren, 353
Kirchheimer, Otto, 275
Klee, P., 139
Klossowski, Pierre, 340, 362
knowledge, 6, 40, 42, 79, 95–120, 126, 165, 176–204, 231, 245, 248, 252, 303, 386–387; knowledge-power, 154–160, 237, 334
Koelln, Fritz C. A., 94
Kohlberg, Lawrence, 256, 282
Kouchmer, Bernard, 173
Koyré, Alexandre, 303
Kraft-Ebbing, Richard von, 333
Krapp, Philip, 93
Kristeva, Julia, 375
Kritzman, Lawrence, 25, 27
Kuhn, Thomas, 7

Lacoue-Labarthe, P., 206
Lacan, 12, 339, 341, 381, 391, 400
LaCapra, Dominick, 50, 70, 71, 321, 323, 343
Lagache, Daniel, 314, 316
Laing, Ronald, 237
Lamarck, J.-B., 7, 8–9
La Naissance de la clinique, 78
Lang, R. D., 329
language, 16–19, 30, 35, 45, 72, 76, 79, 84, 85, 86, 89, 97, 111, 126, 176, 181, 187, 221, 248, 294, 322, 348, 349, 351, 354, 355–357, 358–361, 362–368, 373, 375
languages, 34
Laplanche, Jean, 314, 364
Laqueur, Thomas, 346
L'Archéologie du savoir, 358
Lawrence, Frederick, 120, 274, 376
Lear, Jonathan, 345
Lecercle, Jean-Jacques, 375
Leibniz, G. W., 80
Lemke, Thomas, 398
Lenhardt, C., 275, 282
leprosy, 52
Les Mots et les choses, 74, 76, 81, 84, 92
Levinas, Emmanuel, 362, 366, 371, 376, 378
Levi-Strauss, 12, 76
L'herméneutique du sujet, 178–179
liberation, 4, 151, 297–298
life, 84, 89, 97, 126, 181
life sciences, 34
limit, 151
limit-experiences, 23–24, 27, 119, 224, 318, 321, 325, 340, 363, 369
Lingis, Alphonso, 376, 378
linguistics, 86, 89, 338, 355; structural linguistics, 112
Linnaeus, 82–83, 88
literature, 45, 66, 350, 355–357, 360, 377
Locke, John, 65, 249
Loewald, Hans, 339
logic, postmodern, 44

L'ordre du discours, 358
Lotringer, Sylvere, 236, 308
Lukes, Steven, 279
Lyotard, Jean-Francios, 44, 47, 280, 345

MacDonald, Michael, 49, 51, 71
Macey, David, 317, 340–342
madness, 4, 6, 15, 30, 49–69, 78, 97, 126, 293, 312, 316–323, 324–331, 338, 344, 350, 358, 360, 361, 364–368, 369, 373, 376, 393; in Christian thought, 61–62; classical experience of, 15, 56–62, 74, 319–323, 377; exhibition of the mad, 60–62; history of, 74; medical treatment of, 59–62; medicalization of, 32, 34
Madness and Civilization, 49, 224, 313, 317–323, 324, 329
Malabranche, 80, 81
Maladie Mentale et Personalité, 293
Malament, Barbara, 71
Mallarmé, S., 76, 350, 354–355, 356, 364, 374
Man, 40, 42, 75, 88, 93, 97, 176–181, 197, 200, 217, 246, 249–250, 304–306, 340, 382
Mandell, Charlotte, 377
Mandrou, Robert, 49
Manoni, Octave, 345
Marcus Aurelius, 138, 147, 192
Marcuse, Herbert, 281, 338
Marrou, Henri Irene, 44
Martin, Luther H., 236, 311, 394
Martinet, André, 76
Marx, 7, 37, 211, 214, 221, 242, 243, 250, 252
Marxism, 35–36, 106, 112, 149, 182, 200, 213, 271, 285, 293, 296–299, 300, 302, 306, 382
"The Masked Philosopher," 4
Massumi, Brian, 47
mathematics, 88, 91
maturity, 331
Mauriac, Claude, 173
Maxwell, 88
May, J. Lewis, 94
May, Rollo, 308
McCaffrey, Steve, 375
McCarthy, Thomas, 274, 282, 376
McClaren, Margaret A., 396
McGushin, Edward, 165
McNay, Lois, 396
McSweeney, John, 173
McWhorter, Ladelle, 219, 394, 396
Mead, 281
medicine, 3, 6, 14, 30, 32, 34, 44, 66; medical therapy, 64; clinical medicine, 119
The Meditations, 7, 195, 324
Megill, Alan, 25, 26, 51, 67–68, 69, 70
Mehlman, Jeffrey, 172, 376
melete thanatou, 140
Mendel, G., 88
mental illness, 53, 284, 288; mental patients, 251, 381
Mental Illness and Personality, 217–218, 299
Mental Illness and Psychology, 299
Merleau-Ponty, 207, 285, 286–287, 290, 292, 298, 303, 306
Michelet, 136
Midelfort, H. C. Eric, 50, 51–54, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72
Milchman, Alan, 217, 236
Miller, James, 23–24, 27–28, 338, 340–346
Miller, Jaques-Alain, 331, 333, 347
Miller, Peter, 394
Minkowski, Eugene, 287, 295
mode of subjection, 152
modernity, 1, 17, 18, 178, 181, 193, 198, 200–204, 216, 267; modernism, 348
Molière, 65
Momigliano, Arnaldo, 135, 145
monarchy, 102–108
Mondol, Henri, 375
Montaigne, M., 78
Moore-Rinvolucri, Mina, 47
Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 88
morality, 87, 126, 160–164, 244; of the family, 65; genealogy of, 224; moral codes, 258–262; of work, 55
myth, 20–24, 358

Nancy, J. L., 206
narrative, 44, 46, 268; evolutionary, 44; historical, 135; Marxist, 44
National Socialism, 149, 150
natural history, 9, 76
Needleman, Jacob, 309

Neo-Platonism, 201
Nerval, G. de, 321, 360
Newton, Isaac, 8, 88
Nicholson, Linda, 396, 397
Nicholson, Shierry Weber, 275, 282
Nietzsche, F., 21, 22, 32, 37, 39, 44, 76, 140, 147, 160, 199, 201, 204, 210–235, 242–244, 250, 252, 273–274, 275, 283, 294, 301–304, 305, 310, 321, 322, 340, 341, 348, 360, 379, 394
Nominalism, 29, 32, 35, 39–40, 44–46, 96, 100, 231
normalization, 151, 158, 277
normalizing judgment, 101–102
norms, 96–102, 225, 244, 256, 257, 388
Norris, Christopher, 343
Nussbaumer-Benz, U., 209
Nye, Robert, 70, 72

O'Brien, Patricia, 50, 71
objectification, 176–179, 187–191, 192–196, 202
O'Leary, Timothy, 175
oeconomy, 155
Oedipus, 156–160
Old Testament, 125, 142
The Order of Things, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11–12, 13, 14, 16–19, 22, 32, 34, 37, 42, 45, 157, 176–179, 182, 187, 197, 218, 245, 304, 331
origin, 249

panopticism, 100
Panopticon, 37, 42, 169
Paracelsus, 7
parrhésia, 141, 147, 169, 190, 192, 202–204, 268–270, 281
pastoral power, 155–160, 188
Pavlov, I., 298, 300
pedagogy, 119
penitentiary, 151
Person, Ethel, 343
personalism, 149
Pettegrove, James P., 94
Phelan, Shane, 396
phenomenology, 34, 73, 91, 206, 212, 215, 284–308, 363; existential, 30; phenomenological experience, 224; transcendental, 185–187
philology, 9, 34, 355
philosophical anthropology, 45
philosophy, 66, 79–93, 178, 187–196, 362; as a strategic enterprise, 395; as a way of life, 131, 142, 165
physics, 88, 92
Picasso, Pablo, 75
Pichois, Claude, 374
Pinel, 52, 54, 55, 72, 78, 319, 342
Pinguet, Maurice, 214, 222
Pinto, Henrique, 173
Plague, 318
Plato, 7, 188, 227
Platonists, 29; anti-Platonic, 39; Platonism, 129, 132–133
Plaza, Monique, 396
pleasure, 269, 281, 334–338, 391
Plotinus, 132, 138, 147
poetry, 86, 349, 350, 352–355, 360, 364–368, 375
politics, 34, 103–108, 150, 154–160, 293, 295, 296–299, 307, 390–392
Pomme, 34
Porter, Roy, 15, 49, 54–56, 63, 69, 70, 71
positivism, 32, 77, 91, 93, 181–184, 322
positivities, 179
Post-structuralism, 32
Pound, Ezra, 349
power, 4, 6, 19–20, 35–38, 40, 42, 44, 45, 70, 127, 165, 188, 216, 224–235, 241, 250, 259, 260, 262–270, 276, 278, 332–338, 344, 346, 380–381, 384–388, 400; disciplinary power, 394; normalizing power, 394; power/knowledge, 31, 95–120, 151–154; power-knowledge-subjectivity relations, 161–164; power relations, 29, 238, 330, 369; technology of power, 37, 332
practices, 31, 34, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, 53, 63, 216; interpretive practices, 118; non-discursive practices, 202; social practices, 237
Prado, C. G., 118–119, 121
praemeditatio malorum, 140
Prison, 6, 42, 70, 95, 123; prisoners, 251, 381
Problematizations, 29, 38–39, 43, 115, 234
Proust, Jacques, 48

Proust, 27, 349
psuché, 135, 313, 390–392; Homeric and Platonic conception of, 135
psychiatry, 3, 15, 21, 26, 49, 62, 66, 69, 70, 119, 218, 301, 307, 313–317, 320, 326
psychoanalysis, 5, 86, 291, 312–338, 381, 392
psychology, 30, 150, 247, 286, 313–317, 340
psychopathology, 314
Pugh, Anthony, 70
punishment, 4, 31, 35–38, 102, 245–246

Quinby, Lee, 395
Quine, W. V. O., 1, 280

Rabinow, Paul, 2–3, 25, 120, 170, 206, 210, 235, 238, 274, 278, 282, 344, 397, 400
Racine, J., 75
racism, 150
Racker, Heinrich, 330, 346
radical liberty, 150
Rajchman, John, 24, 28
Ramazanoglu, Caroline, 395
Rameau, J.-P., 321, 322
Ramus, P., 16
Rasmussen, D., 209, 278
rationality, 150, 303, 318
Raulet, Gerard, 308
Rawls, John, 123
reason, 41, 55, 66, 245, 246, 252–257, 312, 316, 344, 358, 360, 361, 386
reflex action, 8
religion, 150, 164–169, 173
Renaissance, 16–17, 176, 275, 355
representation, 42, 81, 89, 197
repressive hypothesis, 318, 335, 339, 344, 389
resistance, 111–112, 119, 156, 161, 201, 232, 240, 259, 267, 370
Ricardo, D., 7, 89
Richards, Mary Caroline, 373
Ricoeur, Paul, 48, 342
Riggins, Stephen, 27
rights, 242, 243, 244–257, 260, 272, 297
Rimbaud, A., 368
Riviere, Pierre, 24, 164, 361
Rogatianus, 132
Roger (patient of Foucault), 317
Rorty, Amélie, 400
Rorty, Richard, 107–108, 114–119, 121
Rosenberg, Alan, 217, 236
Ross, William, 94
Rothman, David, 66
Rouse, Joseph, 26, 121, 122
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 23, 155, 242–244, 249, 252
Roussel, Raymond, 22, 349, 360, 377
Rubin, Gayle, 396, 397
Rusche, Georg, 275
Russell, Bertrand, 1
Ryle, Gilbert, 294

Sade, Marquis de, 321, 360, 366, 367
sadism, moralizing, 320, 323
sage, 136–141, 146, 189, 358
Saint-Hilaire, Etienne Geoffroy, 88
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 36, 47, 161, 213, 221, 225, 285, 286–287, 290, 292, 298, 303, 306, 339, 343, 362, 367
Saussure, F. de, 356
savoir, 113, 118
Sawicki, Jana, 396, 397
Scanlon, John, 308
Schelling, F. W. J., 199, 206
schizophrenia, 297
Schlegel, Friedrich, 353
Schlier, H., 174
Schmid, Wilhelm, 175
Schopenhauer, A., 182, 185, 199, 201, 222
Schuld, Joyce, 164
Schurmann, Reiner, 172
Schweppenhäuser, Hermann, 374
science, 79–93, 106, 120, 149, 203, 208, 287–288, 302, 309; history of, 32; philosophy, 120; scientific paradigm, 204
Scott, Charles, 396
Scull, Andrew, 50, 70, 71
self, 6, 126–143, 156–164, 177–179, 201–204, 216, 225; Augustinian, 136; Cartesian, 136
Seneca, 128, 136–139, 140, 143, 146
Serla, Andre, 308

sexuality, 3, 6, 21, 35, 70, 95, 123, 165, 231–233, 257–262, 281, 331–338, 341, 346, 381–383, 388–394, 397; ancient, 7, 24; Christian experience of, 153–154; history of, 162–163; medicalization of, 158; modern, 20; science of, 332; sexual desire, 38–39; sexual ethics, 65; sexual offenses, 69; sexual repression, 4, 102, 151
Shepherd, Michael, 71
Sheridan, Alan, 46, 70, 238, 274, 308
Sheridan Smith, A. M., 94, 237
Sherman, D., 280
ship of fools, 71
Sidgwick, Peter, 50, 71
signs, 111
Simon, Julia, 275
Simon, Sherry, 237
Skeptics, 132
Sloterdijk, Peter, 281
Sluga, Hans, 237
Smith, Adam, 7
Smith, Colin, 308
social contract, 102, 112
social sciences, 3, 6, 14, 30, 45
sociology, 5, 247
Socrates, 132, 141–142, 178
sodomy, 58
Solidarity movement, 153, 170
Sollers, Philippe, 94
Solomon, R., 280
Sophists, 39
Sophocles, 156
Sosna, Morton, 378
sovereignty, 102–108, 115, 250; sovereign, 112, 245
Soviet Union, 166–169
spatialization, 29, 43; of reason, 41–42, 44; spatialized language, 45
Spengler, Oskar, 219
Spinoza, B., 65, 208
spiritual direction, 165
spiritual exercises, 129–134, 137–141, 165
spirituality, 178, 187–196, 200–204, 208
St. Luke's, 65
Stalinism, 149
Starobinski, Jean, 23
statements, 30, 41, 96, 113, 120
Stein, Gertrude, 349
Stendhal, 75
Stern, Daniel N., 343
Stoekl, Alan, 172, 376
Stoicism, 129, 132–133
Stone, Lawrence, 50, 71
strategies, 113, 264–270; anti-strategic, 153; strategic action, 241, 279; strategic gaming, 261; strategic relation, 238, 282, 395
Strauss, David Friedrich, 222
Strauss, Erwin, 287
structuralism, 2, 30, 32, 41, 47, 75, 92, 339, 355
styles, 142, 145, 160–164, 235; of existence, 127–134
subject, 4, 14, 38, 47, 90, 201–204, 224, 225, 228, 248, 252–257, 259, 276, 284, 286, 327, 364, 369–371, 381, 382–383, 390–394, 399; dissolution of, 245; history of, 126–127; moral subject, 126; subjectivation, 40, 45, 176–181, 187, 202; subjectivity, 29, 74, 141, 151–154, 155–160, 165, 205, 295, 349, 352–353; subjectness, 362
surveillance, 109, 232
Swain, Gladys, 328, 345
Swyer, Rupert, 274

taboos, 358
Taylor, Charles, 19–20, 26, 107–108, 114–119, 120, 149, 170
Taylor, Dianna, 396
technology, 399; of the body, 382; of the self, 260, 272; of self-control, 257
telos, 152
Tel Quel, 22
theology, 66, 194
theoretical shifts, 38
theories, 16–20, 79, 231
thought, 259
Tiedemann, Rolf, 374
time, 180, 218, 295, 366
totalization, 46
Tournefort, 82, 88
transcendental idealism, 181, 198
transformation, 37, 199
transgression, 22–24, 266–270, 273, 321, 323, 325, 329, 344
Trombadori, Duccio, 213, 236, 309

truth, 29, 45, 52, 95, 96, 102, 106–108, 158, 176–179, 184, 187–196, 197–200, 201–204, 231, 245, 257, 259, 276, 358; truth-claims, 115–120; truth games, 38–39, 205, 370
Tuke, S., 15, 52, 55
Turgot, A. R. J., 82
turn of the screw, 197

Übermensch, 139
unreason, 56–62, 66, 316–331, 338, 344, 361
The Use of Pleasure, 2, 3, 13, 14, 125

Vance, Carole S., 396
Van Gogh, Vincent, 21, 321
Van Unnik, W. C., 174
Velasquez, 34, 42, 75
Verdeaux, Jacquline, 315
Veridicative, 31, 32, 38
Vernant, Jean-Pierre, 124, 135–136, 145
Verón de Fortbonnais, 82
Veyne, Paul, 44, 47, 124, 127–129, 136, 139, 143, 146, 147, 214
Vintges, Karen, 396
virginity, in early Christianity, 125
Von Endre Kiss, 209

Wagner, Richard, 222
Waller, Margaret, 376
war, 110–112, 119
Wartenburg, Thomas, 108–112, 121
Waterston, G. C., 94
wealth, 97
Weber, Max, 219, 243
Weber, S., 275
Wellber, David E., 378
"What Is an Author," 4
White, Stephen, 173
Whitebook, Joel, 345
Williams, Bernard, 342
Williams, Forrest, 47, 70, 237, 309
Willis, Thomas, 8
will to truth, 358
Winnicott, D. W., 341
Winnubst, Shannon, 396
Wittgenstein, 1, 31, 139, 252, 280
Wrathall, Mark, 237
writing, 22, 27, 350, 357–361
Wolin, Richard, 172
work (labor), 4, 57, 65, 84, 89, 126, 181, 187, 246, 248

Xenophon, 7

Yount, M., 26

Zohn, Harry, 374
Zougrana, Jean, 219