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THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE PRESENT: MICHEL FOUCAULT AND THE RENEWAL OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for

a Ph. D. in Philosophy

in the Faculty of Arts and Science

University of Ottawa

by

Réal Robert Fillion

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I would like to express my respect and gratitude to both Professor Hilliard Aronovitch and to Professor Graeme Nicholson for the guidance and support that enabled me to complete this project.

ABSTRACT

The philosophy of history has insufficiently taken account of historical <u>practice</u> in its reflections on history.

Michel Foucault, whose work is the focus of this study, does offer a considered reflection on historical practice. One of the guiding threads of his work considered as a whole is his insistence on the need for a close analysis of historical practice in contrast and opposition to generalized views of the historical process. The distinction between history considered as practice and history considered as process will cut across the entire discussion of this thesis, and it is claimed that only an emphasis of practice over process will permit a renewal of the philosophy of history.

The thesis is divided into four Parts, each dealing with specific texts by Foucault, with the goal of drawing out the progressive development and refinement of his reflections on, and practice of, history. His work throughout is placed within the context of contemporary French historiography, the work of the new historians. The point of doing this is to remove Foucault's work from the rather frenzied and smoke-filled rooms of postmodern debate and give it a breath of fresh air.

The first Part will deal with early histories, specifically <u>Madness and Civilization</u> and <u>The Birth of the Clinic</u>. The focus of the discussion will be on how these works challenge what I will call the dominant 'picture' of history which finds its most vivid expression in Hegel's idea of the 'cunning of

reason'. In other words, those works attack the view of history as the progressive realization of reason and knowledge by viewing them from the perspective of that which such histories <u>exclude</u>.

The main focus of Foucault's critique is any view of the historical process as subject-centered and progressively unfolding. He challenges this by showing, especially in <u>The Order of Things</u>, that the history of knowledge displays less a progressive development than it does a discontinuous series of different epistemes that govern what it makes sense to say in any particular period. In <u>The Archaeology of Knowledge</u>, where he discusses his own archaeological approach to the past with specific reference to contemporary developments in historiography, Foucault insists on reading history in terms of the anonymous discursive formations that structure different periods as opposed to reading the whole course of history in terms of the progressive self-realization of subjectivity. This will be discussed in Part II.

In the third Part, we will discuss how Foucault moves away from the general view of history altogether and seeks to find its basis not in theory but in practice. In <u>Discipline and Punish</u>, he shows how 'things said' in the past and about the past are also indicative of 'things done' both in the past and in terms of their genealogical link to the present. Providing a genealogical link between the past and the present 'opens up' the present to its past and possible histories by showing how the

present is not _necessarily_ linked to its past developments, but is, in fact, _contingently_ related to its present structures. In _The History of Sexuality_, he tries to show how most progressive, developmental views of history have the ideological function of concealing that contingency and thereby help maintain the hold current structures of power have on the present.

The fourth and final Part deals with the latter two volumes of _The History of Sexuality_ and in effect shows how the reflection on historical practice enables us to respond to our current historical situation by producing a sense of _self-wariness_ of the kind of historical discourse which effectively conceals the openness and possibilities that the present has vis-a-vis both the future and, more specifically, its own past. For it is only by returning again and again to the past, to the contrasts and actualized possibilities it contains, that the present can be effectively renewed and kept open to its current formative structures and identities and the continued promise of their possible transgression.

Foucault's work provides us with a philosophy of history that recognizes its inescapable historical situatedness that is capable of instantiating the emancipatory direction that gives value to history in the first place; and he can do this more adequately than traditional philosophy of history because of his focus on the results of historical practice rather than on the hypothetical goal of a supposed historical process.

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PREFACE

The initial impetus behind this project is to continue and expand R. G. Collingwood's effort to bring about a rapprochement between philosophy and history. One of his most quoted phrases states that: 'The business of twentieth century philosophy is to reckon with twentieth century history.' By this he did not only mean that philosophy should relate to its own particular time. Collingwood was an historian as well as a philosopher and he sought a philosophy that could account for his practice as an historian. My choice of Michel Foucault stems from this predominant concern, for Foucault, too, was both an historian and a philosopher. Indeed, like Collingwood, Michel Foucault's conception and practice of philosophy is inseparable from his practice as an historian.

Although abruptly terminated by his untimely death, Foucault's work is strong enough to stand on its own, confronting and challenging anyone interested in the concepts it explores; that is, Foucault's thought is proving to be important enough to be of concern even to those not primarily interested in Foucault the thinker.

The literature interested in Foucault the thinker can be divided along three general lines. The first group characterizes Foucault as a postmodern, or poststructuralist, and therefore in an important sense passé, the reason being that postmodernism is seen as a reaction to modernity, a turning away from the

emancipatory project of modernity. This group seeks to defend modernity from what it perceives to be Foucault's attacks on it. Its major representatives are Jurgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and others like Peter Dews and J. G. Merquior[1] who take their inspiration from them.

The second group, composed principally of authors of book-length commentaries on Foucault, rather sees Foucault as a progressive thinker; that is, he is seen as expanding and extending and thereby improving our understanding of society, history and politics. This group will not emphasize Foucault's alleged postmodernism but will rather focus on the development of what they consider to be his archaeological and genealogical methodologies. In this group, one will find the works of Dreyfus and Rabinow, Mark Poster, Barry Smart, and Gary Gutting,[2] for example.

Yet a third group sees Foucault not so much as progressive as prophetic inasmuch as his work goes beyond the problems and

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[1] Cf. Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987; Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth" in his Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; Peter Dews, Logics of Disintegration. London: Verso, 1987; J. G. Merquior, Foucault. London: Fontana, 1985.

[2] Dreyfus, H. L. and P. Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983; Mark Poster, Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989; Barry Smart, Foucault, Marxism, and Critique. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983; Gary Gutting, Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

issues that preoccupy much of contemporary philosophy; indeed, they see him as articulating and formulating new problems and issues in a way that promises to renew philosophical reflection. We see such an appreciation of Foucault in writers such as Gilles Deleuze, James Bernauer, John Rajchman, and Paul Veyne.[3]

Because my interest in Foucault is a function of my interest in the problems of the philosophy of history, I feel Foucault's contribution falls somewhere between the second and the third group. It is progressive inasmuch as Foucault, qua historian, is cognizant and appreciative of innovative contemporary historiographical practices, and it is prophetic inasmuch as Foucault, qua philosopher, articulates and develops a philosophical understanding of the significance such historiographical developments should have on our thinking about history.

By placing Foucault's work in this way, I am setting myself squarely against those in the first group who seek to dismiss Foucault's allegedly postmodern views as ultimately incoherent. This dismissal is unfortunate because, in my view, the interesting debate is not between modernity and postmodernity but rather would be between, for example, Habermas' argument for a conception of modernity as self-grounding and what Foucault calls

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[3] Gilles Deleuze, Foucault. Paris: Minuit, 1986; James Bernauer, Michel Foucault's Force of Flight. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1990; John Rajchman, Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985; Paul Veyne, Comment on écrit l'histoire. Paris: Seuil, 1978.

a need for an ontlogy of actuality; or, to take another example, it would be interesting to discuss Blumenberg's emphasis on self-assertion[4] in connection with Foucault's preoccupation with the concern or care of the self. But of course such matters belong to future research.

As for the research at hand, something must be said about its relation to the philosophy of history. At least as it is practised in the English-speaking world, it has been traditionally been separated into two sides: analytical philosophy of history which is concerned primarily with the form of historical explanation; and speculative philosophy of history which is concerned with discerning the meaning of history as a whole. This distinction, however, is in an important sense bogus: first, it is virtually universally acknowledged that speculative claims about the process of history considered as a whole cannot be made good; second, even traditional 'speculative' philosophers of history like Kant and Hegel cannot properly be said to be attempting to give the meaning of the historical process considered as a whole. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that both were concerned with discerning the meaningfulness of history <u>as</u> a process as opposed to it merely being, in Kant's phrase, 'the idiotic course of things human', or in Hegel's somewhat more graphic term, a 'slaughterbench'. That is, their speculative efforts were directed towards understanding

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[4] Hans Blumenberg, <u>The Legitimacy of the Modern Age</u>. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985.

history as a coherent process and not merely a string of random, unrelated, senseless events. This is why, for both Kant and Hegel, history is <u>teleological</u>, in the sense given by Kant; history, as a process, is to be understood as guided by a discernible purposefulness, whose function is to provide the criteria needed to account for the significance of particular events. Both Kant and Hegel saw the full development of reason as the purpose of history. The difference between them is that for Kant the discernable purpose is merely a regulative idea, whereas Hegel claims it is descriptive of an actual historical process. Of course, the relation between Kant and Hegel, and their respective views on history, are much more complex and involved than this and I do not pretend to offer a full treatment in this thesis; however, enough is said about their treatment of the philosophy of history to make the following point: if the function of speculative philosophy of history is to establish the criteria by means of which the significance of particular events can be evaluated as contributing to the development of a larger process, then the almost universal rejection of speculative philosophy of history is in name only. Indeed, it would seem that stated this way the very analytic/speculative distinction collapses insofar as discussion of specifically <u>historical</u> explanation cannot avoid questions of significance and selection. However, and this is <u>my</u> point, such questions of significance and selection, as well as the character and form of historical explanation, depend on the kind of history you write.

It is this last point that, I am claiming, is obscured by the consistent (and shall we say along with Foucault-discursive) rejection of speculative claims about the historical process. The effective function of such rejection merely conceals the unquestioned acceptance of a view of history as a series of significant events that can be seen to lead up to and justify a particular understanding of the present. And also to justify a picture of history as an overall process composed essentially of events,

This picture of history has been and continues to be challenged, most notably by a group of French historians advocating 'la nouvelle histoire', a continuation and expansion of the kind of history promoted by the Annales journal founded by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre in 1929. While displaying a plurality of methodologies and interests, these historians all emphasize a view of historical research centered on the examination and articulation of problems as opposed to producing narrative accounts of the development of the past (or any particular segment of it). That is, rather than see history as a general process composed of complex causal chains leading to the present, the new historians tend to see history as a plurality of processes, whose interrelationships and antagonisms they seek to articulate and expose.

I argue in this thesis that Foucault's work should be read against this backdrop and that his well-known rejection of any

teleological, subject-centered conception of history is not only (and I argue not primarily) a theoretical challenge to a particular philosophical tradition (stemming from German Idealism), but, more importantly, it is a practical challenge to the predominant way in which philosophers and historians of ideas conceive and practice history. By doing this, Foucault is virtually alone amongst contemporary philosophers of history in _truly_ rejecting speculative philosophy of history in the sense that he does not undertake a theoretical justification of those criteria of significance which would render history intelligible; but, rather, like the new historians, he seeks to explore and articulate the actual operation of various criteria of significance and selection already hard at work in the variety of processes that configure both the past and the present. (Criteria especially evident in our prisons, asylums, and ambiguous attitudes towards sex.)

In addition to his participation in this exploration and articulation undertaken by the new historians, Foucault also goes beyond them in drawing out the philosophical implications of such a practice (and concomitant conception) of history. If criteria of significance, indeed of intelligibility itself, are historically constituted, and if history itself is best described in terms of a variety of different processes whose configurations depend on the questions they allow to be asked, then the picture of history as a process of ever-increasing rationality or increased self-consciousness cannot remain unquestionable or

unquestioned. Indeed, even the rather innocuous idea that more historical knowledge can only lead to better self-awareness becomes problematic when history becomes a question of the various knowledges that have been produced, the kinds of awareness they promote, right down to the very selves that are thereby constituted.

This is why I argue that Foucault shows us that history (as it is currently being practiced by the new historians) leads not to self-awareness, but rather to a kind of self-wariness, that is, a wariness of the constitutive function of various processes that configure both the past and the present, a wariness that can be seen as enabling a certain freedom.

Some freedom, one might object, mistakenly equating it with a merely negative, reactive freedom whereas all Foucault does is leave freedom, or the work of freedom, undefined.

By doing so, many seem to think that Foucault has shirked his duty as a philosopher; and yet this is true only on a particular conception of the philosopher, one of noble lineage to be sure, stretching all the way back to Plato. However, other conceptions also exist, including those that seek questions more than answers, or remain dissatisfied with those proferred, and rather than attempt to replace them, instead choose to expose them and their limitations. As Veyne once remarked, Foucault was a philosopher-warrior, that is one who fights, without stopping

to define right and wrong, relinquishing that comfort and reassurance. Through his histories and his questions he sought, like that other philosopher-warrior - a hoplite named Socartes- to sting us out of a complacency and confidence that often merely serves to conceal - despite ourselves and our best efforts - how little, and badly, we know.

INTRODUCTION - TAKING HISTORY SERIOUSLY

There appears to be a crisis in the philosophy of history. It seems to have been overtaken both in theory and in practice by that which it is supposed to comprehend, namely, history.

There is no doubt that our society is suffused with and dependent on a sense of history for its own self-understanding. This is evident when we consider the characterization of 'our' society as _modern_ society. To call our society 'modern' is, of course, to accept a particular reading of history that sees the 'modern' as arising out of, indeed as turning against and rejecting, a more traditional and static period of history. Modernity, as the period beginning at the end of the eighteenth century has come to be called, is usually characterized by the rise of scientific rationality, the decline of religious authority, the spread of democracy, and the scene of unprecedented economic growth. In a word, modernity is generally seen as the abandoning of a traditional, static, hierarchical society, and the beginning of a progressive, dynamic, egalitarian one.

While this is a good, uplifting story that packs a lot of punch and is firmly entrenched in our practices and language, it is, upon reflection, somewhat curious in that, as far as the understanding of history is concerned, it is strangely unhistorical. It is unhistorical in the sense that it places modernity, not so much as a period following another period, but as it were, at the _beginning_ of history insofar as only in the modern

world does society begin to move, to have a direction, to progress. Everything before that seems to serve as a negative image of what the world used to be like before modernity (read. history) began.

Such a view of history is of course mythical in the sense that it provides an explanatory or justificatory self-image whose strength and effectiveness depends on not being looked at too closely. The problem is, the philosophy of history - whose job it is to look at history as closely as possible - seems to remain under its spell. And because of this it is incapable of dealing adequately with the theoretical and practical challenges to this view. That is, at the level of theory, the philosophy of history has yet to provide an adequate response to the different general views of history that seek to displace the view of history discussed above because of what are deemed its obvious limitations - general views which themselves are not without considerable problems. And, at the practical level, contemporary philosophy of history seems completely blind to the momentous and far-reaching developments that have occurred in contemporary historiography, developments that should have considerable impact on any philosophical appreciation of history.

First, then, let us look at those general views that challenge the contemporary mythical view of history as the triumph of modernity. The critique of the smooth growth and development of scientific rationality[1] and, throughout most of the

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[1]One thinks, of course, of works like that of Max Horkeimer, The Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: Continuum, 1982)

twentieth century, the almost continual critique of the notion of progress[2], as well as the growing importance of anthropology and ecology, has somewhat loosened the hold that the 'myth' of modernity has on the contemporary imagination. However, these challenges to modernity's mythic reading of history themselves produce alternative mythic appropriations of history. Gianni Vattimo, in a penetrating little book, describes three such mythical challenges to what he calls the evolutionary metaphysical view of history.[3] He classifies these challenges into three ideal-types that he entitles: archaism, cultural relativism, and tempered irrationalism, or limited rationalism.[4]

The first challenge, the archaic one, is simply a reversal of the modern one. Rather than seeing modernity as the beginning of history with unlimited progress as its goal, it signals in fact the beginning of the end, as it were. Modernity means capitalistic exploitation and technological imperialism. Truth and authenticity are to be found in the cyclical harmony of primitive cultures and their poetic attachment to the world. This position is not so much a challenge as it is a simple rejection and uncritical replacement.

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and T.S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[2]For a recent discussion of the idea of progress, cf. Christopher Lasch, The True and Only Heaven (New York: A. Knopf, 1991).

[3]Gianni Vattimo, La société transparente, trad. J.-P. Pisetta (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1990), p.46ff.

[4]Ibid., p. 46.

Cultural relativism, the second challenge, is more formidable, if only because it is more widely endorsed, and given at least some reflective consideration. In a nutshell, it holds that any given period of history is defined and characterized by its own set of 'first principles' as it were, which themselves constitute what counts as true, good, right, for that particular culture and that there is no independent way of justifying (or rejecting) these principles. The problem with this view is that the claim about the cultural-dependence of first principles seems to get all its strength from its possible _independence_. That is, its force seems to stem from the idea that it applies to _all_ cultures. This problem is compounded by the difficulty of isolating any _particular_ culture in terms of _its own_ first principles and the interaction this particular culture has with others. In other words, cultural relativists fail to account for their own _situatedness_.

The third view of history, which Vattimo calls 'tempered irrationalism' or 'limited rationalism', is a view that recognizes the mythical character of the progressive or developmental view of history as the rise and triumph of scientific and technological rationality and counters it with, not a relativistic claim, but one which seeks to limit the relevance of that rationality by allowing other dimensions of human experience to be described and treated under non-objectivistic and scientific criteria. The criteria that is followed within

these other dimensions belong to narrative and can be found, at the individual level, in psychoanalysis, and at the social level, in historiography. Indeed, a good deal of contemporary philosophy of history has latched onto this third approach and has discussed at length the cognitive and social contribution of narrative understanding.[1] This has been seen as a particularly promising route for many philosophers of history because it allows them to reject universal history and still have some kind of basis or foundation on which to rest the plurality of models and views such a rejection entails.

Unfortunately, this latter approach, also, is not without its difficulties; for it assumes at the outset a distinction between the 'natural' and 'human' sciences which itself is a fundamental distinction of the original mythic reading of the rise and triumph of science. Certainly, it seeks to legitimate the non-scientific dimension, but it does so within the general framework of the evolutionary reading of the historical process as a whole. In addition, it is increasingly becoming evident that the distinction between the 'sciences of nature' and the 'sciences of spirit' is no longer sufficiently clear to bear the weight narrative theorists put on it.

This problem becomes even more acute when the narrative approach to the philosophy of history is contrasted with contemporary historiography, especially that developed by what has

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[1]Specifically in terms of the philosophy of history, cf. Paul Ricoeur, Temps et récit, 3 vol. (Paris: Seuil, 1983, 1984, 1985), and David Carr, Time, Narrative, and History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

come to be called the 'new history'. Often merely characterized as the importation of quantitative methods into history, it is, as we shall see, more widely and generally a fundamental critique of traditional historiography, whose primary mode of presentation was indeed narrative.

Thus, the three challenges to modernity's evolutionary reading of history are all faulty for essentially the same reason: they fail to give an adequate account of their own relation to history, partly because they continue to assume certain features of the view being rejected. Vattimo sums up the views and their difficulties in this way:

> Archaism wants to return to the origin and a mythical knowledge without facing up to the "intermediate" period that separates us from that initial moment; cultural relativism speaks of isolated and autonomous cultural universes but doesn't indicate the one to which the relativist theory itself belongs; limited rationalism does not possess an explicit theory concerning the possibility of making a real distinction between those domains restricted to mythical knowledge and those where scientific rationality is applicable. [1]

However, one might very well ask if the difficulties are not, in an important sense, unavoidable. It seems that all of these general views of history do not take sufficient account of their own historical situatedness or do not adequately contextualize their own thought about history; and yet, it seems, the very value of such a contextualization or situatedness depends on the view of history being questioned. In other words, the importance one places on one's historical context depends on the

[1] Ibid., pp. 56-57. My translation.

importance placed on history, and placing importance on history is a product of the evolutionary view of history that a full recognition of one's historical context renders implausible. Put in Vattimo"s terms: the universal unitary conception of history has led to a universalization of history which in effect has exploded the very possibility of a universal history.[1]

Thus, the philosophy of history is stuck between a rock and a hard place. By placing a value on history, philosophers of history seem to depend on a general view of history that history itself appears to have rendered obsolete. This is what I meant when, at the beginning of this introduction, I suggested that the philosophy of history was being overtaken by history. Here it is being overtaken in theory.

I also suggested, however, that the philosophy of history was being overtaken in practice. By this I mean that the philosophy of history has insufficiently taken account of historical practice in its reflections on history. I would like to suggest in this thesis that a considered reflection on the practice of history can and does lead us out of the impasse otherwise faced by the philosophy of history.

Michel Foucault, whose work is the focus of this study, does offer a considered reflection on historical practice. Indeed, one of the guiding threads of his work considered as a whole, from Madness and Civilization to The Care of the Self[2], is

[1] Vattimo, p. 57: "La réalisation de l'universalité de l'histoire a rendu la réalisation de l'histoire universelle impossible."

his insistence on the need for a close analysis of historical practice in contrast and opposition to generalized views of the historical process. The distinction between history considered as practice and history considered as process will cut across the entire discussion of this thesis, and it is claimed that only an emphasis of practice over process will permit a renewal of the philosophy of history.

This thesis will be divided into four Parts, each dealing with specific texts by Foucault, with the goal of drawing out the progressive development and refinement of his reflections on, and practice of, history. In order to keep the focus on historical practice over process, his work throughout is placed within the context of contemporary French historiography, the work of the new historians. The point of doing this is to remove Foucault's work from the rather frenzied and smoke-filled rooms of postmodern debate and give it a breath of fresh air.

The first Part will deal with early histories, specifically Madness and Civilization and The Birth of the Clinic. The focus of the discussion will be on how these works challenge what I will call the dominant 'picture' of history which finds its most vivid expression in Hegel's idea of the 'cunning of reason'. In other words, those works attack the view of history as the progressive realization of reason and knowledge by viewing them from the perspective of that which such histories

[2]Full references will be given in those sections dealing with specific works.

exclude.

It becomes clear after a consideration of these early works that the main focus of Foucault's critique is any view of the historical process as subject-centered and progressively unfolding. He challenges this by showing, especially in The Order of Things, that the history of knowledge displays less a progressive development than it does a discontinuous series of different epistemes that govern what it makes sense to say in any particular period. In The Archaeology of Knowledge, where he discusses his own archaeological approach to the past with specific reference to contemporary developments in historiography, Foucault insists on reading history in terms of the anonymous discursive formations that structure different periods as opposed to reading the whole course of history in terms of the progressive self-realization of subjectivity. This will be discussed in Part II.

In the third Part, we will discuss how Foucault moves away from the general view of history altogether and seeks to find its basis not in theory but in practice. That is, he seeks to fit his own histories squarely into their historical context, namely, the present. Thus, in Discipline and Punish, he shows how 'things said' in the past and about the past are also indicative of 'things done' both in the past and in terms of their genealogical link to the present. However, providing a genealogical link between the past and the present is not to provide an explanation or even description of how the present came to

be. Rather, it 'opens up' the present to its past and possible histories by showing how the present is not necessarily linked to its past developments, but is, in fact, contingently related to its present structures. In The History of Sexuality, he tries to show how most progressive, developmental views of history have the ideological function of concealing that contingency and thereby help maintain the hold current structures of power have on the present.

The fourth and final Part deals with the latter two volumes of The History of Sexuality and in effect shows how the reflection on historical practice enables us to respond to our current historical situation by producing a sense of self-wariness of the kind of historical discourse which effectively conceals the openness and possibilities that the present has vis-a-vis both the future and, more specifically, its own past. For it is only by returning again and again to the past, to the contrasts and actualized possibilities it contains, that the present can be effectively renewed and kept open to its current formative structures and identities and the continued promise of their possible transgression.

Thus, I argue, Foucault's work does provide us with a philosophy of history that recognizes its inescapable historical situatedness and yet at the same time is capable of instantiating the emancipatory direction that gives value to history in the first place; and he can do this more adequately than traditional philosophy of history because of his focus on

the results of historical practice rather than on the hypothetical goal of a supposed historical process.

PART I - THE PICTURE OF HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION: THE CUNNING OF REASON

The task of the philosophy of history is to make sense of history. And just as the reference of history is ambiguous, so is the philosophical task of making sense of it. History refers to a dimension of time as much as it does to a professional discipline. History is both a process and an activity. Contemporary philosophy of history recognizes the distinction by dividing itself into two parts.[1] The first part - called the speculative philosophy of history - concerns itself with making sense of the historical process as a whole and the second - normally called analytic philosophy of history - concerns itself with making sense of the conceptual difficulties of actually *doing* history. Clearly, this way of dividing up the task stems from the analytic side (with its predilection for dividing things up!) but accords with the general view held by philosophers and historians that claims about the sense of the historical process *as a whole* must remain speculative because they cannot be grounded in fact, that is, they cannot be proven correct. This view is eminently reasonable given the fact that we cannot stand outside of history in a way that would enable us to judge the process as a whole. We live *within* the historical process; to judge the historical process as a whole would be to see it as in some sense complete.

[1]For a standard introductory text to the issues of contemporary philosophy of history traditionally conceived, see W.H. Dray, *Philosophy of History* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964).

But is this a fair description of what speculative philosophers of history are doing? Are they concerned with making claims _about_ the historical process (claims incapable of proof and therefore speculative) or are they more concerned with simply _making sense_ of history considered, not as an activity, but as a process (which, after all, is one of the senses of the word)? Isn't what they are doing analogous to the works of those historians who see their task as discerning, not merely what in fact happened in the past, but the sense or significance of what happened in the past? That is, speculative philosophers of history are not merely concerned with the sense of history as practised by historians (i.e. as a practice or activity), but are concerned with the sense of history as it actually unfolds (i.e. as a process). And this in spite of the senselessness and absurdity they inevitably encounter on the way.

At least, this is the point of the philosophy of history as envisaged by such philosophers as Kant and Hegel, who in the terms given above, are considered speculative philosophers of history. However, for people like Kant and Hegel there is a _need_ for such an appreciation of history. Otherwise, history - understood as process - would _make no sense at all_. That is, unless one deliberately tries to find some sense in the historical process considered as a whole, then one is left with a picture of history that portrays nothing but struggle and strife.

Thus, Kant, in an essay entitled "The Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" argues for the need for what today is called speculative philosophy of history. He writes:

> One cannot suppress a certain indignation when one sees men's actions on the great world-stage and finds, beside the wisdom that appears here and there among individuals, everything in the large woven together from folly, childish vanity, even from childish malice and destructiveness. In the end, one does not know what to think of the human race, so conceited in its gifts. Since the philosopher cannot presuppose any [conscious] individual purpose among men in their great drama, there is no other expedient for him except to try to see if he can discover a natural purpose in this idiotic course of things human. In keeping with this purpose, it might be possible to have a history with a definite natural plan for creatures who have no plan of their own.[1]

Kant here quite openly acknowledges the speculative nature of attempting to see history as guided by 'a definite natural plan'; however, it is speculation that is not completely ungrounded. That is, this idea of history following some natural plan is proposed as an hypothesis to be tested in the practical realm. And it is an hypothesis based on the observation of what Kant calls "the unsocial sociability of men" by which he means the fact that "the sources of unsociableness and mutual opposition from which so many evils arise drive men to new exertions of their forces and thus to the manifold development of their capacities."[2] On the basis of this observation Kant goes on to formulate the "Eighth Thesis" of his "Idea for

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[1] Immanuel Kant, On History, ed. L.W. Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 12.

[2] Ibid., p. 16.

a Universal History", namely, that the "history of mankind can be seen, in the large, as the realization of nature's secret plan to bring forth a perfectly constituted state as the only condition in which the capacities of mankind can be fully developed, and also bring forth the external relation among states which is perfectly adequate to this end."[1] The point, then, if we are to make sense of history, is a speculative one; we must try to see history as guided by 'a secret plan of nature' duping self-interested childish human beings into doing what is good for themselves and in accordance with certain rational ends. For otherwise, we would be faced with the dismal spectacle of "a planless conglomeration of human actions."[2]

It is interesting to note just how close Kant's speculative philosophy of history is to Hegel's, at least inasmuch as the process itself is guided by something beyond the self-interest of individual human beings, something that brings order and rationality to the process as a whole. Indeed, Hegel's famous notion of the cunning of reason serves the same purpose as Kant's secret plan of nature, as is evident in the following - rather notorious - passage in Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of World History:

> It is what we may call the cunning of reason that it sets the passions to work in its service, so that the agents by which it gives itself existence must pay the penalty and suffer the loss. For the latter belong to the phenomenal world, of which part is worthless and

[1]Ibid., p. 21.

[2]Ibid., p. 24.

> part is of positive value. The particular is as a rule inadequate in relation to the universal, and individuals are sacrificed and abandoned as a result. The Idea pays the tribute which existence and the transient world exact, but it pays it through the passions of individuals rather than out of its own resources.[1]

But while both Kant and Hegel are concerned with making sense of the historical process as a whole, the difference with Hegel's speculative position is that he attempts to make sense of the process from within it. While fulfilling the same purpose as Kant's hypothetical 'secret plan of nature', Hegel's cunning of reason is meant to recognize the historical character of reason's self-development. As the passage above indicates, reason must give itself existence, i.e. can develop only in and through history, but does so through the passions of particular individuals. These individuals literally give up their lives so that the unfolding of reason may continue. The sense of history is not to be found in those particular lives but in the development of reason they allow. The difference with Hegel's position is that he claims to be describing the actual historical process and not, like Kant, proposing a way of looking at the process in such a way as to make it appear to make sense. For Hegel, we don't make sense of history, history makes sense of us.

As far as the understanding of history is concerned, Hegel's view is clearly superior. Kant, it seems, is not really concerned with history at all; that is, he seeks to make sense of a process which on the surface bears none. And he does so

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[1]G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, trans. by H.B. Nisbet with an intro. by Duncan Forbes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 89.

not by examining anything _within_ the process itself but by postulating an _external_ criterion: conformity to an hypothetical secret plan of _nature_. Hegel, on the other hand, proposes an _internal_ criterion for making sense of the historical process: the self-development of reason. It is a criterion because it distinguishes between that which contributes to the development of reason and that which doesn't, and it is internal because reason itself is seen as an historical development. Thus the use of the idea of 'cunning' as opposed to that of a 'plan', however secret. Reason must realize itself within the world and its development, and it must do so in the face of an often hostile world, but also in the face of what, in Kant's words, seems to be best described as 'the idiotic course of things human'. Reason, so the story goes, in order to survive and flourish, not only has to deal with the tempestuous natural world but also with the stupid, selfish, near-sighted foibles of human beings whose uncontrolled passions wreak as much if not more havoc than so-called natural disasters. But despite this, despite the wars and murders, the pillages, rapes, wanton destruction and calculated exterminations, one can, if the proper perspective is adopted (the perspective, for Hegel, of philosophy), discern or trace the progress of reason. And once one has noticed the trace of this progression, one can look closer, and beyond, or rather beneath the pettiness, the selfishness, even the (otherwise) mind-numbing sorrow, one can see the _history_ of that progression as a rationally connected process whose gradual estabi-

iehment and expansion becomes the sense or meaning of history. Reason is cunning in the sense that it is crafty, clever, skillful in achieving its ends in spite of the odds against it. Such a notion is needed because, otherwise, how can we account for the fact that in history unintended consequences of our actions often turn out to be precisely what is needed to move forward? How else are we to describe the fact that we are involved in a process none of us can control but all can be said to follow? A process we can recognize ourselves as following? In other words, how else are we to understand ourselves historically?

However, there is another side to this notion. It is true that the notion of cunning does suggest craftiness, cleverness, and skillfulness. But it also expresses deceit and dishonesty, as well as unscrupulousness. These senses as well are present in the idea of the cunning of reason insofar as human beings are tricked into accomplishing ends they did not themselves choose. And even if it is claimed that it is for their own good, human beings still appear to be the pawns of a process that they can neither stop nor alter. All they are left with is the stoic recognition of its ineluctable necessity and the pious hope that it will lead to a better world. Many would claim that it is this kind of reasoning that has given the philosophy of history such a bad name. And because of this, many if not most philosophers of history have restricted themselves to the conceptual analysis of historical concepts and the logical analysis of historical explanation, thereby banishing speculation

about the historical process from their concerns.

I would like to suggest that such a banishment is not so simply achieved. Indeed, I would claim that some version of this idea of the cunning of reason not only continues to be present in much contemporary philosophy of history, but remains the dominant picture philosophers have of the historical process. I use the word 'picture' here in the sense in which it is used in the expression 'having a picture in one's mind' of something or other, or again in the more active sense of 'picturing' something someone is trying to describe. A picture in this sense carries with it considerable force and effectiveness but not necessarily much conceptual clarity.[1] I am suggesting that the picture that dominates is one that sees history as the story of how the present came to be. Another way of putting it is to say that history, as distinguished from the past (considered in this case exclusively as a dimension of time), is that which is seen as contributing to the formation of the present. Anything that does not so contribute does not, strictly speaking, belong to the realm of history; that is, anything in the past which does not have, or cannot be seen to have, any connection with concerns in the present, cannot therefore be considered historically significant.[2]

It is this notion of significance that connects this

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[1] Perhaps this is why pictures can have such a hold on us.

[2] Thus history opposes itself here to antiquarianism, which interests itself in the past merely because it is past.

dominant picture of history as the story of how the present came to be to the notion of the cunning of reason. For after all the point of the idea of the cunning of reason was to make sense of an otherwise senseless process by proposing a criterion for selecting that which in the past contributed to the self-development, or self-unfolding, of reason. Indeed, history for Hegel _is_ that process. But the interesting thing to note is that, for Hegel, history culminates in the present. The present is the _end_ of history, the standpoint from which one judges and evaluates the historical process. The present is the Absolute. The otherwise senseless unfolding of time is redeemed in the present by being converted into _history_, the rational unfolding of the Absolute, i.e. the story of how the present came to be.

The dominant picture of history no longer bears any mention of Hegel's Absolute and yet the purpose it served remains: that of providing a criterion for selecting what in the past is to be deemed historically significant. However, because this criterion is based not in a developed _conception_ of history - discussion of the historical process has been banished - but rather in a _picture_ of history that vaguely but firmly sees it as the story of how the present came to be, it is contested with difficulty and is even more difficult to dislodge.

But why, one might ask, should it be contested and dislodged? Primarily for the same reasons that Hegel's original idea of the cunning of reason is normally rejected: it sees history as a process that by necessity subsumes individual pur-

poses into a higher purpose; and its development is thereby seen as based on the exclusion of other possible developments in guaranteeing its own.

In the following chapters I shall argue that Michel Foucault's early works show in concrete terms how the traditional and dominant conception of history can in effect be seen as a version of the idea of the cunning of reason inasmuch as it describes a process which subsumes different purposes within a higher one and excludes others that are considered to be threats to that process. Describing Foucault's work as dealing with the idea of the cunning of reason seems particularly appropriate inasmuch as he pits the process of reason's self-realization against its formless opposite, Unreason, and traces reason's slow but effective triumph over it. By doing so, Foucault effectively illustrates both sides of the idea of the cunning of reason: one which displays cleverness and skill in surmounting overwhelming odds, and one which practices deceit in achieving its end. And all of this is accomplished by means of the unwitting and unacknowledged actions of various individuals whose activities bear results that in no way consciously intended.

What I propose to do in this first Part is begin by examining L'histoire de la folie à l'âge classique[1], and then, in another chapter, The Birth of the Clinic[2],, as examples of

[1] I will use, whenever possible, the translation by Richard Howard, of the abridged version, published as Madness and Civilization (New York: Random House, 1965). Passages not included in that version will be translated by myself.

[2] Translated by A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1973).

the cunning of reason thesis, as it were, but with the view of contesting and dislodging this way of 'picturing' history. The chapter on the clinic deals with the subsumption of individuality. A final chapter will place these primarily historical works into the context of contemporary French historiography and its own challenge to this dominant picture of history.

CHAPTER TWO - REASON VS. UNREASON

The importance and originality of Madness and Civilization lies in the perspective it adopts. In it, Foucault is not setting out to write the history of some phenomenon called 'mental illness'[1] and the different forms and shapes it has taken over time, nor does he pretend to be describing the genesis and development of the discipline of psychology. It is not even best described, despite the subtitle of the English translation, as 'A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason', although the phrase itself is instructive[2], inasmuch as part of Foucault's argument is that the concept of insanity did not, in effect, apply to the Age of Reason or, in his words, the Classical Age.[3] No one was perceived as insane in the Classical Age, although many different kinds of people were perceived as mad. And among the people perceived as mad were people who were not so characterized in the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. Foucault traces these changes in perception. However, what distinguishes his work from other histories is the vantage point from which these

[1]For a discussion of Foucault's conception of mental illness and the changes it underwent, cf. his Maladie mentale et personnalité (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1954) and the revised edition Maladie mentale et psychologie (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962). For a discussion of the two works and their connection to Madness and Civilization, cf. P. Macherey, "Aux sources de 'L'histoire de la folie': une rectification et ses limites," Critique 43 (1986), pp. 752-74.

[2]The subtitle here is a translation of the original subtitle of Folie et Déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique (Paris: Plon, 1961).

[3]The standard French term for the period between the Renaissance and culminating in the French Revolution.

changes in perception are recorded; rather than write the story of how the mad have been perceived from the point of view of those who have formulated or articulated those perceptions, he writes about those formulations and articulations from the point of view of those perceived as such, from the point of view of the <u>mad themselves</u>, or more precisely, from the point of view of all those who do not fit into the categories and conceptualizations considered acceptable and reasonable. All of these people who do not fit, indeed who are <u>excluded</u> from the proper and orderly functionings of, shall we say for the moment, State and society, are categorized by Foucault under the single category of <u>Unreason</u> (deraison). It is from the perspective of Unreason that his history is written.

The term Unreason is clumsy. It has a much too ominous and substantive ring to it, one not present in the French word 'Déraison'. The primary connotation of 'déraison' is not a <u>total</u> lack of reason - something the term Unreason does seem to suggest - but a <u>relative</u> lack of reason clearly expressed in either speech or conduct. What I mean by relative is not a minor or inconsequential lack but a lacking intimately related to the normal functionings of reasonable speech and conduct. The term Unreason suggests a total and fundamental opposition. Thus, to say that he is writing from the perspective of Unreason is to say that he is writing from the perspective of those whose speech and conduct is not recognized and indeed effectively excluded or, at the very least, silenced by the accepted and dom-

inant patterns of speech and conduct, i.e. that which is denoted by the term Reason.

This point is important, not only for understanding the place Foucault's early studies have in the whole of his thought[1], but for understanding these works in their own right. In most commentaries, although generally praised and summarized for its precursory value, Madness and Civilization is rarely singled out for substantial independent examination, and when it is, the critique usually centers on the ambiguity of the concept of Unreason. For example, Cousins and Hussein offer this general assessment:

> A central thesis of the book is that Classical internment was not based on what may now seem the ignorance of the distinctions between sin, crime, poverty, misconduct and physical and mental illness, but on a perception in which such distinctions were not pertinent, that is, their perception of species of 'Unreason'. And that the perception implicit in the Classical internment was clear and coherent. The first part of the thesis, which we regard as more important, does not require attributing coherence to the category of 'Unreason', which is what Foucault seems to do in some general passages of the book.[2]

In a certain sense, this critique echoes Foucault's own later critique of Madness and Civilization, about which he says

[1] Although this point also should not be underestimated. For example, Gary Gutting, who has provided the most substantial critique of Histoire de la folie, claims that it is the 'foundation' of Foucault's subsequent work, insofar as even though "there are many significant revisions and innovations, it lays down the basic methods, problems, and values that inform everything else he wrote." Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 110.

[2] Cousins and Hussein, Michel Foucault (London: Macmillan, 1984).

that "it accorded far too great a place, and a very enigmatic one too, to what I called an 'experiment', thus showing to what extent one was still close to admitting an anonymous and general subject of history..."[1] The concept of Unreason, if taken substantively, i.e. as an anonymous and general subject of history or even as a clear and coherent perception, then, raises more questions than it answers. However, to question the coherence or incoherence of the concept of Unreason is one thing, to properly understand the role it played is another. The role the concept of Unreason played was that of allowing Foucault a <u>perspective</u> from which to view the dominant patterns of speech and conduct that describe the concept of Reason as it unfolds in history.

That is, Cousins and Hussein, in accepting Foucault's claim that the distinctions pertinent to one age may not be pertinent to another may not require Foucault's concept of Unreason, but they do require some principle of coherence or perspective from which they can sustain that claim. And one can imagine various ways in which this requirement could be met: by means of a Marxist or functionalist, structuralist or even Spenglerian reading of history. Or indeed one might offer a Kantian or Hegelian reading of that history. And, as we discussed in the last chapter, that perspective or principle of coherence will have to be either <u>internal</u> to the historical pro-

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[1] Michel Foucault, <u>The Archaeology of Knowledge</u>, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 16. Hereafter referred to as AK.

cess, as in Hegel, or <u>external</u> to that process, as in Kant.

The interest and importance of Foucault's perspective is that it is both internal and external at once. It is <u>internal</u> to the historical process considered as a whole; Foucault does not claim to be standing outside of history in order to describe its whole, even if only hypothetical, development. And yet it is also <u>external</u> to the historical process considered as - or characterized by - the dominant patterns of speech and conduct. That is, these dominant patterns are revealed principally by the way in which they <u>exclude</u> those examples of speech and conduct that threaten their continued survival and development. Thus, the perspective of Unreason Foucault adopts is in effect a mirror of the so-called <u>self</u>-development of reason, reflecting the way in which certain practices and self-conceptions gain and maintain dominance.

This raises a further point about the general assessment of <u>Madness and Civilization</u>. Given its curious perspective (that of 'Unreason'), can it really be judged as a work <u>of</u> history, or is it more properly characterized as a work <u>about</u> history? Gary Gutting, as I mentioned earlier, probably has offered the most sustained analysis of <u>Madness and Civilization</u>. In his summary comments he tells us that it "has some major limitations, including an ill-defined methodology, significant historical inaccuracies, and uncritical evaluative presuppositions. However, it remains an impressive achievement that

introduced a new and extremely fruitful approach to the history of madness and provides a powerful basis for the critique of contemporary psychology and psychiatry."[1] Two points need to be made. First, given the substantial limitations he enumerates, one can only assume that Foucault's "impressive achievement" lies more in the _introduction_ of this "new and extremely fruitful approach" than it does in its actual elaboration. And, clearly, Gutting does, throughout his reading of _Madness and Civilization_, have his eye on the further developments of Foucault's 'archaeology'. The problem with this is that to treat Foucault primarily as a methodologist undervalues, and even obscures, some of the very important things he reveals about the very concept of history. This is evident, it seems to me, in the latter part of Gutting's assessment, namely, that Foucault's history provides the basis for a critique of psychology and psychiatry. First of all, it is not clear how history can claim to be in a position to offer a _critique_ of some other discipline, that is, the critical function of history is a much debated issue; and, secondly, Foucault's concern appears to be much less the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry themselves than the _history_ that is normally given of them. In fact, if there is a critical thrust to _Madness and Civilization_ it lies precisely in a critique of the role and function of the writing of history. (If this is right, then comments such as when Gutting says Foucault's work "provides no basis for denying all

[1]Gutting, p. 109.

credibility to modern views or for concluding that earlier views are superior to them"[1] seem to be beside the point.) And in order to establish that critique Foucault, at least at this stage, thinks it is necessary to stand <u>outside</u> of that history, or in other words, to stand within the space or ambit of that which the standard history of psychology excludes.

To sum up the thrust of these critical comments: the attempt to write the history of madness from the point of view of Unreason is perhaps not as 'unreasonable' as it may at first appear. Not, that is, if it is read less as an alternative reading of the history of madness than as a critique of standard histories that deal with madness.

This is why I have chosen to characterize the work as a version of the 'cunning of reason', but from the point of view of Unreason, that is, from the point of view of that upon which Reason uses its cunning in order to achieve its own ends.

As mentioned earlier, the idea that reason uses 'cunning' implies that its rule or dominion is by no means self-evident. Indeed, it will be the first to admit that its existence is threatened on all sides. Most obviously it is threatened by death and extinction; but, more subtly, it must be wary of those forces which would deny its efficacy. The story of <u>Madness and Civilization</u> tells us how reason kept those forces at bay.

But before going on to tell that story, I would like to

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[1]Gutting, p. 108.

respond to the obvious question that arises whenever a term like 'reason' is invoked: who or what is 'reason'? This way of phrasing the question points to two different ways of answering it, that is, in terms of those said to exemplify, possess, or demonstrate 'reason' and in terms of that which is thereby exemplified, possessed, or demonstrated. The two are linked, of course, but they can be distinguished. We can distinguish, for example, between knowers and knowledge that is known. Indeed, part of the function of the idea of the 'cunning of reason' is to try to make sense of the progress of knowledge that is achieved despite the ignorance of those involved in the progression.[1] Of course, reason and knowledge are certainly not synonymous, at least not for someone like Hegel. But then again the notion of reason in Hegel is by no means unambiguous. Which is another reason why Foucault's work is interesting. Foucault does not give a positive account of reason, but rather points it out negatively from the point of view of Unreason, that is, he describes that which is excluded by reason and thereby reveals the _effective_ contours of reason. In other words, reason's _ideal_ is made evident by the very _real_ exclusions which, for Foucault, make up the actual historical process.

And it is this process that I would like now to describe.

[1]For Hegel, of course, the progress is ultimately recognized by the philosopher.

Foucault begins by directing our attention to the space left open by the disappearance of leprosy at the end of the Middle Ages; a space to be filled. Although he uses traditional historical language in his description of the reorganisation of the finances of the now defunct 'leper colonies' and compares the French situation with the simultaneous developments in other parts of Europe, and even goes so far as to give a causal explanation for the retreat of leprosy (due to the end of the Crusades and thus contact with Eastern sources), his purpose is not to characterize this change as a particular 'event' understood in the traditional historical sense. Rather, he points out that although the space is empty, it still echoes with the values and images tied to the "figure of the leper" which are basically those of <u>exclusion</u>. In other words, the leper may be gone, but the structures and forms of his exclusion remain, right down to the "major form of a rigorous division which is social exclusion but spiritual reintegration." (MC, 7;HF,16) It is the contours of this "major form" that Foucault sets out to describe.

The descriptions Foucault offers are not straightforward historical ones; at least not in the beginning. Much of his discussion deals with the images and symbols that characterize Renaissance literature and art. Foucault finds it necessary to trace the major "experiences" of fear and exclusions found within the Renaissance. And this is best revealed in the period's works

of art. This is where the example of the 'Ship of Fools' plays such a significant role. For Foucault, these "highly symbolic cargoes of madmen in search of their reason" (MC, 9; HF, 20) sums up admirably and concisely the ambiguous status both of the mad and the Renaissance's attitude to what they represent.

The specificity of this figure is brought to light when contrasted with that of the village idiot, an innocent and pathetic figure, who formed an integral part of medieval village life and was a reminder of man's lowly position in the grand scheme of things. Most importantly, the village idiot was never considered a threat.

The Fool, the Jester, does not play the same role. Still often a figure of fun, as was the village idiot in his innocence, the laughter the Fool provokes is tinged with uneasiness, because in effect he is seen as speaking the truth, that is, "in a comedy where each man deceives the other and dupes himself, the madman is comedy to the second degree: the deception of deception; he utters, in his simpleton's language which makes no show of reason, the words of reason that release in the comic, the comedy: he speaks love to lovers, the truth of life to the young, the middling reality of things to the proud, to the insolent, and to liars." (MC, 14; HF, 25) Beneath the laughter and derision lies the uncomfortable sense of a world not completely orderly, not completely safe, and of a life, with its hardships and difficulties, bordering on the absurd.

In fact, what characterizes the Renaissance best, according to Foucault, is that this uneasiness has developed quite dramatically into the sense of 'a world gone mad'. From the brevity and fragility of life on earth and its harshness, it is but one small step to the idea that human existence itself in its meanderings and fruitless struggles is itself void of meaning and worth. And thus from the immemorial fear of death, the threat of nothingness, "we have shifted to the scornful contemplation of that nothing which is existence itself... The head that will become a skull is already empty. Madness is the déjà-là of death." (MC, 15-16; HF, 26) However, as Foucault goes on to note:

> The substitution of the theme of madness for that of death does not mark a break, but rather a torsion within the same anxiety. What is in question is still the nothingness of existence, but this nothingness is no longer considered an external, final term, both threat and conclusion; it is experienced from within as the continuous and constant form of existence. (MC, 16; HF, 27)

But perhaps even more expressive of this fear is the theme of excess as opposed to that of nothingness. This is best illustrated when we look at some of the paintings of the period. Foucault maintains that there is considerable coherence between different works illustrating the theme of madness. What they reveal is a split occurring between language and image, which is evident, for example, through the demise of gothic symbolism. The symbols have lost their sense, and the whole discursive background which guaranteed that sense. That is, the sense is gone but the symbols remain, unanchored, unhinged, and gradually

the image in which they were contained "begins to gravitate about its own madness." (MC, 18; HF, 29) Knowledge is no longer immediate: "the figure no longer speaks for itself; between the knowledge which animates it and the form into which it is transposed, a gap widens" and thus "dreams, madness [the nonsensical, l'insensé], the unreasonable can also slip into this excess of meaning." (MC, 19; HF, 29) But the explosion of significations still represents knowledge, but a difficult, closed, esoteric knowledge, a knowledge only wholly possessed by the Fool and his strange revelations. (Perhaps more accurately, the Fool himself is possessed by his knowledge.) It is through these images that the Renaissance "expressed what it apprehended of the threats and secrets of the world." (MC, 24; HF, 33)

Now contrast the darkness and disorder and fear of these images with those that one finds in the literary, philosophical and moral themes of the period.

According to Foucault there exists, in the Renaissance, a split between what he calls the tragic experience of madness (la folie) and a critical experience expressed in literary and philosophical treatises. What the former experience expressed with great dramatic force, the latter characterizes as folly, which can be characterized as madness minus the fascination. Folly is still seen as connected with knowledge, not as a menace, but as an indication of its bookish limits: "madness appears here as the comic punishment of knowledge and its ignorant presumption." (MC, 26; HF, 35)

What is thereby accomplished is that the threat is removed from the world where it is essentially out of reach, and is interiorized, that is, connected with human weaknesses, obsessiveness, and illusions. It now has to do with self-perception. And thus its relation to truth is significantly altered; folly "has less to do with truth and the world than with man and the truth of himself that he can perceive. (HF, 36; my trans.) The threat still exists, of course, but now it is within, where one can 'get one's hands on it' as it were, thereby eclipsing the tragic dimension whose dangers were considerably greater. Of course, this 'interiorization' is not quite that simple, because the forces to be dealt with are formidable; and it is precisely at this point that the use of cunning is required.

First of all, Reason accepts the fact that folly can and does, on occasion, 'speak the truth'; but the purpose of this move is to tie folly to Reason such that from now on "madness [or folly] and reason enter into a perpetually reversible relation where all madness has its reason that judges and masters it, while all reason its madness within which its derisory truth is discovered." (HF, 41; my trans.) The net result of this apparent 'concession' is that folly (madness) no longer has an independent existence.

Not only its existence, the value of folly is said to belong to the same sphere as reason. The value of folly consists precisely in reason's recognition of it as a sign of

its own limitations. Folly is not only <u>tied</u> to reason, it is <u>essential</u> to it: "If there is reason, it is precisely within the acknowledgement of this continuous circle of wisdom and folly, it is with the clear consciousness of their reciprocity and impossible division." (HF, 44; my trans.) What effectively happens is that reason assimilates folly into itself, and thereby triumphs over it, because "it places folly at the very heart of its own work, designating it as a movement in reason's own nature." (HF, 46; my trans.) Reason has thereby removed the threat. Foucault describes the final result like this: "now the truth of folly (or madness) is nothing other than the victory of reason and its definitive mastery; for the truth of madness is to be within reason, to be a figure of reason, a force, almost a need so that reason can better assure itself." (HF, 47; my trans.)

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The threat therefore has been effectively removed. However, it has not been completely eliminated. In the Classical Age, a new threat arises on what might be called the 'moral horizon', a new fear has surfaced, calling out for new solutions. The fear is of this unruly crowd "which included peasants driven from their farms, disbanded soldiers or deserters, unemployed workers, impoverished students, and the sick." (MC, 47; HF, 75-6) Things get out of hand, there are riots. There are too many of them to simply be chased away. The

Royal Edict of 1656, establishing the Hopital General, is a response to this threat. By means of it a new relation is established between the sovereign and the people, or between the nation and the individuals that make it up. A new system of obligation is established between the unemployed and his society: "he had the right to be fed, but he must accept the physical and moral constraint of confinement." (MC, 48; HF, 77) Confinement, with its wide and heterogeneous mandate, begins. It represents a Europe-wide response to the economic crisis, and in fact is often repeated in times of crisis well into the eighteenth century. However, its utility is not restricted to difficult times.

> ...outside of the periods of crisis, confinement acquired another meaning. Its repressive function was combined with a new use. It was no longer merely a question of confining those out of work, but of giving work to those who had been confined and thus making them contribute to the prosperity of all. The alternation is clear: cheap manpower in the periods of full employment and high salaries; and in periods of unemployment, reabsorption of the idle and social protection against agitation and uprisings. (MC, 51; HF, 79)

Foucault is quick to note, at this point, that this 'economic' dimension of the issue should not be understood in terms of efficiency. In fact, the functional value of such tactics was nil, and their gradual suppression was inevitable. The point is the ethical value placed on work was more important during the Classical Age than the value of economic efficiency. Work was seen as a panacea, as the rightful activity of 'fallen man'. It was not the fruits of labor that counted, but labor itself. The net result of all this, for Foucault, is that the

idle have replaced the leper on the moral horizon, to be replaced in time by the mad. But at this point the mad are interned because they, like the others, do not work but sit idle and unproductive.

Foucault's next move is to show how, within this heterogeneous lot, madness is to be isolated, alienated, (alienee), and distinguished. And his method is 'archaeological' because he does not, as do most historians in this case, look to see who will fit into the modern straitjacket as it were, but is rather concerned with the space which made the further developments possible.

He begins with the principle that the heterogeneity displayed is not based on ignorance; rather, he notes that "confinement did not only play the negative role of exclusion; it also played a positive role of organization." (HF, 96; my trans.)[1] Foucault is claiming that this confinement is but the surface manifestation of a profound reorganisation of values and norms. The variety of faces that are confined behind bars and within houses of confinement gradually take on the same expression, until what we have staring back at us is the face of Unreason. And the 'us' in question here is the bourgeois family and its world.

What Foucault is describing then is not only reason's response to an exterior threat (the idle and unruly masses) but

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[1] This whole chapter, 'Le monde correctionnaire' is not in the abridged version of which Madness and Civilization is a translation.

more importantly its response to the much more dangerous and subtle interior threat (the transgressions within the family order). This threat Foucault calls Unreason. The response is confinement. And his point is that the coherence of the institution lies not in its science or politics, but in its _perception_. Unreason, which had previously been a felt (and feared) dimension of the world, is now _localized_, immobilized, held at arm's length; it can now be watched over, observed. The threat is physically removed, because Unreason, instead of being a formless possibility is now recognizable in the form of distinct characters; not the abstract Moral Types of the Renaissance, but concrete persons and their specific acts. Rather than universalizing Unreason, the Classical Age has individualized it, because now "the man of Unreason is a concrete character (_personnage_) grafted from a real social world, judged and condemned by the society of which he is a part." (HF, 118)

What Foucault has shown thus far is the actual space wherein madness could arise. He has described the conditions of its possibility. But it is still not yet clear how madness in itself is to be distinguished from Unreason as a whole and given its own particular character.

Again, as indicated above, the mad will be distinguished as concrete _individuals_ within the motley of other detainees, with their own specific characteristics. The Classical Age will

call them "les furieux", that is, those whose violence and disorderly conduct is neither a result of sickness nor crime. Foucault goes to great lengths to show how the singling out of the mad within the interned has nothing to do with the beginnings or stirrings of a strictly medical approach to madness, but rather was a response to the perceived threat of Unreason.[1] In doing so he is attempting to counter the traditional approach which proceeds by "relegating to the past all that is still connected to confinement, and connecting to a burgeoning future that which already suggests the psychiatric hospital." (HF, 138) It is precisely this approach to the history of ideas that Foucault is attempting to replace by emphasizing structure over process. He describes the method he is using as follows: "It is merely a matter - achieved by disengaging chronologies and historical successions from all perspectives of 'progress', and by restoring to the history of the experience a movement that owes nothing to the finality, nor to the orthogenesis, of knowledge - it is a matter of allowing the figure and structures of this experience of madness to appear just as it really was for classicism." (HF, 138-9) This, of course, is a methodologically important statement. But we shall defer discussion for the moment, for we too at this moment are not primarily interested in the orthogenesis of Foucault's

[1]Here again, Unreason denotes those 'activities' - to the extent that such immediate responses to concrete conditions can be called activities - that ran counter to the ordered and organized life of Reason, viz. the established order, the status quo.

methodological development. His 'methods' will be discussed at length in Part II. Thus, although characterized by its structures, Foucault's primary focus remains the experience of madness in the Classical Age. And that experience lies somewhere between the hospitals and the correctional institutions. Or, in other words, somewhere between the medical and legal perceptions of the 'subject' as postulated by the establishment and maintenance of those institutions.

The mad are singled out because they fall through the cracks. They are not judged according to strictly medical standards, but rather according to social ones. Social sensibility is the ultimate judge of who is to be interned. Scandal, not sickness, is the criterion. However, the internment of the mad is not justified on the grounds of criminality. On the contrary, the mad do not break the law, they fall outside of it. This is the ostensible reason for their confinement. No longer subject to law (Reason) the mad must be excluded from society. In fact, the refinement of the definition of the legal subject (his rights and duties) further defines those who fall outside of the sphere of its application. This new space is occupied by the mad, such that the idea of 'mental illness' i.e. the 'object' medical knowledge will create for itself, "will have been slowly constituted as the mythic unity of the legally incapable subject and of that man recognized as the disrupter of the group: and this through the influence of the moral and political thought of the eighteenth century." (HF, 146)

Unreason is now further specified: an individual is now mad and incompetent, and is thereby 'fixed' into a concrete space of exclusion and retention within the structured order of society.

Thus the mad are, according to Foucault, doubly alienated. And it is this double alienation that will ultimately designate them as 'mentally ill'. They are alienated from the legal framework of society because they are judged incompetent; as well they are alienated from the social framework insofar as their behaviour is considered scandalous and threatening and therefore their internment is regarded as fully justified. Neither a legal nor social subject, they now become a subject of medical attention. The mad have become the insane. The operative word here is the notion of becoming. Foucault is not describing the correction of a misguided perception, but a change in perception.

If Madness and Civilization is to be understood as a more or less standard work of history, as it sometimes is[1], then it will be read as an account of the development of the modern conception of mental health and mental illness. And this account will generally consist in a description of the necessary conditions which gave rise to and permitted such a development. But to read it in this way, to put it in the terms of the 'cunning of reason', is to read it from the point of view of

[1]Such for example is the opinion expressed in J.-G. Merquior, Foucault (London: Fontana, 1985), pp. 26-7.

reason, i.e. from the point of view of the successful establishment of the contemporary conception. And the novelty of Foucault's approach is precisely _not_ to describe that success from its _own_ vantage point, but from the vantage point of Unreason. And he can do this because reason has not been completely successful in silencing Unreason. That perspective is still open to us through the works of people like, for example, Nietzsche, Nerval, and Artaud. I mention this again because it is extremely important to understand that one of the major questions Foucault's work addresses is that of the _position_ or status of the historian vis-a-vis the subject-matter of his work. The past, of course, can only be 'approached' via the present. However, this does not mean that the past is a _function_ of the present. If it were, then the study of the past would be seen exclusively as how the present came to be. Or, put another way, history is seen as the process which has led from point A to point B. And while this appears to be more or less harmless in itself, it becomes less so when the process so described is characterized as _necessary_. This necessity is implied in the very approach of traditional historical understanding, which, crudely put, goes something like this: given these conditions, this was _bound_ to happen, could not _but_ happen. And historical explanations are judged according to the degree of necessity their elaboration implies.

Foucault is also concerned with elaborating historical conditions, in this particular case with the historical

conditions which underlie differing conceptions of madness. Traditional histories of madness see the past as the slow development of the current conception of mental illness. Foucault, by pointing to the works of Nietzsche, Nerval, and Artaud, shows that besides the concept of mental illness there exists this other <u>possibility</u> of madness, and it is from this other perspective that he formulates his historical question: given the <u>possibility</u> (and not the necessity) of a concept of mental illness (which from the point of view of Nietzsche, Nerval, and Artaud is curious indeed), what are the conditions which have permitted its dominance? And it is the description of those conditions that make up the substance of <u>Madness and Civilization</u>.

One of the essential things Foucault seeks to show is that the 'isolation' of the mad did not lead to their 'liberation' but rather that their 'liberation' was merely a further step in their 'isolation'. In other words, the final 'suppression' of <u>madness</u> is in fact its transformation into the concept of <u>insanity</u>. That is, the isolation and specification of the madman permits the mutation of the concept of confinement into that of the <u>asylum</u>. The degree of difference between both institutions is perhaps best illustrated by the degree of danger each contains. The former attempts to silence its opposite, the force of Unreason, which in essence opposed the order and structure of the world. The latter corrects 'unreasonableness', the inversion of sense operated by the mad, and thus is not con-

cerned with the structures of the world per se, but merely of correcting the false picture the insane have of that world. The threat or fear is not overcome by suppressing it, but simply by removing it from the world as such.

Of course, this was possible only once the threat was reduced and isolated sufficiently to permit such a move. And this isolation was effected not by anyone in particular but by the very structures of confinement themselves. Those structures, that is, and the particular historical circumstances which surrounded them.

To counter what he has called the reform 'myth' of the treatment of the mad, Foucault discusses the prior 'reform' of confinement that occurred during the economic crisis between 1765 and 1770. The confinement of the mad had become perceived as unjust already, but "pour les autres". (HF, 422) That is, during this period there occurs a reassessment of the 'economic' and 'social' character of the population at large. What this means is that there is reassessment of the general attitude towards poverty. Briefly put, poverty is now too widespread to be faulted morally. It is rather seen as a matter of economics. Or, in other words, it is recognized that a certain degree of poverty is necessary for the general wealth to be maintained, that is, "a people would be poor which had no paupers." (MC, 230; HF, 428)[1] The "Poor" no longer exist; what we have instead

[1]Foucault goes on: "indigence becomes an indispensable element in the State. In it is concealed the secret but also the real life of a society. The poor constitute the basis and the glory of nations." (MC, 230; HF, 428)

is a distinction between <u>poverty</u> which is an inevitable economic reality and the <u>population</u>, which is the driving force of that economy. Given this, the idea of confining the 'poor' is a grave mistake.

But of course it isn't just a matter of letting everyone loose. A distinction must be made between the useful and the useless poor, which translates into a distinction between "the positive element of indigence and the burden of illness." (HF, 433) The healthy poor are put 'back into circulation' as it were, while the sickly poor must be removed from the hospitals and other institutions, which are now perceived as "generators of illness" (HF, 437) and returned to the bosom of the family where proper care and attention can be given. In other words, everyone is freed except for the criminals and the mad. This raises the old question: are the mad criminal or sick? Are they to be incarcerated or returned to their families for care? The answer is: neither one nor the other but something of both.

Actually, it was the way the question was formulated which best reveals the eventual solution. The problem and its solution, according to Foucault, was this: "Must the mad be treated as other criminals and placed within a carceral structure, or are they to be treated as sick individuals without families and consitute around them a quasi-family? We will see precisely how Tuke and Pinel accomplished both in defining the archetype of the modern asylum." (HF, 448)

Because most commentaries focus precisely on this development as central to the whole work, there is no exegetical need to go into the details of the establishment of the asylum by Tuke in America and Pinel in France. However, in terms of our own analysis, that is, in terms of the cunning used by reason in order to remove the threats to its existence and thereby establish its dominance, this final development is the most successful because the most subtle. This is because the issue, as presented by the side of reason, is no longer understood as a matter of reason and order but of the rights and freedom of rational individuals. The subtlety of this position is revealed in the fact that, so long as Reason and Order were given prime significance, Unreason and Disorder, as their opposites, would always exist as an underlying threat, their 'suppression' notwithstanding. However, once reason is equated with freedom, then the absence of reason _implies_ an absence of freedom. Thus, we move from nature to freedom, or from the animality of madness to the restraining of the insane, or put more forcefully, from chains to the straitjacket because now "within insanity one no longer is faced with the experience of of the absolute confrontation between reason and unreason, but with a play [_jeu_], always relative, always mobile, between freedom and its limits." (HF, 460) What reason now creates is a carefully controlled environment where the insane, under constant surveillance are allowed to 'speak their minds' as it were. That is, the silence that had been imposed on them had had more

nefarious consequences than allowing them to speak, albeit in a highly regulated way. In other words, madness had become 'public' once again (insofar as it is a matter of public concern), but it has now become effectively neutralized; for it takes its place alongside everything else as something that, ultimately, can be known, i.e. it becomes an object. And this objectification is the final triumph of reason because "it masters madness more profoundly and better than its older submission to the forms of Unreason. The new aspects of confinement can permit insanity the luxury of a certain freedom: it is enslaved now and disarmed of its most profound powers." (HF, 463) Indeed, not only is madness no longer capable of speaking for itself freely, but by being objectified (i.e. psychologized) madness enables reason 'finally' to achieve an objective view of itself (and not madness). The negativity of Unreason is fully transformed (and presumably eliminated) into the positivity of reason.

But of course not completely, or Foucault's history would not have been possible. Thanks to Nietzsche, Nerval, Artaud, Van Gogh, glimpses from the point of view of Unreason have remained. Or rather, thanks to these people, a space is created which allows someone like Foucault the possibility of going beyond reason "and of recovering the tragic experience beyond the promises of the dialectic." (HF, 554) But how is this possible? How do the works of people like Nietzsche and Van Gogh allow for this possibility of going beyond Reason?

Foucault tells us that "by the madness which interrupts it, a work of art opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without answer, provokes a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself." (MC, 288; HF, 556)

And it is this task of questioning the world's self-understanding that Foucault takes on with unflinching determination.

CHAPTER THREE : THE TRIUMPH OF KNOWLEDGE

In the Birth of the Clinic[1], Foucault continues his critique of the conception of history as the story of reason's self-development, which, I have been arguing, is the dominant picture of history; a dominance particularly evident in the history of ideas. We saw that the subject and target of Madness and Civilization was not so much the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry as it was the history usually given of the development of those disciplines. The subject and target of the Birth of the Clinic is modern medicine and its self-appointed date of birth.

> Modern medicine has fixed its own date of birth as being in the last years of the eighteenth century. Reflecting on its situation, it identifies the origin of its positivity with a return - over and above all theory - to the modest but effecting level of the perceived. In fact, the supposed empiricism is not based on a rediscovery of the absolute values of the visible, nor on the predetermined rejection of systems and all their chimeras, but on a reorganization of that manifest and secret space that opened up when a millenial gaze paused over men's sufferings. (BC, xii)

This 'manifest and secret space' is that of the individual body of individual human beings considered in their concrete individuality. And it is from within this space that Foucault proposes to cast light on the traditional understanding of the self-development of medical knowledge.

In this sense, the Birth of the Clinic complements Madness and Civilization inasmuch as it offers a critique of the

[1]Michel Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973). Translation of Naissance de la clinique (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1963).

self-conception of reason (in the shape of the history of medical knowledge) in its relation to individual bodies, just as Madness and Civilization offered a critique of the self-conception of reason (in the shape of the history of psychiatry) in its relation to the mind.

However, another interesting facet of the Birth of the Clinic is the way that it too can be read as revealing 'the cunning of reason' and once again from outside the perspective of reason; indeed, from the perspective of that which reason uses up in order to accomplish its own end (i.e. its continued self-development), that is, individual bodies. As we shall see, these individual bodies end up dissected and thereby reveal to knowledge their universality. Echoes of Hegel are here very strong, for in his description of the cunning of reason he writes, as we have seen, that the "particular is as a rule inadequate in relation to the universal, and individuals are sacrificed and abandoned as a result." Of course, Hegel claims to be writing from the point of view of the universal, whereas Foucault here is attempting to write from the point of view of that which is "sacrificed and abandoned as a result": that is, the bodies of individuals. And he can do this because he does not see the 'birth' of the clinic as a necessary condition for that which is said to follow, but rather examines it in terms of the conditions of possibility that would permit or allow (make possible) such an appropriation of individuality. Thus, rather than treating this self-appointed 'birth' of the clinic as a

step in an historical process, he treats it as a fundamental <u>reorganization</u> of the relation between knowledge and the individual, characterized as follows:

> The <u>object</u> of discourse may equally well be a <u>subject</u>, without the figures of objectivity being in any way altered. It is this <u>formal</u> reorganization, <u>in depth</u>, rather than the abandonment of theories and old systems, that made <u>clinical experience</u> possible; it lifted the old Aristotelian prohibition: one could at last hold a scientifically structured discourse about an individual. (BC, xiv)

It is this <u>clinical experience</u> that Foucault wishes to examine, not in terms of what in contributes to later developments, but in terms of itself, in terms of its discursive specificity, where the facts of discourse are "to be treated not as autonomous nuclei of multiples significations, but as events and functional segments gradually coming together to form a system" and where the meaning or significance of any particular statement is not defined "by the treasure of intentions that it might contain, revealing it and concealing it at the same time, but by the difference that articulates it upon the other real or possible statements, which are contemporary to it or to which it is opposed in the linear series of time." (BC, xvii) Only in this way, according to Foucault, can we respond positively and intelligently to our incontrovertible <u>historicity</u>, which Foucault characterizes as the fact that we are destined "historically to history, to the patient construction of discourses about discourses, and to the task of hearing what has already been said." (BC, xvi)

Foucault follows a plan roughly similar to that worked out in Madness and Civilization insofar as he first discusses institutional developments and then goes on to examine the theoretical discussions that abound internally to those institutions. However, both can be approached through the reorganization being effected in the relation between the doctor and his patient. This reorganization in the medical profession is isomorphic with the changes in relations in other areas, for example the political arena, where, at the end of the eighteenth century the relation between the State and its citizens was also being profoundly organized, or again in the economic sphere and the concomitant rise of a liberal ideology. Foucault wants us to keep our eyes on or our ears open to the noises of this debate when considering this other relation between the doctor and the patient.

The transformation of the relation between doctor and patient, Foucault suggests, is perhaps best evoked by considering the question the doctor initially asks the patient: from "what is wrong with you?" the question has become "where does it hurt?" Whereas the former question concerns less the patient than his or her illness, the latter question concerns less the patient than his or her body.

In fact, the question "what is wrong with you?" that the doctor asks, Foucault suggests in his first chapter, indicates less a reciprocal relation than the relative unimport-

ance of <u>either</u> the patient or the doctor. What matters is the illness, the 'rational space' of illness. Illness exists not in the patient's body but the classificatory space of essences; it can only be spotted on these <u>qualitative</u> grids. The essence of illness and the physical body of the patient are connected only by means of these <u>qualities</u>, which the doctor merely transposes from his examination of the patient onto the classificatory grid. In fact, the illness, to be known, must be isolated from the individual in which it resides; the individual is thus a negative element. However, this negativity remains indispensable, because an illness can arise, that is, its qualities can only become manifest against the backdrop of the particular character of a particular individual. In other words, the patient, although inessential in terms of the illness itself, is essential in terms of the perception of the illness. Thus, on the one hand, the relation between the doctor and the patient is abstract because "the patient is the rediscovered portrait of the disease" (BC, 15)[1], but, on the other hand, the relation grows increasingly concrete insofar as they are "caught up in an ever greater proximity, bound together, the doctor by an ever more attentive, more insistent, more penetrating gaze, the patient by all the silent, irreplaceable qualities that, in him, betray - that is, reveal and conceal - the clearly ordered form of the disease." (BC, 15-16)

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[1]In French, the passage reads: "le malade c'est la maladie ayant acquis des traits singuliers" (NC, 14).

But besides this rapprochement between the 'body' of medical knowledge and the physical body of the patient, a third element must be introduced if the reorganisation we are tracing is to be adequately understood. This third element is the space where the doctor and patient meet.

The hospital, like civilization, is an artificial construct. It was not, in the eighteenth century, the antiseptic and sterilized institution it is today. Rather it was seen as "the temple of death". (BC, 17) The natural place for illness was not the hospital but the family. This attitude towards illness, of course, "coincides exactly with the way in which, in political thought, the problem of assistance is reflected." (BC, 18) Foucault takes up here the discussion, already encountered in Madness and Civilization, about how poverty was seen as a necessary element for the smooth functioning of the economy. In the ideal liberal society the hospitals would be superfluous. And the sick would be treated at home. But by whom? In order for the "privatisation" of illness to work, the treatment offered must be checked, monitored; "a system of surveillance is needed in order to insure that abuses would be prevented and quacks forbidden to practise, and, by means of an organized, healthy, rational medicine, home care would prevent the patient's becoming a victim of medicine and avoid exposure to contagion of the patient's family." (BC, 19-20) And it is the context of this concern which gradually will structure the institutional space of medical knowledge.

The monitoring of private care was a problem for the medical profession at the end of the eighteenth century. And the problem was not merely one concerning the kind of care the patient _received_ but, perhaps more importantly, concerned the kind of illness unmonitored patients might _spread_.

A good example of this is the whole question of epidemics as it arose in the eighteenth century. Before the changes we are here considering, standard medical knowledge did not distinguish any _essential_ difference between an epidemic and the individual cases that make it up; they were not studied in their generality but were rather 'tracked down' to their concrete manifestations, which meant that: "A medicine of epidemics could exist only if supplemented by a police." (BC, 25) A police force of health inspectors, as it were, whose researches and findings were to prescribe what medical measures must be taken. The result is that, with the establishment of a kind of 'epidemic control centre', medicine is 'politicized' and a new medical corps is born (distinguished from everyday practitioners).

The centralisation of the medical profession was accompanied, even buttressed, by two predominant myths. The first held that doctors became the new priests, the new clergy, of a rational social order, who, of course, did not save the soul, but healed the body. The second myth held that illness itself would disappear in the good society, that is, a society that was not wracked by disorderly passions and excess.

The two myths, although in apparent contradiction, according to Foucault, complement one another as do black and white. He writes:

> The two dreams are isomorphic: the first expressing in a very positive way the strict, militant, dogmatic medicalization of society, by way of a quasi-religious conversion, and the establishment of a therapeutic clergy; the second expressing the same medicalization, but in a triumphant, negative way, that is to say, the volatilization of disease in a corrected, organized, and ceaselessly supervised environment, in which medicine itself would finally disappear, together with its object and its raison d'être. (NC, 32)

Of course, these myths did not survive the revolutionary fervor and spirit that engendered them, but they did produce a significant effect. Medicine, by being tied to the political utopia, broke out of its endemic negativity, and received "the splendid task of establishing in men's lives the positive role of health, virtue, and happiness." (BC, 34) Indeed, more than this, medicine ceases to be merely a knowledge of how to heal certain ailments; it goes much further and embodies also "a knowledge of healthy man, that is, a study of non-sick man and a definition of the model man." (BC, 34) This signals a fundamental shift in medical perception insofar as the criterion is no longer health but normality. The object of medical attention is no longer the restoration of health to the sick individual, but to place him or her within the context of the normal and the pathological.

The Birth of the Clinic follows pretty much the same pattern as Madness and Civilization albeit with stricter reference to the structural similarities or analogies between different levels of social (in this case political and medical) discourses and the practices they are said to justify.

In the second half of the book, Foucault looks exclusively at medical discourse itself as it is structured within this newly formed clinical space. And what he shows is how, within this clinical space, life itself becomes a mere moment in the self-elaboration of knowledge. He does not mean 'life' in the abstract, but the concrete life of the individual, as it progresses through illness and death. Thus, knowledge is able to overcome the limits of illness, and by appropriating the individual as a moment of itself, transcends the limit of death (for death is always the death of an individual). This is possible because within the clinic death is no longer seen as an absolute dividing line, but is seen rather as "multiple, and dispersed in time." (BC, 142) The de-absolutization of death is fundamental to the new medical perception. No longer seen as the final stage of life and illness, death is incorporated into the same process; life, illness and death "now form a technical and conceptual trinity." (NC, 146) But, in fact, death now even plays a more fundamental role than the other two terms. Death is that which de-composes the order of life and illness. Death becomes the observational pinnacle from where life and illness can come into their own (as knowledge). Foucault tells us that "death was the

point of view from the height of which disease opened up onto truth; the life/disease/death trinity was articulated in a triangle whose summit culminated in death; perception could grasp life and disease in a single unity only insofar as it invested death in its own gaze." (BC, 158)

However, as Foucault reminds us, we are not here talking about death in the abstract, about death in general; we are talking about the death of concrete individual bodies. Indeed, this is an essential feature for the possibility of medical knowledge, as it is of guaranteeing a fundamental role to the individual, which, of course, is basic to the ideology (as it is articulated in its various manifestations: politics, economics, medicine) of the period in question. That is, the individual is necessary for medical knowledge insofar as: "Only individual illnesses exist: not because the individual reacts upon his own illness, but because the action of the illness rightly unfolds in the form of individuality." (BC, 168-169) This new medical perception, then, this 'new' medical knowledge vindicates the principle of individuality beyond its rhetorical and ideological roots, and grounds it firmly in scientific self-knowledge. But this knowledge is achieved at the cost of the individual's life. However, the irony is that it is only by dying that one finally achieves true individuality because one's unique and irreplaceable individuality is ultimately and definitively expressed in the way one dies; "in the slow, half-subterranean, but already visible approach of death, the dull,

common life becomes an individuality at last." (BC, 171)

One would be hard pressed, I would suggest, to find a better example of what Hegel meant by the 'cunning of reason'. Medical knowledge proved not only cunning in the establishment of its claims to universal validity (as a science) but at the same time acknowledged the necessity for, and thereby legitimated the appropriation of, the lives of concrete individuals. These lives are no longer 'senseless' from a universal point of view, but are rather essential moments in a progress that moves above and beyond them. To paraphrase Hegel, then, medical knowledge "pays the tribute which existence and the transient world exact [namely the inevitable reality of death], but it pays it through the illnesses of individuals rather than out of its own resources."

Here we see why Foucault chose the development of medical knowledge as his subject, for it represents in concrete historical terms the fundamental characteristic of 'modernity' which expresses itself in the paradox of human finitude - that in recognizing its limits it recognizes its strength in the promise of unlimited progress - which underlies the whole modern project of achieving self-knowledge through the human sciences (a subject he will return to at length in Les mots et les choses). Foucault's choice proves to be most revealing because "medicine offers modern man the obstinate, yet reassuring face of his finitude; in it, death is endlessly repeated, but it is also exorcised; and although it ceaelessly reminds man

of the limit that he bears within him, it also speaks to him of that technical world that is the armed, positive, full form of his finitude." (BC, 198)

The stage is set for Foucault's next attempt to try to come to grips with, and even try to go beyond, this notion of finitude, and the kind of limits it places on self-knowledge.

CHAPTER FOUR - THE SILENCE OF THE PAST

The two works we have examined in some detail are quite clearly works _of_ history in a more or less straightforward sense insofar as they deal with certain specific features which belong to the past. But they are also, perhaps less straightforwardly, works _about_ history, not only because they question standard approaches to the subject-matters in question (i.e. madness and disease), but because they implicitly question the very assumptions upon which the study of history rests. I say 'implicitly' because at this point in Foucault's work the radical character of his questions lies more in the _perspective_ from which he concretely approaches his subject-matter rather than from any explicitly formulated theoretical position. The perspective he adopts is in an important sense _outside_ of history and this is what provides him with his critical distance. The sense in which this perspective is outside the historical process is that it represents that which is ultimately excluded from the historical process: the individual in his concrete, contingent, and accidental individuality.

However, this concern for the individual is precisely also a concern for history; history, that is, in all of its concrete particularity, its contingent relations, and accidental developments and outcomes. _This_, one might argue, is what the fine detail of history is about; detail that is marred by an over-zealous concern with the process of history considered as a whole, or a hasty assessment of its general significance. His-

tory, many will argue, is only about individuals insofar as they can be seen to be contributing to the process as a whole. History, as opposed to, say, the recounting of mere stories of the past is concerned with concrete particularities only to the extent that they can generate more abstract generalities (eg. about human behaviour, economic patterns, social movements); history seeks not contingent relations but necessary conditions leading not to accidental, but rather significant, developments. Of course, this is not the only conception of history. Indeed, this chapter will discuss developments in historiography that effectively challenge this view. However, I am arguing that it remains the dominant 'picture' of history, one that, I will try to show, still has a hold on even the most sustained attempts at avoiding it. The picture of history I refer to, again, is that picture which sees history as the story of how the past has contributed to the self-development of the present; or, history is the story of how the present came to be.

Foucault, in both works considered so far, takes up the case of this nameless individual that history - as the story of how the present came to be - uses up and leaves behind. That is, he deals not with the mind and body of history, but the mind and body of that which history leaves behind: the mind of Unreason and the body of the dead individual. The fuel and fodder of progress.

In the conclusion to the Birth of the Clinic, Foucault sums up quite nicely what he sought to demonstrate in his first

two major works:

> Western man could constitute himself within his language, and gave himself, in himself and by himself, a discursive existence, only in the opening created by his own elimination: from the experience of Unreason was born psychology; from the integration of death into medical thought is born a medicine that is given as a science of the individual: [from Holderin's Empedocles to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, and on to Freudian man][1] an obstinate relation to death prescribes to the universal its singular face, and lends to each individual the power of being heard forever; the individual owes to death a meaning that does not cease with him. (BC, 197)

This goes some way towards explaining Foucault's preoccupation in his next few works with the elaboration of the character and function of 'discursive practices', - what he calls 'episteme' - perhaps even to the point of obscuring the relation these discourses have with the individuals they both reveal and conceal at the same time. And we shall have occasion to note just how true this is in the next Part. But as his subsequent work will prove, the guiding thread still remains for Foucault the incontrovertibility of the 'anonymous individual' at the base of history. Perhaps Foucault's greatest success in these early works is to have pointed to the 'space of Unreason' and the individualized body of illness as concrete examples of what is meant by the 'anonymous individual' in history, i.e. an individuality that is not sacrificed but is rather guaranteed by that anonymity and can be discerned only negatively as the back-

[1] Curiously enough, the French text reads: ['Et d'une façon générale, l'expérience de l'individualité dans la culture moderne est peut-être liée à celle de la mort: des cadavres ouverts de Bichat à l'homme freudien]... (NC, 201)

drop against which the 'social individual' of historical concern gains its prominence and sense. Just how to sustain an account of this notion of 'anonymous individuality' without falling himself within a specific (one might say 'ideological') discursivity is precisely the problem will have again and again to confront. But (much) more of that later.

Before going to the next Part where Foucault's response takes on a distinctly 'theoretical' bent, I would like to take a little time to place this discussion within a wider historiographical (as opposed to a strictly philosophical) context, one which turns out to be quite receptive to the concern for the 'anonymous individual' (although it too stresses 'anonymity' at the expense of 'individuality').

That Foucault can be treated within a historiographical context seems a matter of course, given that he tended to consider himself more of an historian than a philosopher. So much so that the chair he eventually held at the College de France was, at his request, given the name of: History of Systems of Thought. And part of the task of this study is precisely that of placing him within the context of French historiography. This of course has been noticed in the literature, although it seems for the most part to be restricted to the work of the sixties, connecting him with the Annales school and with the developments in the philosophy and history of science. This is what we will discuss briefly here. However, what doesn't seem

to have been given the attention it deserves is the connection Foucault's work _after_ _The Archaeology of Knowledge_ has to the subsequent developments in French historiography, generically referred to as 'la nouvelle histoire'. These connections will be drawn out in Parts III and IV of this study. In the sixties, however, the two main developments of French historiography bear resemblence to Foucault's work in a particularly noticeable manner.

On the one hand there had been an emphasis on what has been called "la longue duree" in historical studies, especially in the work of Fernand Braudel (himself taking over the _Annales_ banner from his mentors Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre)[1]. On the other hand, Louis Althusser (working in the vein of Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem) has developed the notion of a "coupure épistemologique" i.e. an emphasis on discontinuity in history. And as Lemert and Gillan have written: "Stable structures and discontinuities, history of the long term and the history of rupture meet in Foucault."[2] What we want to do here is give a brief account of these twin developments with special reference to how they contribute to a concern with "anonymity" within history.

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[1]The standard work on the Annales school in French historiography is probably Traian Stoianovich, _French Historical Method: the Annales Paradigm_ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

[2]_Michel Foucault: Social Theory and Transgression_ (New York: Columbia, 1982), p. 11.

First off, it should be noted that the two historiographical developments arise out of specific disciplinary boundaries of unequal dimensions. The *Annales* school represents a very broad conception that applies to the study of history as a whole, as an academic discipline. The historiographical innovations introduced by people like Canguilhem, Bachelard, or Althusser are more restrictive in one sense, insofar as they are concerned with the history of ideas (or more specifically the history and philosophy of science); but in another sense their conceptions have a wider impact because they are *epistemological* in a general sense, and are not limited to the epistemology of historical knowledge.

These internal disciplinary considerations account to some extent for the differences between the two approaches to history, and even, perhaps, for their apparent opposition. This suggestion gains plausibility when we examine the character of the traditional historiographical concerns either approach was faced with, and their reaction to those concerns.

If we begin with the *Annales* school (taken as whole, even though there are differences in emphasis and orientation between Bloch and Febvre and the later 'generations' as they came to be called), their criticism and restructuring of traditional historiography can be summed up in four major points, each of them pointing towards the "anonymous" side of history.

1) Traditional historiography only considers written documents and first-person or direct accounts as evidence,

while obviously non-written resources, such as those provided by archeology and statistics reveal a wealth of information. (In Foucault's work, especially Madness and Civilization, much use is made of the 'art' of a period in discerning its fundamental concerns.)

2) Traditional historiography centers around and emphasizes singular events spread over a short period of time while overlooking the general development of societies and cultures as revealed by mundane, repeated facts that take place over a long period of time (like agricultural practices, or, in Foucault, practices of confinement).

3) Traditional historiography gives special status to the political, the diplomatic and the military character of historical events while underestimating socio-economic and cultural facts. Foucault's archaeological considerations can, at least in the works just examined, be seen as a combination of the socio-economic and the cultural.

4) And finally, traditional historiography, according to the Annales school, was 'cowardly'. It feared debate, and eschewed controversial interpretation and refused any form of historical synthesis. Foucault's 'attack' on traditional history of ideas is also in keeping with this final point.

Such is the negative characterization of the Annales school. A positive characterization is a more difficult matter since the major commonality between the historians affiliated to or indebted to the Annales paradigm[1] is their rejection of trad-

itional historiography.[2] The Annales movement can be divided into the work of three generations of historians. The first generation consists essentially of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, the founders of the Annales journal itself in 1929. Bloch's work diverged from traditional historiography first by emphasizing economic factors rather than merely political and military ones; but, more importantly, he argued for a comparative approach to history which sought to draw analogies between geographically and even temporally distinct phenomena, thus exploding the generally sequential causal framework of traditional historiography. He drew attention to the importance of drawing similarities and dissimilarities between distinct phenomena.[3] Febvre's innovation and contribution is an emphasis on the study of 'sensibility' in history, of the emotional life of the past and of its importance in shaping the context and content of the evidence historians consider,[4] again undermining the almost exclusive concern of establishing causal chains.

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[1]For a characterization of the Annales approach to history as a 'paradigm', cf. T. Straianovitch, p. 236ff.

[2]For a critical assessment of the Annales movement, cf. F. Dosse, L'histoire "en miettes" (Paris: La Découverte, 1987). For a more polemical study, cf. H. Coutau-Bégarie, Le phénomène "Nouvelle histoire": Stratégies et idéologies des nouveaux historiens (Paris: Economica, 1989).

[3]For a brief discussion, cf. M. Bloch, 'A Contribution Towards a Comparative History of Human Societies' in French Studies in History, eds. M. Aymard and H. Mukhia (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988), pp. 35-68.

[4]Cf. Lucien Febvre, 'Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past' in French Studies in History, pp. 102-120.

The second generation, led by the imposing figure of Fernand Braudel, is preoccupied with the establishment and investigation of "la longue duree": Braudel's name for a particular level of slow-moving historical time descriptive not of events and dates, but of structures and patterns that develop slowly over time and help shape and determine those matters dealt with by more traditional histories.[1] This period is especially concerned with introducing and developing quantitative methods in history.

The third generation builds on the work of the first two; but while the first helped introduce economic and psychological considerations into historical research, and the second geographical and mathematical methodologies, the third makes use of anthropology, ethnography and linguistics. Its main concerns revolve around the material conditions and support of culture as well as a concern with what has come to be called "l'histoire des mentalités" which explores what might be called the collective unconscious of a particular time and place.[2]

Foucault, I will be arguing throughout this thesis, can and should be read against the backdrop of these historiographical developments. Indeed, I am arguing that, if Foucault's philosophy of history is of interest and importance, it is

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[1]Cf. F. Braudel, 'History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Duree' in French Studies in History, pp. 69-101.

[2]A good overall treatment of this third generation can be found in the three volumes edited by Pierre Nora and Jacques Le Goff, Faire de l'histoire (Paris: Gallimard, 1974.)

because it takes into account this 'new history' as it is often called; a new history that has gone a considerable way in exploding the traditional 'picture' of history and thereby can contribute to reducing the peculiar grip it has on the contemporary imagination.

And nowhere is this grip more apparent than in the history of ideas. For while Foucault can be read as belonging to this new history inasmuch as his work draws out the similarities and dissimilarities of different periods by examining the structures and patterns of what he will call the 'positive unconscious' of history, he does so with the standard practices and purposes of the history of ideas in mind. And in this, his approach is also indebted to the work of Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem, his teacher and thesis advisor. This is interesting because, in certain ways, the new history contrasts with the historiographical innovations surfacing in the history and philosophy of science at about the same time. For while emphasis on generality and the long-term proved to be innovative in historical research as such, it was already well-entrenched in the history of ideas (or of science). The history of science was seen as the gradual development and progressive elucidation of the modern scientific outlook. It was seen as the story of trial and error, of flashes of brilliance, and the slow march of truth. People like Bachelard and Canguilhem were to puncture the smoothness of this edifying story by bringing it down to earth.[1]

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[1]For a discussion of Bachelard and Canguilhem with the work of Foucault in mind, cf. G. Gutting, op. cit., and also D.

Bachelard introduces the notion of an 'epistemological break' whose point is that the development of science actually proceeds by breaking with ordinary modes of perception and understanding by placing the objects under investigation under new concepts and thereby revealing heretofore unimagined relations between them. These new relations result in a restructuring of the character of that experience such that the continuity it has with the past is one of difference rather than similarity. For his part, Canguilhem also wants to oppose the supposed continuity of the development of scientific knowledge. (This is particularly evident, as we have had occasion to notice, in the way traditional history of science sees its task as the tracing of 'precursors' of modern ideas - eg. Aristarchus on heliocentrism - thereby assuming that these ideas can be taken out of their contexts and compared in terms of their 'resemblance' to modern ideas.) Canguilhem sees the problem as in part the result of seeing the history of science as the history of theories (i.e. each one trying to correct the mistakes of the last one). Instead of this, Canguilhem suggests that it is more fruitful to study the history of concepts since it is the concepts themselves which organize the various concerns which are pursued. Concepts, unlike theories, are not tied to particular formulations, and thus can be discerned by means of their relations and not by means of explicit articulation. Concepts

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Lecourt, Marxism and Epistemology: Bachelard, Canguilhem and Foucault, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1975).

suggest the questions that were asked rather than the answers that are finally given; answers are always compromises, whereas questions reveal the formation and transformation of concepts at a more fundamental level.

This brings us to Althusser, who also uses the ideas of Bachelard and Canguilhem to attack traditional historiography, but his concern is not restricted to the history and philosophy of the sciences. His use of the 'epistemological break' is not confined to the development of science but to our understanding of society as a whole. What comes out of this new orientation is an emphasis on the structure of relations between conceptual concerns which have nothing to do with the explicit projects of self-conscious agents. Rather, Althusser makes use of agents merely as the 'bearers' of these structures of relations, while the really interesting story is that of the structures themselves, their formation and dissolution in the friction of constant interaction, thereby suggesting a discontinuous development characterized by the clash between new intelligibilities and the survival of old incoherences.

Obviously, even if we only consider the works examined thus far, Foucault owes a great deal to these thinkers. The idea of discontinuity, of the _reorganization_ of a conceptual space clearly echoes Bachelard's idea of an epistemological break. Indeed, Foucault's fundamental purpose "of showing the contingent nature of what present themselves as necessary a priori limits on knowledge corresponds to Bachelard's insistence

that philosophical a prioris derive from our inability or unwillingness to think beyond the categories of current (or recently past) science."[1] As well, Canguilhem's insistence on the structures revealed by the examination of concepts rather than theories is reflected in Foucault's attempt to uncover more fundamental structures that link different discursive practices. In this, Foucault, like Althusser, places the weight of his analysis on the structure of relations between concepts rather than privileging the explicit projects of self-conscious agents.

This last point also shows how the two developments in French historiography come together: they both reject self-consciousness as the subject and object of history and instead emphasize the structural and relational characteristics of the development of various practices in and over time.

The interest of Foucault, however, is the way in which the rejection of self-consciousness as the determining factor and primary matter of history is sustained and developed. It is, I will be arguing, the primary focus of his work considered as a whole. And I will also be arguing that out of this sustained rejection there arises a notion of what I am calling 'anonymous individuality'. This 'anonymous individuality' is not meant to replace self-consciousness as a new 'subject and object' of history, however; rather, it signals a different answer to the question of the <u>point and purpose</u> of which, I further argue and suggest, becomes the fundamental and central

[1]Gutting, p. 53.

question of a renewed conception of the philosophy of history.

PART II - THE PROCESS OF HISTORY : "THINGS SAID"

INTRODUCTION: UNEARTHING THE POSITIVE UNCONSCIOUS

The works considered in this Part are crucial for understanding Foucault's conception of history. The Order of Things, The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Order of Discourse will be read as offering, in a more sustained manner than previously, what this study is calling Foucault's philosophy of history. That is, the development and discussion of the archaeological method is to be read in the wider context of his general reflections on and use of the concept of history.

Foucault, like most philosophers of history, is struggling with the ambiguity of the very notion of history. Sometimes he uses the term with obvious reference to it as a discipline. This is clear when he discussses the notion of archaeology as a methodological alternative to the traditional approach to the study of history - more specifically the history of ideas. At other times, the notion of archaeology, in its use of the concepts of epistemes and discursive formations, appears to be more descriptive of the historical process as such. Unfortunately, just as in the case of the ambiguous use of the notion of history in traditional philosophy of history, it is not always clear whether it may not carry with it certain ontological implications. Similarly for the notion of episteme, one is not always sure if it is meant to be descriptive or if it is to be understood as methodologically prescriptive.

However, Foucault is not alone in this oscillation be-

tween a methodological and ontological treatment of history. Indeed, this oscillation may be considered the moving force behind the developments of modern French historiography discussed in the final chapter of the last Part. The methods adopted, whether they are the quantitative ones characteristic of economics and statistical analysis, or the more qualitative ones derived from anthropology and psychology, imply conceptions of the historical process itself as best characterized or understood, for the first, in terms of economic patterns, or, for the second, in terms of the unconscious structures of various 'mentalites'. And these conceptions in turn are shaped by the success or failure of various methodological extensions and applications.

An examination of the oscillation between methodology and ontology characteristic of Foucault's approach to history will be the focus of this Part. Generally speaking, Foucault's approach to history is to be seen, as he himself suggests, as the attempt "to reveal a <u>positive unconscious</u> of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse."[1] Here we have a clear example of how Foucault combines the structural concerns with the unconscious characteristic of the new history with the epistemological concerns of the history and philosophy of science as

[1]Michel Foucault, <u>The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences</u>, trans. A. Sheridan-Smith (New York:), p. xi. Hereafter referred to as OT. Foucault has provided, for this English translation, a useful introduction specifically addressed to an English-speaking audience.

practised by Bachelard and Canguilhem. Foucault describes this positive unconscious as those "rules of formation, which were never formulated in their own right, but are to be found only in widely differing theories, concepts, and objects of study, that I have tried to reveal, by isolating, as their specific locus, a level that I have called, somewhat arbitrarily perhaps, archaeological." (OT, xi) Thus, it is quite clear that the uncovering of this positive unconscious is the object of Foucault's historical investigations and we shall examine this more closely in a moment.

But can we say that the positive unconscious also designates the subject of history? Is Foucault suggesting that the historical process itself is to be understood as the process of this positive unconscious such that the course of history is determined unconsciously? The answer to this question - which is the central question of the works we are here considering - can only be found through an examination of some of the philosophical problems that arise out of Foucault's conception of this positive unconscious.

Foucault himself formulates three of the problems in the forward to the English edition of The Order of Things. We shall take up these formulations and devote a chapter to each.

The first chapter will deal with the problem of change. It will exmamine the way in which continuity and discontinuity play off each other in Foucault's work. More precisely, it will discuss in what sense discontinuity is descriptive of the his-

torical process as such.

The second chapter will discuss the problem of causality, provoked in large part by the theme of discontinuity. That is, if the process of history is described in terms of successive discontinuously related discursive formations, then what causes the formations of any particular one and what causes the rupture with the formation of the next? It should be noted immediately that Foucault does not provide an answer to this question; rather, his discussion throws an interesting light on the whole question of causation in history.

And, finally, the question of causation leads to a final chapter that deals with the problem of the subject indicated above. What is the subject of history for Foucault? The structures of knowledge? And how are these related to the traditional subject of history, i.e. the actual doings and sufferings of human beings? That is, we will discuss what Foucault means when he attempts to show how human agents, the traditional subject of history, are "determined in their situation, their function, their perceptive capacity, and their practical possibilities by conditions that dominate and even overwhelm them." (OT, xiv)

The examination of these problems should give us a good idea of how, at this stage, Foucault conceives the historical process.

CHAPTER ONE - THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE

Foucault has sometimes been called an anti-historian.[1] The primary reason for this is his emphasis on the notion of discontinuity in history; of abrupt, inexplicable, and fundamental changes in the way human beings have understood the world around them. Such an emphasis is anti-historical on a particular reading of history, one which characterizes history as the story of how the present came to be. I argued in the last Part that this is the dominant view of history. It is a view which recognizes and makes a distinction between the past and history. History selects out of the past the significant developments that have contributed to giving shape to the present and pointing to the future. On this view, the individual and the particular do not possess historical significance in and of themselves, but only to the extent that they can be seen to be contributing to a larger collective development. Raymond Aron, for example, espouses such a view and characterizes it as follows:

> At a certain point in time, an individual reflects on his adventure, a collectivity on its past, humanity on its evolution: thus are born the autobiography, particular history, universal history. History is the retrospective grasp of human development [devenir], that is, at once social and spiritual.[2]

[1]For example, J.M. Merquior, Foucault (London: Fontana), p. 45.

On this view, to describe the historical process as subject to abrupt discontinuous and inexplicable change is precisely to refuse to see the historical process historically. That is, it is in effect to refuse to do history, whose task it is to show the continuity of the historical process in terms of human development.

However, as our examination of Foucault's work in the last Part has shown, it is precisely this picture of history that Foucault is intent on questioning. We saw that in those works Foucault attempted to shift radically the point of view of the historian, first by attempting to write from within the space of Unreason and then from the space opened up by the body of the dead individual. What these attempts suggested was that Foucault realized in order to break out of the traditional approach to history - one which sees its task as the telling of the story of how the past necessarily led up to the present - he would have somehow to stand outside of that present's self-understanding. In that sense, then, Foucault was indeed an anti-historian. But in another sense, in wishing to break out of the present's self-understanding, Foucault was nothing but an historian, insofar as the historian's self-appointed task is to give us an unbiased and 'objective' account of the past. And as many historians remind us, the interest and significance of studying and preserving the past lies precisely in the fact that

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[2]R. Aron, Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 98. My translation.

the past is unlike the present.[1] In this sense, Foucault was anything but an anti-historian. And it is only if we keep this in mind that we can understand and properly assess Foucault's often repeated claim of being merely a 'positivist'.[2]

Of course, these brief considerations lead immediately to a series of well-known and much discussed difficulties in the philosophy of history concerning the 'objectivity' of historical knowledge, of the relation of the past to the present, and the whole question of historical evidence. But these are precisely the questions Foucault's work addresses in the development of his archaeological approach to the past.

The primary function of this 'archaeological' approach is to uncover the radical discontinuities that underlie the seemingly unified development recounted by traditional historiography. At least, this is Foucault's deliberately provocative way of putting it. We have already noted that the radical character of such a move is somewhat attenuated when it is placed within the context of the twin development of modern French historiography discussed in the last chapter of the previous Part of this study. And indeed this twin development and Foucault's place within it are discussed in the introduction to The Archaeology of Knowledge; we shall therefore have occasion to return to it. However, this relation and influence

[1] Cf. Philippe Ariès, Le temps de l'histoire. Paris: Seuil, 1987.

[2] For Foucault's positivism, cf. Paul Veyne, "Foucault révolutionne l'histoire" in Comment on écrit l'histoire (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p. 201ff.

is less evident (and, perhaps, only or primarily implicit) in The Order of Things, and therefore something must be said about the peculiar character of this undoubtedly most well-known of all of Foucault's works.

Part of the interest of the Birth of the Clinic and Madness and Civilization consisted in the way Foucault attempted to find a perspective on the past that stood outside the dominant mode of understanding history, while at the same time acknowledging that the past can be approached only via a certain perspective such that the historian cannot claim transcendental objectivity. The historian does not stand outside the historical process. Thus the appeal to Unreason and the body of the dead individual. The problem with The Order of Things for most critics is that in it there is no such acknowledgement of perspective. The archaeologist, it seems, unlike the historian, does stand outside the process he is describing, unaffected by the conditions that apparently determine everything (and everybody) else. How can Foucault describe the radical shifts in episteme, how can he describe an episteme that is thoroughly and completely discontinuous from his own without reducing it to the terms characteristic of his own? In other words, how can Foucault affirm that two periods are discontinuous if he does not claim a position that transcends them both, or one that at least can trace certain continuous elements within an otherwise discontinuous process.

This last point is important for, as we shall see, Foucault does in fact presuppose an element of continuity in his description of otherwise radically discontinuous episteme; however, this element of continuity is not explanatory, which, it turns out, is what the point of the objection to the discontinuity thesis usually is. For example, Michel Amiot writes:

> One might accept, if need be, a pure historian limiting himself to the reconstruction of a contingent and unexplained succession of periods of knowledge; but it is unacceptable for a philosopher to act as though the contingency of so-called "enigmatic" successions was forever inexplicable to him.[1]

Foucault would no doubt respond by insisting that his claim is not that the discontinuous character is 'forever inexplicable' but that he refuses to explain them away, as it were. Traditional explanations of these important changes are, for Foucault, "more magical than effective." (OT, xiii)

But if these changes in history are contingent, they are not arbitrary, in the sense that they are not unstructured. This brings us back to the element of continuity that seems to traverse The Order of Things. That element is: language. The point, however, is not that language is in some sense an explanatory element of continuity; rather, it is a descriptive element of continuity. The Order of Things describes the different ways in which language is related to the world, or rather betrayed, by the way that relation has been articulated by those whose

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[1] Michel Amiot, 'Le relativisme culturaliste de Michel Foucault', Temps modernes 22 (1967), p. 1294. My translation.

business is to articulate such matters, such as alchemists, grammarians, or philologists, depending on which period one is examining. Foucault's claim is that this relation between language and the world (the implicit principle of continuity) is radically different from one period to another (the thesis of discontinuity). The Order of Things attempts to describe those differences.

Foucault describes three discontinuous 'periods' and the possibility of a fourth. That is, three 'periods' in which les mots and les choses are related to each other, or are connected together. In the first period, the Renaissance, language and world are intimately connected in terms of resemblance. In fact, language and world are in essence one, insofar as the world is seen as an infinite text, one that provokes endless commentary upon commentary. The world of nature and the 'world' of knowledge are both fundamentally mysterious and esoteric. That is, the world of nature and the obscure texts of knowledge are replete with innumerable signs which, however, point to a fundamental unity. In the terminology of structural linguistics which Foucault often makes use of in this work, during the Renaissance, the relation between les mots and les choses is not the binary relation of signifier to signified but a ternary organisation of signs "since it requires the formal domain of marks, the content indicated by them, and the similitudes that link the marks to the things designated by

them; but since resemblance is the form of the signs as well as their content, the three distinct elements of this articulation are resolved into a single form." (OT, 42)

The next period is that of the Classical Age. The relation between words and things in the Classical Age is characterized by the notion of 'representation' rather than 'resemblance' and illustrates the split that now persists between words (language) and the things they merely represent (the world). Language is severed from the world and "has withdrawn from the midst of beings themselves and has entered a period of transparency and neutrality." (OT, 56) The connection between language and the world does not reveal a deep truth in terms of a fundamental affinity, but is concerned with certainty and accuracy. Words and language can attempt to translate or represent the world as accurately as possible, but "they no longer have the right to be considered a mark of it." (OT, 56) The relation between words and things is now one of measure and order.

The third period has been called the Modern period, or the period of Man, and it is in many ways our own period, although Foucault admits, even celebrates, the fact that there are 'signs' suggesting we may be coming out of it.

The Modern period is the period of Man. That is, it is the period characterizing the link or connection between words and things as necessarily passing through Man, or subjectivity. Language and world are mediated through the knowing

consciousness of Man. Kant, of course, is the pivotal figure. Representation is no longer directly of the world, but rather stems from the active consciousness of the thinking subject. The Classical Age severed language from the world in order to represent that world in a measurable and orderly fashion. For the Modern period, even this connection with the world is severed such that representations collapse within the subject, making the subject, and not the world, the focal point of both words and things, <u>les mots et les choses</u>. Or rather, the subject is the focal point because <u>it</u> (and not language) must mediate an independent world of things and an unconnected world of words (representations). Thus, on the one hand, "there will be things with their own organic structures, their hidden veins, the space that articulates them, the time that produces them; and then representation, a purely temporal succession, in which those things address themselves (always partially) to a subjectivity, a consciousness, a singular effort of cognition, to the 'psychological' individual who from the depth of his own history, or on the basis of the tradition handed down to him, is trying to know." (OT, 240)

In the final chapter, Foucault suggests that the Modern period is coming to an end, by which he means that the figure of Man (i.e. subjectivity) as the filter of knowledge, of the relation between language and the world no longer holds. Man is dead. For Foucault, the death of Man refers to "the explosion of man's face in laughter, and the return of masks; it is the

scattering of the profound stream of time by which he felt himself carried along and whose pressure he suspected in the very being of things; it is the identity of the Return of the Same and the absolute dispersion of man." (OT, 385) With the dispersion of Man comes the final severance between word and thing, between language and world, between representation and that which it is _said_ to represent. The world is wholly taken up in language, the world is world of _things said_, neither grounded in the subject nor in an ordered system of representations, but nevertheless displaying "a unity that we ought to think but cannot yet do so" (OT, 386), a task whose possibility has been 'dug up' by Foucault's archaeology.

This emphasis on the continuity of the theme of language within an otherwise discontinuous procession of epistemes is not meant to smooth over the radicality of Foucault's conception of history. This was what was meant by the claim that language offered a _descriptive_ continuity and not an _explanatory_ one. This appeal to language is akin to Foucault's earlier appeals to Unreason and to the re-organized space around the body of the dead individual in that he is trying to write from a perspective which is both _within_ the historical process and _outside_ of it. That is, he would like to describe the historical process in terms that are _immanent_ to it, that do not have transcendental or universal status, and yet are not the terms used in the self-conceptions, self-articulations, self-justifications of those _within_ the process. And he does this by treat-

ing language, not as the vehicle or medium by which something is said by someone, but rather in itself; not as a system of meaning but as a record of things said. Language is thus historical in that it has been 'said' at a particular time and place; and at the same time, having been 'said', it is no longer dependent on the occasion of its particular articulation. In other words, although historical, language is not understood as the underlying substance of history, but quite simply (one might say: positivistically) as the catalogue of 'things said'.

So much for the general point about language. Foucault's treatment of language is obviously indebted to the work of people like Georges Dumezil, an historian of religion, who "had pointed out the need for an analysis of discourse distinct from traditional methods of exegesis as well as from those of linguistic formalism" and himself "dedicated his efforts to uncovering common structural principles among texts that were viewed strictly in their specific historical, institutional, and ideological functioning."[1]

It is important to note at this point that the language Foucault is concerned with in The Order of Things is language that expresses or pretends to express knowledge about the world. The epistemes Foucault describes concern the expressions of knowledge. Thus the claim about discontinuity applies to the expressions of knowledge.

Interestingly, if this latter point is kept in mind, it

[1]James Bernauer, Michel Foucault's Force of Flight, p. 96.

suggests that the standard view of Foucault as the 'historian of discontinuity' in fact understands things backwards. On this view, the notion of discontinuity has a kind of ontological status. That is , the historical process is said to be fundamentally discontinuous. So much so that Foucault is seen as propounding some kind of irrationalist reading of history; irrationalist in the sense of refusing to see any point or purpose being achieved in and through history. History in terms of progress and evolution is abandoned in favor of a view of history as sheer senseless becoming.[1] The problem with this is that it leads to somewhat peculiar (and overstated) interpretations of Foucault's understanding of the historical process. For example, Merquior tells us that "in Foucault epistemic mutations are fundamentally arbitrary. Epistemes succeed one another without any inner logic. Moreover they tend to constitute radically heterogeneous blocks of knowledge: absolute discontinuity is the supreme interepistemic law."[2]

This somewhat inflated claim does not square well with the kinds of things Foucault writes when he discusses the discontinuities he encounters between various epistemes.

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[1] A distinction expressed, for example, by Aron over forty years ago: "L'histoire-évolution se degrade aujourd'hui en histoire-devenir. Sans cesse créatrice d'oeuvres spirituelles ou sociales, elle est sans but, sans terme fixe, toute époque existe pour elle-même, irreductible et solitaire, puisque chacune s'assigne une fin différente et qu'aucune communauté profonde n'unit ces humanités dispersées." Introduction à la philosophie d'histoire, p. 183.

[2] Merquior, p. 42.

For example, when he deals with the change from the Renaissance to the Classical Age, the problem of discontinuities is treated as a series of questions rather than as a postulate. Questions that cannot as yet be answered; not until "the archaeology of thought has been established more firmly, until it is better able to gauge what it is capable of describing directly and positively, until it has defined the particular systems and internal connections it has to deal with before attempting to encompass thought and to investigate how it contrives to escape itself." (OT, 50-51) And until then, Foucault insists that all he is doing is tracing "these discontinuities in the simultaneously manifest and obscure empirical order wherever they posit themselves." (OT, 51) What this suggests is that the idea of discontinuity is not so much an ontological claim about the historical process, as it is a particular feature or peculiarity of the history of <u>ideas</u> (or knowledge). And the specific question he is asking (recall in the preface the description of Borges' "Chinese encyclopedia") is not which concerns history as a whole but rather: "What does it mean, no longer being able to think a certain thought? Or to introduce a new thought." (OT, 50)
It is true that he does <u>assume</u> the fundamental character of these discontinuities, but not out of an ontological or metaphysical impulse. He does this on the <u>grounds of the evidence</u>. That is, there really is a fundamental discontinuity between the <u>expressions</u> of knowledge of these different periods. What he is <u>not</u> assuming is that there is some kind of explanatory principle

beneath these 'surface' (i.e. theoretical, ideological, superstructural, etc.) discontinuities that would permit an historical explanation. In fact, Foucault addresses this idea of 'explaining' these discontinuities when he introduces the second fundamental mutation from the Classical Age to the Modern period. He writes:

> What event, what law do they obey, these mutations that suddenly decide that things are no longer perceived, decribed, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way, and that it is no longer wealth, living beings, and discourse that are presented to knowledge in the interstices of words or through their transparency, but beings radically different from them? For an archaeology, this profound breach in the expanse of continuities, though it must be analysed, and minutely so, cannot be 'explained' or even summed up in a single word. It is a radical event that is distributed across the entire visible surface of knowledge, and whose signs, shocks, and effects it is possible to follow step by step. (OT, 217)

What this suggest is that Foucault is at least as interested in the continuities within a given episteme as he is in the fact that they display fundamental discontinuities between themselves. This runs against the grain of the traditional history of ideas which seeks to trace the fundamental connections that link one period to the next and which ultimately culminate in the present. In that sense, the traditional approach overlooks (indeed dismisses) the many differences that distinguish different periods. Foucault, as against this, seeks to restore the distinctiveness of these different periods, and in this sense, agrees with the historian P. Ariès, that: "For a civilization that eliminates differences, History must reinstate a lost

sense of particularity."[1] Perhaps the best way to put the equal importance Foucault places on both continuities and discontinuities has been expressed by Roberto Machado who translates it in terms which, at this period, Foucault would have been more familiar with: "The major ambition of The Order of Things is to uncover the synchronic continuities and the diachronic discontinuities between knowledges and to establish a general configuration of knowledge within a given period."[2] And indeed the substantive content of The Order of Things describes in minute detail (especially for a philosopher) these 'continuities' between the diverse disciplines that flourished within these different periods. And he is capable of doing this precisely because he does 'respect' the traditional boundaries and self-conception of these various disciplines; and by making use of Canguilhem's notion of a 'history of concepts' in fact "undermines the privileged role of disciplines in the history of thought and knowledge."[3]

But, of course, Foucault is not merely a practitioner of Canguilhem's 'history of concepts' which is still very much tied to the philosophy and history of science. For Foucault, all expressions of knowledge are descriptive in a particular episteme, even those expressions which do not immediately appear

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[1] P. Aries, Le Temps de l'histoire, p. 248. My translation.

[2] Roberto Mochado, 'Archéologie et épistémologie' in Michel Foucault, philosophe (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p. 28. My translation.

[3] Gutting, p. 219.

to us as 'knowledge-claims'. In the words of Gilles Deleuze: "Science and poetry equally are knowledge."[1] This is where those who read Foucault as 'the historian of discontinuities' have it, in a sense, backwards. Discontinuity is not what Foucault uncovers from beneath a surface continuity (although this is what one finds in history textbooks); rather he uncovers the continuities within a given episteme of the different expressions of knowledge in a given period. In a sense, discontinuity is the surface phenomenon as far as the evidence is concerned (and not the reconstructions undertaken by traditional historians of ideas). What Foucault is wary of is the way this evidence has been classified and categorized, and seeks to go 'beneath' them to see what other continuities and discontinuities they betray. After warning us away from the reductive continuity characteristic of traditional history of ideas, he asks us to be wary of the categories and classifications of knowledge we assume to periods vastly different from our own. In The Archaeology of Knowledge, he writes:

> We must also question those divisions or groupings with which we have become so familiar. Can one accept, as such, the distinction between the major types of discourse, or that between such forms or genres as science, literature, philosophy, religion, history, fiction, etc., and which tend to create certain great historical individualities? We are not even sure of ourselves when we are analyzing groups of statements which, when first formulated, were distributed, divided, and characterized in a quite different way: after all, 'literature' and 'politics' are recent categories, which can be applied to medieval culture, or even classical culture, only by a retrospective hypothesis, and by an interplay of formal analogies or semantic re-

[1] G. Deleuze, Foucault (Paris: Minuit, 1986), p. 29.

> semblances; but neither literature, nor politics, nor philosophy and the sciences articulated the field of discourse, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as they did in the nineteenth century. In any case, these divisions - whether our own, or those contemporary with the discourse under examination - are always themselves reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalized types: they, in turn, are facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others; of course, they also have complex relations with each other, but they are not intrinsic, autochtonous, and universally recognizable characteristics. (AK, 22)

And hence Foucault characterizes himself as an 'archaeologist' rather than as a 'historian'. The choice of words is obviously significant and yet we have not up to now discussed that significance. One associates the image of the archaeologist in this context as someone who is digging beneath the surface and thus unearthing the 'true' story. However, this is a better description of a detective than it is of the archaeologist. The image suggested by the term 'archaeology' is that of a ribboned off section of land, meticulously and carefully excavated, every 'chance' discovery catalogued and analyzed (not in order to 'explain' its appearance, but merely to identify it). An archaeological site appears to the untrained eye to be merely the rubble and remains of what might have been, admittedly, a human habitation. The archaeologist knows nothing of what or who these people were save by what they have unwittingly left behind. A broken pot, the walls of a house, their thickness and disposition. And it is precisely this anonymity and contingency that interests Foucault as archaeologist because what is revealed is unadorned and unconnected

to the investigator, at least in the sense of forming a link in a continuous chain culminating in the present. The archaeologist seeks to uncover the intelligibility implicit in the remains he digs up, not by connecting them to anything else, but by discerning the patterns they reveal in the way they were deposited, left behind, perhaps even buried.

Of course, Foucault's 'archaeological digs' are peculiar insofar as what he sifts through has nothing to do with mud and dirt, but rather has to do with words and thoughts. And to see words and thoughts as <u>deposits</u> (or, in Foucault's words, as 'archives') requires an effort on the part of the archaeologist. For the archaeologist is not concerned with these words and thoughts insofar as they do or do not <u>say</u> something to him/her; rather his/her concern is to place them in the interrelated system or formation in which they occur. In other words, the archaeologist 'digs up' the discursive formations deposited in the archives. Again, to recapitulate briefly what we have already had occasion to note, the point of developing this approach was to counter two nefarious tendencies in the traditional approach to the history of ideas. Both are related to the historian's (implicit) attitude towards the present. The first was to see the task of the historian as that of showing how the present came to be. This led to the second problem, this time of a more methodological nature, of the idea that the historian digs through the historical archives in search of 'precursor' ideas that foreshadow in however obscure a manner,

ideas with which we are familiar today. The result of combining these two tendencies is the view of history as a continuous, progressive development which inevitably culminates in the present (which is certainly not, Foucault argues, what the actual historical record suggests). Foucault's 'archaeology' meant to see different 'periods' of the past, not in relation to how they contributed to the present, but on their own terms, as 'present' to themselves, as a series of discontinuous 'present' discursive formations, each structured by its own intelligibilities and positivities. This approach to the past 'on its own terms' as it were, was not undertaken without concern for its own relation to the present, however. On the contrary, 'archaeological' analyses are meant to shock us out of the familiarity and embeddedness of the present. The emphasis on discontinuity is a reminder that things have not always been the way they were now and that, because of this (a fact obscured by traditional historiography), there is nothing necessary about discursive formations in the present.

However, this latter point, which is Foucault's main point in terms of archaeological methodology, is actually obscured by the way he develops that methodology because, in fact, as formulated, it raises as many questions as it resolves. While we acknowledge discontinuity, the question remains, why do epistemes change? And if a general answer is unavailable, then the question becomes: what is the significance of such changes? Can they be predicted, prevented, promoted? In addition to this,

it is unclear at this point how past discursive formations are related to the present; in fact, it is not even clear how any particular discursive formation is related to the present it is said to structure. Is a discursive formation a function of the words and deeds of actual historical agents, or are the said words and deeds themselves a function of the discursive formations?

These problems arise, in part, out of Foucault's particular 'archaeological method' and in part out of any attempt to deal with the past. But in order to discuss these matters fruitfully we shall turn away from the context of continuities and discontinuities and turn towards the matter of to what extent Foucault's archaeology partakes of both 'structuralist' and 'historical' approaches to the past, and how it can help us understand the difficult matter of causation in history.

CHAPTER TWO - THE PROBLEM OF CAUSALITY

It should be noted at the outset that Foucault does not, either in The Order of Things or in The Archaeology of Knowledge, offer a resolution of the problem of causality in history. Indeed, he even claims to be leaving the whole question to one side, and "chose instead to confine myself to describing the transformations themselves, thinking that this would be an indispensable step if, one day, a theory of scientific change and epistemological causality was to be constructed." (OT, xiii)

However, leaving the question explicitly to one side does not mean that what he says doesn't impinge on the notion of causality. In fact, the whole development of the archaeological methodology can be read as a response and critique of the loose and uncritical discussion of 'causes' in history, at least to the extent that important and fundamental changes are reduced to an explanatory causal sequence that is unsatisfactory.

In addition, Foucault's insistence on description as opposed to explanation also goes to the heart of the problem of causality in history and the social sciences. To state the problem as briefly as possible: is the sense of cause used in historical explanation the same as that used in scientific explanation, the latter described as the discovery of necessary and sufficient conditions?[1] That is, are historians, when they trace the necessary conditions of a particular historical phenomenon

[1]Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether sufficient conditions can be discovered even in science.

and thereby attribute them causal significance, doing the same thing as the scientist when he establishes the necessary conditions for the occurrence of particular natural phenomena? Some argue that there is a fundamental difference between the two activities inasmuch as the historian "does not ask himself 'What causes y's?'; he asks, 'What is the cause of this y?' - and he asks this about a y in a determinate situation."[1] Another way of putting the point is to say that the generality of scientific causal explanation gives way in history to the specificity of the description of particular causes. As Dray goes on to say, historians generally use the notion of cause "to draw attention to some necessary condition which, for one reason or another, is considered important in the context of writing."[2]

This is where Foucault comes in. Although his work at this point does refrain from attributing causal significance, it does show that the attribution of necessity to particular conditions depends on the characterization of the context being described, and that the context he is interested in, that is, the context of knowledge is better described archaeologically than it is by taking knowledge-claims (and the account of their own genesis) at face-value. This is what Foucault means when he says that he wishes to describe the positive unconscious of knowledge.

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[1]W. H. Dray, Laws and Explanation in History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 104.

[2]Ibid., p. 112.

In this concern with the unconscious in history, Foucault demonstrates his affinity with the concerns of the new history for the patterns and structures that unconsciously determine historical contexts. Foucault even draws attention to the methods and concerns of this new history with obvious reference to the development of his own archaeology. Four features are discussed.

1. The first point is the historian's understanding of 'documents' (what we might call evidence). Traditional historiography treated documents "as the language of a voice since reduced to silence, its fragile, but possibly decipherable trace." (AK, 6) But this, of course, is to treat evidence uncritically, as a ready-made 'object'. Rather the evidence must be 'manipulated', information must be squeezed out of it. The mass of evidence and documents that have been 'left over' from the past is no longer treated as a hollow chamber resonating with echoes of voices of the past. Foucault tells us that the document or the evidence is no longer for history "an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said, the events of which only the trace remains; history is now trying to define within the documentary material (tissu) itself unities, totalities, series, relations." (AK, 7) In other words, history is no longer considered as the memories of a particular society's past (understood analogously to an individual's conscious memories); rather, history is to be understood as "one way in which a society re-

cognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked." (AK, 7)

2. The second point is a re-evaluation of the notion of discontinuity. For the traditional historian, 'discontinuity' was how he received his 'data' and which it was his job to transform into an intelligible account of an historical past. That is, discontinuity was understood as "the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the historian's task to remove from history." (AK, 8) For 'la nouvelle histoire', the notion of discontinuity is used 1) as a methodological principle that enables the historian to approach history from different 'levels of analysis' (short-, mid-, and long-term, for example); 2) as a result of analysis (the transformation of various 'series'); and 3) heterogeneously, depending on what 'domaine' one chooses to describe.

3. The third point, one which is particularly important for Foucault and which grows out of the two previous developments, is that "the theme and the possibility of a total history begin to disappear, and we see the emergence of something different that might be called a general history." (AK, 9) The idea behind this is now that historians can glean from the historical record various 'series', the question arises as to what relations, if any, can be correlated between these different series, and this on a variety of different levels. And the aim is not to get a complete picture (the correlation of new series is always a possibility) but rather a general picture.

Foucault describes the task of a general history as that of determining "what form of relation may be legitimately described between these different series; what vertical system they are capable of forming; what interplay of correlation and dominance exists between them; what may be the effects of shifts, different temporalities, and various rehandlings; in what distinct totalities certain elements may figure simultaneously; in short, not only what series, but also what 'series of series' - or, in other words, what 'tables' it is possible to draw up." (AK, 10) The point is that whereas a total history relates and reconstitutes everything "around a single centre - a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape; a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space of dispersion." (AK, 10)

4. And finally, all of these developments imply a series of methodological questions concerning such matters as what counts as evidence, the problem of selection, different levels of analysis and the relations between them, all of them in a certain 'standard' but whose resolutions require rethinking.

Foucault has described this 'nouvelle histoire' (within which he clearly sees himself as working) for two reasons: first, to relate this 'nouvelle histoire' to the so-called 'structuralist tide that was sweeping Paris'[1] insofar as it "intersects at certain points problems that are met in other

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[1]Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 83.

fields" but that it does so only in "a certain number of relatively limited cases" (AK, 11); and, secondly, to show that for the most part the concern with 'structures' in history, because 'home-grown' should not be construed as "an attempt to overcome a 'conflict' or 'opposition' between structure and historical development: it is a long time now since historians uncovered, described, and analyzed structures, without ever having occasion to wonder whether they were not allowing the living, fragile, pulsating 'history' to slip through their fingers. The structure/development opposition is relevant neither to the definition of the historical field, nor, in all probability, to the definition of a structural method." (AK, 11, my emphasis)

The question we will want to ask now is whether or not this explicit reference to 'la nouvelle histoire' helps us to understand the significance and intelligibility of Foucault's archaeology and the sense in which its analysis of the conditions of possibility (to be distinguished from the necessary conditions) of the formation and dissolution of the discourse of knowledge points in the direction of a renewed conception of history.

"Anonymous Statements and Anonymous Individuals"

For Foucault the target for attack and renewal is the 'history of ideas'. This, of course, from the outset, puts considerable distance between him and someone like Braudel. But it does bring him closer to others within the new history who

claim to be working out a 'histoire des mentalites'. It should be noted immediately that Foucault does want to distance himself from this approach; the reasons are what is interesting.

But, first, what is meant by the term 'histoire des mentalites' and how does it differ from the history of ideas? One way to point to the contrast it seeks to establish is to replace the term 'history of ideas' with that of 'intellectual history' which, for reasons of convenience, can be considered as synonymous. Generally speaking, one might state the distinction as that between consciously proposed and unconsciously held (or perhaps between proposed and presupposed) ideas. In Jacques Le Goff's words: "The history of mentalities operates at the level of everyday automatisms of behaviour. Its object is that which escapes historical individuals because it reveals the impersonal content of their thought."[1] Roger Chartier tells us that this "collective mentality that regulates the representations and judgements of social agents without their knowledge is opposed, term for term, to the conscious construction of an individualized mind."[2] Thus, what the 'histoire des mentalites' is interested in is the contents of thought contained within the individualized expressions of ideas insofar as "in fact the internalized conditionings that escape conscious knowledge and cause a group or a society to share a

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[1]Jacques Le Goff in Roger Chartier, Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 27.

[2]Ibid., p. 28.

system of representations and a system of values without the need to make them explicit."[1]

The main reason Foucault wants to stay away from this notion of 'mentalite' is that he considers it much too prone to a facile continuity, and he places it (or rather disposes of it) along with those others notions like 'tradition', or 'evolution', 'influence' and 'development', all of which lead to the impasses of traditional history of ideas. More specifically, he connects it with the notion of 'spirit', in the sense that both serve to establish "between the simultaneous or successive phenomena of a given period a community of meanings, symbolic links, an interplay of resemblance and reflexion (miroir), or which allows the sovereignty of collective consciousness to emerge as the principle of unity and explanation." (AK, 22) This identification of 'mentalites' and 'esprit', however, is somewhat facile on Foucault's part. For if anything, the notion of a 'mentalite', used by Le Goff or Duby for example, refers to a collective <u>un</u>conscious rather than a conscious one. That is, a notion of 'spirit' implies a certain measure of recognition and (ultimate) direction which does not seem to be necessary for the notion of 'mentalite'. Or rather, the notion of 'spirit' (which is in an important sense fundamentally 'progressive' if not always in a temporal sense then at least in terms of 'spreading' throughout a given population) would be added on or rests upon a notion of 'mentalite'.

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[1] Ibid., p. 28.

But still, the notion remains unacceptable for Foucault because of its constant reference to <u>consciousness</u>. And it is in attempting to avoid the idea of consciousness completely that Foucault appeals to the idea of <u>discourse</u> and to discursive formations. This, however, is a difficult notion to get a handle on. Indeed, despite his apparent theoretical intentions, one never really gets a clear treatement of the concepts introduced. There seems to be much flailing about on Foucault's part. He appears to come at the idea from a variety of different angles, but without ever grasping it firmly, as though he were shadow-boxing with it. If it is true that what he is offering are proposals for concrete historical analysis of 'knowledge', then, of course, he may have adopted such a 'loose' mode of presentation strategically or, at the very least, purposefully. Whether or not such a 'strategy' is at all helpful is an open question.

The first thing to say about 'discourse' is that it is not some kind of independent sphere of meaning that 'speakers' dip in and out of, or which somehow underlies everything they <u>may</u> say. Foucault asks us to give up these images "whose function is to ensure the infinite continuity of discourse and its secret presence to itself in the interplay of a constantly recurring absence." (AK, 25) Rather, Foucault wants us to understand discourse as nothing other than the sum total of '<u>things said</u>', that is, the domain of discourse "is made up of the totality of all effective statements [<u>énoncés</u>] (whether spoken or written),

in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them." (AK, 27) As we shall see, the key term Foucault uses throughout is that of _dispersion_. The point of characterizing discourse, in terms of analysis, as the domain of 'things _said_' at a particular time and place is to distinguish from the domain of _language_ per se. For although in order to study language one must consider actual instances of it, the point of the analysis is to produce "a finite body of rules that authorizes an infinite number of performances." (AK, 39) Foucault develops his notion in explicit contradistinction from this result. He writes:

> The field of discursive events, on the other hand, is a grouping that is always finite and limited at any moment to the linguistic sequences that have been formulated; they may be innumerable, they may, in sheer size, exceed the capacities of recording, memory, or reading: nevertheless they form a finite grouping. The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another? (AK, 27)

The 'instances' of language Foucault is concerned with, which are historically-specific as it were, are given the name of _énoncé_, and its particularity lies in the fact that it is always "an event that neither the language (_langue_) nor the meaning can quite exhaust." (AK, 28) The reason for this 'intransparency' is the specificity of its appearance. This 'specificity', however, has its own particular characteristics. A particular _énoncé_ is of course linked to the particular _manner_

in which it was 'said' (spoken, written) but also to the particular space of its appearance (in the 'thickness' of a given language, or, as Foucault calls it, the 'materiality' of a given medium: books, magazines, etc.); an énoncé is obviously unique as are all events, but is also capable of 'repetition', 'transformation' and 'reactivation'; and finally an énoncé is obviously linked to that which precedes and follows it in the standard relation of context and consequence, but also in a more 'formal' sense.

Foucault draws all of these distinctions in order to discern the particular and peculiar specificity of the énoncé; however, the point of establishing the 'space' where the énoncé occurs (or, as Foucault puts it, deploys itself) is not that of reestablishing it "in an isolation that nothing could overcome; it is not to close it upon itself; it is to leave oneself free to describe the interplay of relations within it and outside it." (AK, 29) Perhaps the best way of expressing what Foucault is trying to do is to produce a concept of a 'statement' which serves at one and the same time as both instance and rule.

Is this just another example of a philosopher attempting to have his cake and eat it, too? It would appear so, insofar as Foucault seems to be saying that "while a discursive formation cannot be individualized save by reference to a group of statements, at the same time a statement cannot be specified save by reference to the discursive formation within which it appears."[1] Is this a vicious circle? Or is it some-

thing else altogether? I want to suggest that what we have here is Foucault's attempt to describe the domain of knowledge in a way compatible with (indeed as something of an extension of) the way 'working historians' generally conceive the 'historical process', at least implicitly, and to the extent that they do not try to generalize their findings beyond their point of application. In other words, insofar as they are not indulging in the 'philosophy of history' (traditionally conceived). The 'working historian' I am referring to applies to those historians working in France at the same time Foucault was writing, but it can also refer any (say "social") historian who goes beyond the traditional emphasis on political and diplomatic 'events'. The student's nightmare-history of places and dates.

What is characteristic about these 'histories' is that, in seeking to describe a particular period - the major 'events', important trends, significant movements, as well as its general structures and distributions - they refer more often than not to what I earlier called 'anonymous individuals'. What this means is that, although they do of course refer to named individuals (like particular kings, presidents, and tyrants), they also refer to nameless individuals (like peasants, warriors and priests). These nameless or 'anonymous' individuals are not to be understood principally as groups and classes, although of course they can. In fact, this is one way of distinguishing history from

[1]B. Brown and M. Cousins, "The Linguistic Fault: the Case of Foucault's Archaeology" in M. Gane (ed.), Towards a Critique of Foucault (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 41.

sociology. While sociology is interested in the 'behaviour' of these groups, history is concerned with the 'activities' of these 'anonymous' individuals. And the reference to 'individuals' is fundamentally important, for the ultimate reference for sociology is the 'behaviour' itself, while for history it is the lives of the individuals.

Let us take an example. Georges Duby, in a book tracing economic expansion in Europe between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, refers to 'anonymous individuals' both in the persons of the lords and those of the peasants in describing the particular economic developments that arise out of the feudal organisation and distribution of wealth.

> No man could exploit the workers excessively without seeing their productivity fall, or forcing them to take flight in a world where there was still plenty of room for emigrants. That is why the desire to raise profits from seigneurial exploitation gradually formulated in the minds of lords and their agents the idea of 'ameliorating' output from dependent peasants, and the Latin word meliorare is often encountered in contemporary economic documents. Peasants were either encouraged to beget more children, or given an opportunity to expand their productive capacities. Part conscious, part countered by other influences and unsophisticated mental attitudes, this aim stimulated further progress within the new feudal milieu.[1]

What Duby is doing is tracing an actual economic development, not by referring to the 'behaviour' of groups (the nobles and peasants), but by referring to the actions (and

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[1]Georges Duby, The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century, trans. Howard B. Clarke (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), pp. 178-179.

possible reactions) of concrete and yet 'anonymous' individuals. These individuals are 'anonymous' inasmuch as they are not named <u>nor need they be</u> for Duby to achieve his aim, which is to trace the particular economic development of the period. And yet, leaving the anonymity aside for the moment, Duby is still referring to concrete particular individuals and their actions and not to the 'behaviour' of groups. He is referring to 'particular' nobles and 'particular' peasants who express various degrees of satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with their 'lot' in life. Underlying Duby's account are the lives of particular individuals and the tough choices they had to make between 'staying' and making the best of things and 'going' off and risking everything for the hope of something better, rather than more 'universal' assumptions about how hungry people tend to seek for food wherever it might take them, and that they will stay put if a sufficient amount is provided. And the point is, even if Duby (at the risk of narrative and evidential chaos) did spend pages and pages naming all of these particular individuals, it wouldn't <u>add</u> anything to his account, <u>even though those individuals are in fact presupposed</u>, and are who Duby is referring to.

I want to suggest that these 'anonymous individuals' who people Duby's histories are like Foucault's idea of 'enonce' in the archaeology of <u>knowledge</u>, insofar as they both serve as <u>instances</u> of what Duby is talking about and as the <u>rules</u> which permit him to give an account of their actions understood in 'socio-economic' terms. The difference with Foucault, of

course, is that he is not dealing with socio-economics, but with knowledge. Whereas Duby both presupposes and describes the actions of 'anonymous individuals', Foucault both presupposes and describes the articulation of 'anonymous statements', that is, of 'things said' at a given time and place. These 'anonymous statements' are both general and particular; particular because they have been stated, and general because they are considered 'anonymously'. And just as Duby's account of economic development would have been 'bogged down' and ultimately dissipated if he had gone into the concrete details of the lives of the particular named individuals, so too for Foucault the history of 'ideas' dissipates the domain of knowledge into the ideas and intuitions of named individuals.

To put this comparison between Duby and Foucault another way: the 'subject' of Duby's book is the economic development of Europe between the seventh and twelfth centuries. However, in an important sense, the 'subject' of the book is nothing other than a description of the particular relations that existed in that time between 'anonymous individuals' (anchored of course in occasional and 'strategic' proper names). Similarly, the 'subject' Foucault treats is knowledge, but by that he means nothing other than the description of the particular relations that exist at a given time between 'anonymous statements' (énoncés) considered as 'claims' to knowledge.

This comparison with Duby is not meant to exempt Foucault from all the difficulties and confusion the statement of

his own position has placed him in, but it is intended to take seriously his claim that he was not a 'structuralist'. This, of course, has been noted in the literature. For example, Dreyfus and Rabinow summarize it neatly when they say that "whereas the structuralist studies possibility, the archaeologist studies existence."[1] However, Dreyfus and Rabinow give the notion of 'existence' here more ontological weight than I suspect Foucault intended and which this comparison with Duby was meant to clarify. This 'ontological weight', as I have called it, lead Dreyfus and Rabinow to the conclusion cited earlier that "Foucault illegitimately hypostatized the observed formal regularities which describe discursive formations into conditions for these formations' existence."[2] However, the point I have been drawing attention to is that, if we grant along with Gutting that Foucault is less interested in providing a philosophical or social scientific theory than he is in providing a method of concrete historical analysis, then the use of 'observed' and 'existence' in the Dreyfus and Rabinow objection becomes problematic. It becomes problematic because notions like 'observation' and 'existence' take on a particular status in historical studies, principally because the 'existence' of that which it is said to 'observe' is gone forever, and all we have are 'things' from the past, our curiosity, critical acumen, and the resourcefulness of our imaginations.

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[1] Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 56.

[2] Ibid. My emphasis.

This leads us to the question of where history is actually 'made'; and Foucault might say, as would many historians, history is 'made' in the library.

"Foucault's Library"

What is an énoncé? Because it is a principle and/or instance of historical specificity it is difficult to say what it is without already undertaking a concrete analysis. However, it is not to be understood as a logical proposition, nor as a grammatical sentence, nor even as a speech-act.[1] Indeed, it is definitely not to be understood as an atomic unit of analysis. But nor is it to be understood holistically, i.e. structurally. I have tried to give it some shape by characterizing it as having to do with 'things said'; however, this characterization applied more specifically to discursive formations, and the purpose of referring to 'things said' was to point out that to define "a system of formation in its specific individuality is therefore to characterize a discourse or a group of statements by the regularity of a practice." (AK, 74) However, now we have to get more specific.

Foucault, after having eliminated various possible characterizations, ends up suggesting that we consider the énoncé less as an element of analysis than as a function. He writes:

> It is not so much one element among others, a division that can be located at a certain level of analysis, as a function that operates vertically in

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[1]On the relation between the notion of the énoncé and speech-act theory, cf. Dreyfus and Rabinow, pp. 46ff.

> relation to these various units, and which enables one to say of a series of signs whether or not they are present in it. The statement is not therefore a structure (that is, a group of relations between variable elements, thus authorizing a possibly infinite number of concrete models); it is a function of existence that properly belongs to signs and on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they 'make sense', according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation (oral or written). One should not be surprised, then, if one has failed to find structural criteria of unity for the statement; this is because it is not in itself a unit, but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space. (AK, 87; my emphasis)

Again, the enonce in the domain of knowledge serves the same function that the 'anonymous individual' plays in social history a la Duby insofar as a 'peasant' is not a particular creature created by something called 'the feudal system' but an individual who 'functions' as a condition for the possibility of that system and one which guarantees its existence, and does so as long as that anonymity is preserved. If the individual is named (given a proper name) then it immediately takes on a unity and content which returns it (or rather him/her) as an element of a system, rather than a function which traverses various systems.[1] In other words, the 'anonymous individual', just as Foucault's 'anonymous statement' is linked "to a 'referential' that is made up not of 'things', 'facts', 'realities' or 'beings', but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated, or described within it, and

[1]Cf. The Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 126.

for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it." (AK, 91) What has happened here is that we have effectively entered Foucault's library, for in a sense it is only in the library that the <u>énoncé</u>, in its splendid anonymity, actually 'exists'.

Because the <u>énoncé</u> is not an ethereal substance, it does have concrete, material existence, indeed <u>must</u> have it; and, in fact, "the statement not only needs this materiality; its materiality is not given to it, in addition, once all its determinations have been fixed: it is partly made up of this materiality." (AK, 100) And this because the 'materiality' we are speaking of is peculiar insofar as it must remain <u>anonymous</u>. That is, the <u>énoncé</u> "cannot be identified with a fragment of matter; but its identity varies with a complex set of material institutions." (AK, 103) This <u>institutional</u> reference is what guarantees the materiality, i.e. the concrete existence, of the <u>enonce</u> without however giving up its anonymity. This anonymity would in fact have to be abandoned if it were given spatio-temporal localisation (i.e. if it were <u>named</u>); however, as it is here presented, 'materiality' defines " the <u>possibilites of reinsciption and transcription</u> (but also thresholds and limits), rather than limited and perishable individualities." (AK, 103) The idea behind this notion of 'materiality', then, is not to provide a principle of individualisation per se, but rather to provide a principle of variation. It is this latter principle which accounts for an <u>énoncé</u>'s identity. Foucault writes: "The constancy of the statement, the preservation of its identity

through the unique events of the enunciations, its duplications through the identity of the forms, constitute the function of the <u>field of use</u> in which it is placed." (AK, 104) And this, of course, is why what is required here is not a theoretical approach, but concrete historical analysis.

What Foucault means by concrete historical analysis is historical analysis that is not theoretically motivated (historical examples dug out to illustrate some theory or other) but which also is not blind (does not submit to the 'authority' of the texts). Foucault does not simply wander around the library to see what he might find like a Sunday-afternoon antiquarian. He goes in, rather, armed with an a priori 'form' of analysis, but it is an <u>historical a priori</u>, by which he means "not a condition of validity for judgements, but a condition of reality for statements." (AK, 127) That is to say, the 'history' Foucault is 'looking for' as he pores over the books in his 'library' is one "not of truths that might never be said, or really given to experience; but the <u>a priori</u> of a history that is given, since it is that of things actually said." (AS, 127) An historical a priori is not a formal a priori but a contextual one insofar as its task is to weed out formal a prioris (for example, of different disciplines) and of the various connections (and dis-connections) between them.

Thus, Foucault's 'library' does not contain the depth and silence of the past, buzzing almost imperceptibly save for the sensitivity of the historian's ear. Rather, it is a 'space'

traversed by series and systems and discontinuous formations. Foucault describes this 'space' in the following way:

> We are now dealing with a complex volume, in which heterogeneous regions are differentiated or deployed, in accordance with specific rules and practices that cannot be superposed. Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive*. (AK, 128)

Given what we have said thus far, it is clear that by *archive* Foucault is not referring to all the documents self-consciously preserved by a given culture, but rather to all the documents (or monuments) *deposited* in the archive. That is, he is referring to the sum-total of 'things said' and the "system of discursivity, in the enunciative possibilities and impossibilities that it lays down." (AK, 129) The archive is not, in other words, a grand text, "the great confused murmur of *a* discourse" but rather "it is that which differentiates discours*es* in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration." (AK, 129; my emphasis)

A word returns again and again : dispersion. To put this in the context of Foucault's 'library' we can see that what Foucault is interested in is tracing the various 'dispersions' that run through this library whose material provides the evidence of the past. This is not hermeneutics. Foucault is not interested in opening up a 'dialogue' with the texts of the

past, in the attempt to effect a 'fusion of horizons' on the Gadamerian model. Rather, Foucault is interested in discerning what the texts 'say' despite themselves, and in order to do this, he cannot view them as disembodied voices but as the place where various 'dispersed' discourses can be seen to operate. And although these discursive formations display structural characteristics, they are not formal but actual, that is, historical, which for Foucault means that they are discontinuous. They are subject to mutation and transformation. This, of course, as we have already noted, is why Foucault distances himself from the universalist claims of structuralism. In fact, the opposition structuralism/history, given recent developments in historiography, has become less acute, not to say obsolete. As Deleuze has pointed out in his book on Foucault:

> ...the heart of contemporary debates has less to do with structuralism as such - that is, with the existence (or lack of it) of models and realities that we call structures - than with the place and status bestowed on the subject in ways we feel are not completely structured. Therefore, as long as we continue to contrast history directly with structure, we persist in believing that the subject can gather, build up and unify matter. But this no longer holds true if we think of 'epochs' or historical formations as being multiplicities. [1]

However, while this may be true and important in historiographical terms (and the explosion of historiographical production in France in the sixties and seventies is a testament to this approach) we are still left with a difficult philosophical

[1] G. Deleuze, Foucault, trans. S. Hand (Minneaplois: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 14.

problem: what about Foucault? What about the archivist himself? If he is going to describe history in terms of discursive formations and multiplicities, then surely it is the case that his own discourse is 'subject' to the same multiplicity.

In other words, if Foucault's archaeology is capable of describing the conditions of possibility of particular discursive formations, and thereby the positive unconscious that underlies them, then surely the conditions of possibility of Foucault's own discourse about discursive formations must be capable of archaeological description. But from what standpoint, from which point of view? How does the archaeologist himself reveal the conditions of his own positive unconscious?

This, I will be arguing is a specific instance of the larger philosophical problem of relating unconscious structures or relations with conscious discourse.

CHAPTER THREE - THE PROBLEM OF THE SUBJECT

What, then, about Foucault himself? What is the status of his own discourse? This has turned out to be one of the most fundamental criticisms of his 'archaeology'. And if the 'archaeology' is read as primarily concerned with <u>undermining</u> the human sciences by exposing their claims to scientific status, then Foucault's own project is undermined because it <u>assumes</u> a status for the 'archaeology' it is nowhere shown to possess. The status it assumes is said to be one it explicitly rejects, i.e. that of a kind of phenomenology, insofar as the archaeologist 'brackets' his own self-understanding qua archaeologist in order simply to 'transcribe' the discursive formations of the past. As Dreyfus and Rabinow have pointed out, Foucault, from the archaeological 'perspective' "looks on, as a detached meta-phenomenologist, at the historical Foucault who can't, if he thinks about human beings in a serious way, help thinking in terms of the meanings and truth claims governed by the latest discursive formation."[1]

I want to suggest that this is a misleading approach, insofar as it tends to read Foucault's 'archaeology' as an alternative human <u>science</u>. This, of course, is a plausible reading if attention is focused on <u>The Order of Things</u>, where Foucault tells us that "a 'human science' exists, not wherever man is in question, but wherever there is analysis - within the dimension proper to the unconscious - of norms, rules, and signifying tot-

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[1]Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 87.

alities which unveil to consciousness the conditions of its forms and contents." (OT, 364) The difference with Foucault's 'method', it is said, is that the analysis is not referred back to 'consciousness' but to the archaeologist! Stated this way, the problem (not to say incoherence) is overwhelming. However, the problem of _status_ of the archaeologist is no more a problem for Foucault than it is for any historian seeking to go beyond and beneath the exegetical account of discourses in the past in order to lay bare the _conditions_ of those discourses. The difference between the archaeologist and the historian is that the archaeologist attempts to reveal the conditions of _possibility_ of particular discourses by describing the _enonces_ that govern their formation, while the historian describes the conditions he deems _necessary_ for the characterization of subsequent events relative to the story he is trying to recount. However, both sets of conditions and their descriptions depend on the prior commitments of the inquirer, whether he be archaeologist or historian. The commitments of the historian are revealed by the significance he places on particular conditions vis-a-vis the story he is recounting. The commitments of the archaeologist, on the other hand, are revealed by the differences he describes. The point is, the problem doesn't lie with the commitments themselves, or, more precisely, the problem doesn't lie in the fact of _having_ these prior commitments, but in how these commitments are to be _identified_ and understood.

Foucault's archaeology attempts to show that this identification is deeply problematic and it limits itself to

identifying them by tracing their conditions of possibility rather than attempting to justify them by characterizing those conditions as necessary for the further development of those commitments. The problem with the latter approach, the approach of traditional historiography, is that before one can attribute necessity to particular conditions one must first be able to identify them. And this identification is problematic because, as Foucault tells us, "it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say - and to itself, the object of our discourse - its mode of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity, and disappearance." (AK, 130) The fundamental difficulty expressed in a sentence: "The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable." (AK, 130)

Since we cannot give a so-called 'objective' description of the archive we 'belong' to because we are in fact actually using it, what should we do? Foucault suggests that we resist the temptation of reducing everything to terms we are immediately familiar with, and try, instead, to describe another archive in all of its 'strangeness' and positivety. This is done, not out of a 'mere' interest, out of a desire to escape from the present into an idealized past. The analysis of an archive represents an altogether different function; what that

analysis shows is that "at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us." (AK, 130) This analysis evokes and describes a discourse we no longer share, its practices and pronouncements are ones we can no longer (immediately) recognize, its world begins where ours leaves off. It presents us with a fun-house mirror that tells us what we are not. This analysis finds its place within the space left open or silent by our own discursive practices. And in that sense it is a <u>diagnostic</u> analysis; it does not describe a whole, whether healthy or ill, it merely describes the functioning and relation of various parts. Foucault gives this description of what the archaeological analysis of an archive achieves:

> ...it deprives us of our continuities; it dissipates that temporal identity in which we are pleased to look at ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuties of history; it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies; and where anthropological thought once questioned man's being or subjectivity, it now bursts open the other, and the outside. In this sense, the diagnosis does not establish the fact of our identity by the play of distinctions. It establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. That difference, far from being the forgotten and recovered origin, is this dispersion that we are and make. (AK, 131)

What I would like to suggest is that the 'archaeology' that Foucault has developed is a first expression of what I am calling his <u>diagnostic</u> philosophy of history whose aim is to produce an understanding of history from within that history,

but anonymously, so that the understanding achieved is not reduced to being a mere moment in that history. Thus, his particular approach is not a theoretical philosophy of history, that is, its aim is not to tell us what history is or must be; but nor is it practical, in the sense of producing a program for action. Rather, it is diagnostic in the sense that it tells us what history is not, and consequently what it need not be.

Of course, what we have here is a first expression of this idea and many of its details and difficulties have yet to be worked out. However, before going on to deal with some of them, I would like, briefly, to compare Foucault's diagnostic approach to history with Wittgenstein's therapeutic approach to philosophy. And I want to do this in order to tone down somewhat Foucault's overblown rhetoric about the death of Man, which I find of only limited usefulness.

First of all, as for the idea that one cannot decribe one's own archive, a similar view is expressed by Wittgenstein in On Certainty[1], where he says "I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false." (OC, par 94) Of course, the reference to 'world' and 'I' does not fit quite well with Foucault, but the notion that truth and falsity are distinctions that are made certainly does. As is Wittgenstein's consistent practice of describing the use of language rather than theorizing about it. This idea

[1] (Basil Blackwell, 1969).

of the concrete, actual <u>use</u> of language as, not so much under-lying, but actually <u>composing</u> the world (or, for Foucault, the 'order of discourse') also seems to be what Wittgenstein attempts to illustrate in the very next paragraph:

> The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules. (OC, par 95)

The point being expressed here shows the difficulty of distinguishing between 'ourselves' and the 'world'. Both seem to be the function of the structured <u>use</u> of language. The 'propositions' (language) are learned <u>practically</u> (implicitly through use) as a game. By whom? By the players of the game. And as Gadamer has brilliantly shown, players are, in play, indistinguishable from the game.[1] Thus, one might say that Wittgenstein, too, is an 'anti-humanist' insofar as his descriptions of 'games people play' are not intended to tell us something about <u>people</u>. His interest lies solely in the games <u>that</u> are played; and specifically 'philosophical' games that lead only to illusion and impasse. Another way of putting it is to say that Wittgenstein is not interested in what Man <u>is</u>, but in merely in what he <u>does</u>. And in that sense his use of language-games and forms of life is not so much descriptive of what he takes the world to be, as it is a conceptual matter of getting at what is in fact <u>done</u>. This is what he means when he

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[1]Cf. <u>Truth and Method</u>, (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 91ff.

says that "it is our acting, which lies at the bottom c. the language-game." (OC, par 204)

Another similarity between Foucault and Wittgenstein can be found in another example provided by the latter:

> The child learns to believe a host of things. I.e. it learns to act according to these beliefs. Bit by bit there forms a system of what is believed, and in that system some things stand unshakeably fast and some are more or less liable to shift. What stands fast does so, not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing; it is rather held fast by what lies around it. (OC, par 21)

Note that Wittgenstein refers belief back to action and not 'consciousness', and the rest of the paragraph is less interested in the content of belief but rather in what might be called its 'contextual configuration'. One might even suggest that 'the system of what is believed' (i.e. system of ways of acting) is somewhat akin to both the notions of episteme and discursive formations in Foucault. Especially given the fact that what 'stands fast' and what is 'liable to shift', that is, the continuities and discontinuities within a given 'system of belief' is not a function of something that lies 'beneath' that system, like a core meaning. A 'system of belief' is quite simply - one might say with Foucault, quite 'positively' - held together 'by what lies around it', that is, by the systematic activities that compose the 'contextual configuration' of that system. And were Wittgenstein more interested in history, one could very well imagine his descriptions dealing with the way language has been used in various synchronically continuous and

diachronically discontinuous ways, such that different language-games can be conceptually devised in order to trace different forms of life. Note that these 'forms of life' would not refer ultimately to an entity called Man, but rather to their changing 'contextual configurations'. Wittgenstein, like Foucault, does not refer his analysis to a 'founding subject' but rather to the activities human beings just so happen to undertake. Again, Wittgenstein like Foucault, is not interested in telling us what human beings are, but simply in describing what it is human beings do. And one can easily imagine Wittgenstein agreeing with Foucault that their effort was not to tell us what human beings must everywhere and always do, but rather to show "how it was possible for men, within the same discursive practice, to speak of different objects, to have contrary opinions, and to make contradictory choices; my aim was also to show in what way discursive practices were distinguished from one another; in short, I wanted not to exclude the problem of the subject, but to define the positions and functions that the subject could occupy in the diversity of discourse." (AK, 200)

But these descriptions are not merely descriptions for description's sake. It is clear, for example, in Wittgenstein that the use of the conceptual device of language-games is designed to weed out the confusions and difficulties that arise out of the misuse and misapplication of language appropriate to specific circumstances. His philosophical approach is therefore

characterized as 'therapeutic'. Its aim is not to prescribe a treatment nor propose a cure, but to relieve certain tensions, caused for the most part by philosophy's overextension of its capacities and possibilities.

What about Foucault? Cannot his work be read as exclusively descriptive? Indeed, doesn't he himself insist on this very point when he tells us that he is "un positiviste heureux"? (AS, 164) Foucault does seem to be of two minds on precisely this point, at least in The Archaeology of Knowledge. But as many passages suggest, and as his subsequent work will show, his own approach is primarily critical. However, the difficulty arises out of the ambiguity Foucault displays and even maintains about his own position vis-a-vis both philosophy and history. Is Foucault doing philosophy or is he doing history? And rather than answer a predictable 'neither and/or both', he confesses his embarrassment and tells us that "for the moment, and as far ahead as I can see, my discourse, far from determining the locus in which it speaks, is avoiding the ground on which it could find support." (AK, 205)

This avoidance of professing one's commitments or staking one's grounds, on which so much criticism has been heaped, is insisted upon by Foucault precisely because he wishes to avoid falling back into what might be called the self-justificatory discourses of our present archive. This requires effort and vigilance, according to Foucault; and, perhaps more importantly, it requires a new way of thinking. This new way of thinking

Foucault calls 'archaeological', and it is not, strictly speaking, philosophical, in the sense that it does not seek out the timeless essence of things, but rather seeks to show how they are discursively specific. And this reference to discourse suggests that this new way of thinking is not, strictly speaking, historical either, inasmuch as it does not tell the story of a process from the point of view of a subject that ultimately culminates in the present. Or, in other words, Foucault seeks to avoid the philosophical figure of the subject, and the historical figure of man, in favour of an archaeological approach to discursive practices which are reducible neither to the consciousness of a subject, nor to the self-development of man. Foucault is not here merely proposing an <u>alternative</u> to these other two approaches, but he is in effect criticizing them insofar as they both stem from "an anthropological thought that orders all these questions around the question of man's being, and allows us to avoid an analysis of practice," (AK, 204) which, as we shall see, continues to be Foucault's main concern.

Neither history nor philosophy traditionally conceived, Foucault's work can be seen, I am arguing , as a philosophy of history, one which centers on the <u>use</u> of the concept of history. It is a <u>diagnostic</u> philosophy of history, as opposed to a speculative or analytic philosophy of history; one that discusses not the meaning of the process considered as a whole, nor the epistemological evaluation of its methods, but rather attempts to provide a way of using the past that will, instead of simply

justifying the present, provide a perspective that enables one to question and challenge it.

But this brings us back to a central difficulty of Foucault's archaeology. If its task is to uncover the conditions of various discursive practices, it is still not clear what effect such an 'uncovering' is to have, and on whom it is supposed to occur. In other words, which specific discursive practices in the past are supposed to offer a perspective on what specific (and problematic) features of the present? An answer will require Foucault to move beyond the framework he has set up for himself in The Archaeology of Knowledge.

And indeed, one can see him moving towards a positive account of what his analysis is for, one which goes beyond the purpose of shaking up our complacent certitudes. These complacent certitudes are no longer to play the merely negative role of inhibiting our understanding, but the positive role of actually shaping it in ways we are unaware of precisely because of that complacency. Foucault shows himself to be going after, not our certitudes - they must be taken for granted and indeed serve as the starting point - but rather the shape those certitudes (and the complacency that keeps them alive) actually take, and in what ways this shape affects what we in fact do. Foucault doesn't 'merely' want to describe the 'truths' we hold and the 'things' we say; he wants to describe what 'holding' certain truths and 'saying' certain things itself does. He writes:

> It is an attempt to reveal discursive practices in their complexity and density; to show that to speak is to do something - something other than to express what one thinks; to translate what one knows, and something other than to play with the structures of a language (<u>langue</u>); to show that to add a statement to a pre-existing series of statements is to perform a complicated and costly gesture, which involves conditions (and not only a situation, a context, and motives), and rules (not the logical and linguistic rules of construction); to show that a change in the order of discourse does not presuppose 'new ideas', a little invention and creativity, a different mentality, but transformations in a practice, perhaps also in neighboring practices, and in their common articulation. I have not denied - far from it - the possibility of changing discourse: I have deprived the sovereignty of the subject of the exclusive and instantaneous right to it. (AK, 209)

Thus, this concern with 'discourse', this convoluted elaboration of the notion of an <u>enonce</u> (of an 'anonymous statement'), the historical a priori and the archive, all of these conceptual devices are meant to enable us to grasp 'things said' not as <u>belonging</u> to someone, not as being ultimately connected to a speaking subject, but simply as <u>said</u>. Anonymous statements and the connections between them (between <u>them</u> and not between the presupposed 'speakers'). Note that it is the <u>anonymity</u> that is important and not the supposed independence or self-reference of these statements. Foucault does not draw <u>this</u> distinction sufficiently clearly in these works and is led on occasion to asssume an independence or self-sufficiency to his 'domains of discourse' (which, after all, like Wittgenstein's language-games are more conceptual or logical devices than they are metaphysical descriptions) which his concrete proposals do not warrant. And although he mentions practices (without distin-

guishing between discursive and non-discursive practices), it is clear that the lack of any explicit connection between discourse and practice is the single most important failure of his work in this period. In attempting to deal with the theoretical difficulties of his earlier 'histories' he seems to have lost the (intuitive) grasp of the force of the connection between discourse and practice they illustrated.

However, as our next Part will show, he will try to regain the force of the connection, without abandoning the 'anonymity' required to avoid the reduction to the self-consciousness of the 'subject'. And he will do so by still treating 'things said' anonymously but not independently. That is, he will begin to treat more explicitly the fact that 'things said' are also 'things *done*'. And within this new framework, the problem he will have to face ceases to be that of accounting (or failing to account) for the status of his own discourse, and becomes that of justifying the character of his action.

PART III : THE PROCESS OF HISTORY - THINGS DONE

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION: GENEALOGIST AS NEW HISTORIAN

The ambiguity contained in the word history - the same word refers to a process and to an activity or discipline - could be alleviated if we restricted the use of the word history to the activity or discipline of historical research, and retained the use of the past as denoting all that has occurred prior to the present. Such a distinction has the virtue of properly distinguishing between the concept of history considered as a dimension of time and history considered as mode of inquiry that investigates that dimension. I recognize that such a distinction rests on the assumption that there is not, within the dimension of time we call the past, a movement or process that we can specifically call historical such that the task of history as a discipline is simply to describe it. This is not to say that historians do not discern movements and processes within the past - indeed it is what they do best - but simply, like Kant, I refuse to ascribe an ontological status to those processes and movements. Strictly speaking, their ontological status belongs to the evidence and reconstructive efforts of the historian.

I do not mean by this that what happened in the past depends on the historian's reconstructive efforts, but our awareness of those happenings in the past certainly does. Indeed, the more historians discover about the past, the more evident such a statement becomes, in the sense that the presentation of new evidence or a fresh appeal to old evidence often

reveals how prior accounts of the so-called historical process in fact distorted what actually happened in the past, or so now claims this new historian as she refers to her evidence and reconstruction.

In other words, historians refer to the past and yet all they come up with are histories. Or, the object of history is indeed the past, but its subject is the evidence and the reconstructive efforts of historians.

This is all very obvious; and yet such considerations seem to play no part in discussions surrounding the philosophy of history. This is because, I am suggesting, philosophers of history - both analytic and speculative - fail to make the proper distinction between the past and history. Or, put another way, they fail to give an adequate account of how, in effect, the past <u>becomes</u> history.

One way of describing this is to say that the past recollected becomes an historical past. The past as such denotes that which is no longer. History, or the historical treatment of the past, denotes that which is preserved. Or again, the past refers (somewhat ambiguously) to that which was and has now been forgotten. History, on the other hand, refers to those things now remembered. Thus, history is often connected with the notion of <u>memory</u>. Just as an adult remembers his childhood (its struggles in many ways defining the shape the rest of his life has taken and will take), so a collectivity remembers its past.

The analogy, of course, is an old one, and it is as rich as it is potentially misleading. For history and memory are not the same thing, just as the past and history are not the same. Remembering something about the past does not serve the same function as understanding it historically. Collectively speaking, remembering the past (or certain elements of the past) forms part of the process of moving into the future (becomes the vehicle for transmitting and perpetuated the acquired knowledge of that collectivity). Understanding the past _historically_ does not mean linking the past to the future, but rather means understanding the past within the past, that is, in terms of itself. At least, this is the impetus behind the project of _recording_ history.

What characterizes the _historical_ approach to the past is the fact that history is _written_, and it is thus tied in a very concrete way with the past it attempts to recount. Because of this it restricts itself to recounting the past in question in as accurate a manner as possible. It is this written character of history that distinguishes it from other attitudes to the past, and defines its scope and limits. Again, this is not to say that societies and cultures that do not have any written record do not have and understanding of their own pasts, but only that that understanding plays a different role than that of recording, as carefully and accurately as possible, the historical past. One might say that such cultures are less _tied_ to the past and may seek to hand on the past in more diverse

and less formal ways (one can imagine the twists and turns a story of 'origins' might take as it is passed on from generation to generation). [1]

But if the development of historiography is so connected to the written word, then it becomes imperative to understand, certainly what is being written down - the problem of selection as discussed in contemporary analytic philosophy of history - but also, and probably more importantly, who is writing it down, for what purposes, and to what end. This, interestingly enough, has not been a standard question in analytic philosophy of history. One of the reasons for this is that the historian was treated in much the same way as the scientist, in that it was assumed that the historian's purpose was to tell us what happened in the past (just as the scientist's purpose is to tell us how nature works). That is, the historian's task is to give us knowledge of the past. The question for the analytic philosophy of history, then, revolved around the character and status of that knowledge. Never was it asked why historical knowledge was sought, nor to what ends it was directed. (Nor was this asked of the scientist, it being postulated that the 'thirst for knowledge' is inherent in man's nature.) Thus, while analytic philosophy of history does discuss - in relation

[1] As Jacques Le Goff has pointed out in an interesting work entitled Histoire et mémoire (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), p.114: "tandis que la reproduction mnemonique mot à mot serait lié à l'écriture, les sociétés sans écriture, à l'exception de certaines pratiques de mémorisation ne variatur, dont la principale est le chant, accordent à la memoire plus de liberté de possibilités créatives."

to the epistemological question of the 'objectivity' of historical knowledge - the value-commitments of the individual historian, it does not ask about the value-commitments of the discipline or activity. Nor does it discuss how history, again as a discipline or activity, is itself productive of certain values, indeed of value itself.

Foucault does ask these questions by developing the Nietzschean notion of genealogy. However, while definitely stemming from his reading of Nietzsche - a reading we shall examine presently - Foucault's genealogy is interesting for the way it systematically develops concerns and approaches characteristic of the new history. Jacques Le Goff, himself an important new historian, goes so far as to claim that Foucault "proposes an original philosophy of history that is closely linked to the practice and methodology of the discipline of history."[1]

The most explicit discussion of the concept of genealogy is to be found in Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"[2]. The text is somewhat ambiguous in that it is not always clear when Foucault is ascribing a sense to the concept itself, such for example as he understands it and uses it, and when he is discussing Nietzsche's own particular use of it. Our concern is with the concept as Foucault will use it in his other works. More specifically, we are concerned with the concept of

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[1]Ibid., p. 296 My translation.

[2]In The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 76-100. Hereafter referred to as NGH.

genealogy in its relation to history. I would like to show two things. First, how the concept of genealogy removes some of the limitations of the archaeological approach; and, second, how the concept of genealogy can be read as a philosophical treatment of the concept of history implicit and implied in the new history.

The most important limitation of the archaeological approach removed by the concept of genealogy is that the latter explicitly deals with the relation between the past and the present. However, in doing so, genealogy in no way undermines the importance of archaeology and its critique of traditional history of ideas. That is, genealogy, like the archaeological concern with uncovering the positive unconscious of knowledge, "must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history - in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles." (NGH, 76) This statement not only describes genealogy, it also describes the preoccupations of the new history in its search for new methods and new objects for studying the past.[1] From the very beginnings of this movement, with the work of Bloch and Febvre, there is the desire to investigate things normally not considered of historical significance, principally

[1]Cf. Le Goff and Nora (eds), Faire de l'histoire, 3 vol. (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).

because of what was thought to be a lack of suitable evidence.[1] However, this lack of evidence was merely a lack of imagination in developing methods to get at what was considered inaccessible, or simply to look at old evidence in a new way. Michel Vovelle's project of examining wills and testaments in order to understand the eighteenth century's attitude to death[2], or Roger Chartier's examination of the book trade in order to understand different kinds of literacy and sensibilities[3] come to mind. Such an approach, which Foucault calls genealogical, requires a great deal of patience and knowledge of details as well as relentless erudition. However, such an approach also requires another condition; it must reject "the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies." (NGH, 77) In other words, the genealogical approach "opposes itself to the search for 'origins'." (NGH, 77)

What Foucault means by the search for "origins" is a kind of search that hopes, through history, "to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities" and it is based on an assumption of "the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession"; that is, this attitude and

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[1] Some notable examples: fear, climate, culinary tastes, private life.

[2] M. Vovelle, Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIIIe siècle (Paris: Plon, 1973). See also his Ideologies et mentalités (Paris: Maspero, 1982).

[3] R. Chartier, Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

approach to history is enraptured by "the image of a primordial truth" that demands and "necessitates the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity." (NGH, 78) The genealogist challenges this "lofty" approach to history in much the same way that historians challenge (and deride) the speculative philosophers of history and their armchair attempts at disclosing the meaning of history as a whole. And such a speculative approach must be challenged, according to Foucault, because: "What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of the origin; it is the dissension of other things" and what the insistence on the origin actually does is create "a field of knowledge whose function is to recover it, but always in a false recognition due to the excesses of its own speech." (NGH, 79) Thus, Foucault here goes further than most contemporary philosophers of history and historians who reject 'speculative' philosophy of history in that he follows through on this rejection. That is, instead of simply retreating to the safe domain of 'analytic' philosophy of history, he acknowledges the character of the historical process implicit in the rejection of speculation and even proposes to deal with the consequences that appear to follow from that rejection.[1] That is why the philosopher of history, for Foucault, becomes the genealogist. The genealogist makes use of

[1]Analytic philosophers of history tend to leave aside these important considerations and instead turn their attention almost exclusively to the form of historical explanation. A move that, according to a recent critic, has exhausted its usefulness. Cf. Martin, The Past Within Us (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

what might be called the 'contingent character' of the historical process in order to combat the 'metaphysical' (in the Kantian sense) search for ultimate meaning. He writes:

> The genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of the origin, somewhat in the manner of the pious philosopher who needs a doctor to exorcise the shadow of his soul. He must be able to recognize the events of history, its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats - the basis of all beginnings, atavisms, and heredities. Similarly, he must be able to diagnose the illnesses of the body, its conditions of weakness and strength, its breakdowns and resistances, to be in a position to judge philosophical discourse. History is the concrete body of a development, with its moments of intensity, its lapses, its extended periods of feverish agitation, its fainting spells; and only a metaphysican would seek its soul in the distant ideality of the origin. (NGH, 80)

But even more than this, even more than the rejection of an ultimate meaning to the historical process, is the rejection of the desire to seek meaning in or <u>through</u> history, to seek an understanding of ourselves and of our 'destiny' through the understanding of our 'collective' past. For Foucault, the genealogist, in tracing lines of 'descent', "does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things" but rather

> to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations - or conversely, the complete reversals - the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth and being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. (NGH, 81)

Again, the 'view' of history expressed here, is not all that unfamiliar. At least, not if one is in the habit

of reading 'la nouvelle histoire', with its minute approach and re-evaluation of the historical 'legacy'[1] as well as its desire to find more 'material' support for the history of ideas and culture.[2] Foucault's originality, then, lies less in the 'view' of history his genealogy presupposes (although I would not deny that his work has had a profound effect on the articulation of that 'view'[3]) than the use he proposes to make of it, explicitly relating it to the dispersion and disruption of "what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself." (NGH, 82)

One might say that what genealogy attempts to do is reveal (or unmask) ideas through their bodily manifestations. But, in fact, it is more than this; for Foucault is not only, as are the new historians, trying to ground ideas and structures in concrete 'materiality', he is actually equating the notions of body and history insofar as you cannot (any longer) have one without the other. Nor, indeed, can you have both. Thus the need for a genealogical dismantling of a view of the history of

[1]Like G. Duby's Le dimanche des Bouvines (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) and J. Le Goff's La naissance du Purgatoire (Paris: Gallimard, 1980).

[2]Viz. again Jacques Le Goff, Pour un Autre Moyen Age (Paris: Gallimard, 1977) and Roger Chartier, Les origines culturelles de la Révolution francaise (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

[3]As evidenced especially in the work and praise of the historian Paul Veyne. op.cit. One also sees obvious traces of Foucault is works like J. Donzelot's La police des familles (Paris: Minuit, 1977).

ideas as a continuous process that need not make reference to its concrete, i.e. <u>bodily</u> effects.

> The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body. (NGH, 83)

Genealogy is called on not only to dismantle the tradtional conception of history, but also the traditional conception of the self. It is here, more than anywhere else, that Foucault demonstrates his firm grasp, both of the historiographical developments going on around him, <u>and</u> of the very <u>idea</u> of history. An idea which, for the most part, remains implicit in the work of historians. The idea is the recognition that our historical interests and concerns, the <u>reasons</u> one might say, that we write and study history, are constitutive of our self-identity. History is supposed to tell us who we are. At least in theory, in the general conception that history has of itself and which it voices whenever it has to justify its activities (not only to those who hold the purse-strings but to all of its potential practitioners). This is its answer to the question: why study history at all? The past is, after all, the past. In practice, historians and indeed philosophers of history (the latter, at least in the English-speaking world) have been much more concerned with the problems and possibilities of actual historical research (the extent to which its explanations are

'true', the status of its claims to knowledge, the particularities of its appeal to evidence, the idea of an historical fact). And although not all of these questions have been answered (some have even been dismissed as ultimately irrelevant or misplaced[1]), there is no denying the important developments that have been achieved. It is generally recognized that no history of any given subject-matter can be considered definitive or complete given the innumerable perspectives that can be adopted. The practice of history, in France particularly, but elsewhere as well (England, Germany, Italy) is characterized by the adoption of new methods, new problems and even of new objects of historical research. However, curiously enough, all these new developments have not seemed to affect the general conception of the ultimate justification of the interest in history, namely, that it tells us who we are. It would seem reasonable to expect that such important and various changes in the practice of history would (or should) have some kind of effect on the theory or generalized conception of what history, ultimately, is for. In other words, if traditional historiography was constitutive of our selves, what effect does (or should) the 'new history' have on that constitutive function?

This is where Foucault comes in. His genealogy is a practical reconceptualization of how to study the past, and a theoretical articulation of what that reconceptualization entails. As an historian he partakes of the development and

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[1]Cf. Martin, chap. 1.

renewal of historical research, and as a philosopher he traces the radical implications these developments have on the the conception we have of our very selves.

Foucault opposes to traditional history of ideas a genealogy of the body, or rather, genealogy "is situated within the articulation of the body and history." (NGH, 83) What this means is that if, for example, one wants to investigate the practice of punishment, one does not treat its present form as the culmination of a long historical developmental process. Foucault insists that, on the contrary, such "developments may appear as a culmination, but they are merely the current episodes in a series of subjugations..." and his own particular approach "seeks to reestablish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations." (NGH, 83) And, it is important to note, this 'play of dominations' is basic. It is what lies at the base of the historical process. Here, Foucault goes further than the 'new historians'. While they insist on a more concrete, closer, 'material' reading of history and are less prone - not to say methodologically opposed - to idealistic abstractions of progressive lines of development, they are not however hostile to the notion of progress as such. Indeed, they might be characterized as bringing to the notion of progress a more careful, cautious, and empirical approach.[1]

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[1]This is clearly the tendency in the work of such historians as Michel Vovelle and Roger Chartier. It is also present in Jacques Le Goff, Histoire et mémoire.

Foucault, on the other hand, is clear on this point: "Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination." (NGH, 85) Here we have a marvelously succinct statement of the project that underlies his book Discipline and Punish which we will turn to in a moment. But more generally, it is a statement about the inescapably historical character of any practice, including that of the historian himself. Foucault is in effect responding to the question we left off with at the end of the last Part: what is the status of Foucault's own discourse? However, answering it involves questioning the status of any historian's discourse, a status that is actually thrown into question by his very practice. In other words, if the cumulative, progressive picture of history is to be abandoned, so then must the historical project of telling us who we are by showing us how we got here. For Foucault, an 'effective' history not only abandons the idea of "retracing the past as a patient and continuous development" but it also, and more importantly, "emphatically excludes the 'rediscovery of ourselves'." (NGH, 88) If the 'new' history is to be an 'effective' history, one that adequately and honestly[1] responds to its own demands, then it must face up to its new task.

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[1] In the words of Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 125.

> History becomes "effective" to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being - as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. "Effective" history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millenial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting. (NGH, 88)

Foucault's discussion of Nietzsche and genealogy here become especially interesting inasmuch as we can discern, through the references to "effective" history and continuous reference to the dispersal of the self, a critique and correction (as when one corrects one's trajectory) of his earlier archaeological approach. This becomes apparent when we examine the distinctions between traditional history, the true historical sense, and genealogy. The true historical sense can be likened to Foucault's archaeology in its opposition to traditional history; whereas the latter tends "to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities," the former, that is, "the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference." (NGH, 89) The true historical sense, effective history, like archaeology and like the new history, attempts "to disclose dispersions and differences, to leave things undisturbed in their own dimension and intensity." (NGH, 89) And the task of effective history, like the diagnostic function of archaeology "is to become a curative

science." (NGH, 90)

The addition of genealogy to this picture, however, is a recognition of the common roots of what Nietzsche calls 'the historian's history' and 'effective history' and which I have likened to Foucault's distinction between 'traditional history of ideas' and 'archaeology'. That is, both turn to the past, and turning to the past and focussing exclusively on the past incurs the risk of producing "a faceless anonymity" (NGH, 91) in the historian such that he can no longer recognize the character of his own present. The danger is that both the historian and the present will "lack individuality" (NGH, 92) and both will be submitted and sacrificed on the altar of timeless verities and eternal truths, thereby betraying the force and strength of their truly historical character. Or, in other words, if in turning to the past one can thereby reveal the masks worn by the present, one must be careful not to take the step of regarding this _turning to the past itself_ as formative of one's true identity, an identity without masks. That is, one should be careful not to reify and consecrate a process that effectively reveals illusions and masks into a process that considers itself constitutive of the truth. Nietzsche showed how "the locus for the emergence for metaphysics was surely Athenian demagoguery, the vulgar spite of Socrates and his belief in immortality, and Plato could have seized this Socratic philosophy to turn it against itself." (NGH, 93) However, Plato failed to do this; in fact, he did the opposite by consecrating that philosophy.

The same danger haunts the true historical sense. The anonymity and lack of individuality that characterizes the "popular ascetism of historians" should not be consecrated "but dismantled, beginning with the things it produced; it is necessary to master history so as to turn it to genealogical uses, that is, strictly anti-Platonic purposes." (NGH, 93)

Foucault's archaeological approach to the past, as we saw in the last Part, focussed on anonymous statements and discourse and on the discontinuous character of 'things said' at different times and different places. In this, he shared the desire to let the past speak for itself as opposed to having it speak for a self-justifying present. But in doing so, Foucault ran the risk of having the idea of discontinuity reified, and of having the anonymity and facelessness of the archaeologist consecrated. Thus, his archaeology must be supplemented with a genealogical thrust. The archaeological approach must begin genealogically from the present. Genealogy is meant to keep us from characterizing the historical process itself, or reifying the way it effectively explores the past. Discontinuity, a term whose archaeological use ran the risk of describing the historical process itself, now has the prescriptive function of actually guiding historical research. Discontinuity describes not theory but practice. History, genealogically conceived, has now as its task not to tell us who we are, but to show us that we are not who we thought we were. Foucault writes:

> The purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all those discontinuities that cross us. (NGH, 95)

Foucault's use of history therefore not only poses an archaeological challenge to the traditional conception of history as the story of how the present came to be, but it also proposes a genealogical project of dismantling that conception and the self-justificatory role it plays. Rather than promote a sense of self-awareness, Foucault's conception of history strives to instill in us a sense of self-wariness; a wariness, that is, of those selves the traditional approach seeks to justify. As Foucault writes: "It is no longer a question of judging the past in the name of truth that only we can possess in the present, but of risking the destruction of the subject who seeks knowledge in the endless deployment of the will to knowledge." (NGH, 97) What we shall examine next is some of the shapes such a deployment can take.

This is Foucault's appropriation of Nietzsche. And what I am suggesting is that its peculiarities can best be understood and evaluated within the context and contours of a philosophy of history, rather then, say, as Foucault's own attempt as a 'tranvaluation of all values'. Foucault takes a great deal from Nietzsche, but his contribution can better be assessed, I am claiming, against the backdrop of Kant and Hegel and their respective conceptions of the philosophy of history.

To repeat what I mentioned earlier: Foucault agrees with Nietzsche in rejecting Kant's transcendental standpoint for a 'perspectival' one, as well as opposing Hegel's 'necessary' historical process with a radically contingent one. However, Foucault's approach to the idea of history is in a certain sense like Kant's insofar as it has a kind of hypothetical character that is geared towards practice.[1] But Foucault's approach to history is also akin to Hegel's to the extent that, rather than looking to the future, he is resolutely concerned with the <u>present</u>. Indeed, as is well known, he characterized his own approach as that of writing 'the history of the present.'

But what does it mean to write 'the history of the present', and how does it contribute to what we have characterized as Foucault's conception of history's ultimate purpose: of showing us that we are not who we thought we were? The only way to answer that question is to examine those works in which these ideas come to play.

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[1]For Kant's philosophy of history, cf. Y. Yovel, <u>Kant and the Philosophy of History</u> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

CHAPTER TWO - THE SHADOW OF LIBERTY

They usually lie just on the outskirts of our cities, neither surrounded by trees nor shrouded in mist. On the contrary, were it not for the barbed wire fences, the occasional signs, and the lookout tower, one would suppose that this compound of buildings was a school, or a home for the elderly, or perhaps even government buildings, given the price of real estate in the city. But a closer look at the familiar architectural setting reveals its particularity: these buildings make up what has come to be called a penitentiary. The prison. We drive by, acknowledging its presence, the necessity of it. And then we do not give it a second thought.

The necessity of its presence? We live in a free society. A free society is a society governed by the rule of law. Laws that are broken must not go unpunished. Punishment involves, normally, a fine and/or imprisonment. That's the logic of it, but where's the necessity? Why, to punish those who break the law, do we lock them up in prisons? And the question is not whether there are alternatives; fines alone are an example, community work is another. The question is rather: where does this idea come from, when did it arise? Not: why are there prisons? but: when did locking people up become a solution?

Is this a philosophical question? Or is it an historical question? Look at the title: Surveiller et punir: La naissance de la prison. The birth of the prison. Definitely an historical problem. But what about the main title, do these

words represent concepts? or practices? A philosophical problem. So which is it: philosophy or history? Of course, it can be both; but what does <u>that</u> mean?

Perhaps it means that Foucault is looking at the question from both perspectives at once. Foucault tells us that: "My books aren't treatises in philosophy or studies in history: at most, they are philosophical fragments put to work in a historical field of problems."[1] What I would like to do in this chapter is discuss what Foucault means by this statement and show its connection to what I have been calling his philosophy of history. First of all, what does he mean by placing his work "in a historical field of <u>problems</u>"? Clearly, Foucault's <u>Discipline and Punish</u>, while definitely containing much historical material, is not the narrative treatment of the 'birth'and rise of the modern prison as it is has taken its place in our institutional landscape. And in that sense <u>Discipline and Punish</u> can be seen as implicitly recognizing the distinction made in contemporary historiography between what has come to be called 'histoire-problème' as opposed to 'histoire-récit'. Rather than simply proposing itself as a narrative of past events, history recognizes itself as <u>problem-oriented</u>. As Furet has pointed out[2], such a recognition stems from four related developments. First, historians recognize

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[1]Burchell, et al. (eds), <u>The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality</u>, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 74.

[2]Cf. Francois Furet, <u>L'Atelier de l'histoire</u> (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), pp. 76-77.

that their object is not time as such, or even the past as a whole. The historian understands that his treatment is highly selective, and that the significance of his selections depends not on some hypothetical conception of the course of universal history, but on the particular questions he is asking. Thus, a history is judged less on its alleged accuracy to certain 'facts' about what 'really' happened, than on the clear formulation of the problems it sets out to solve. Secondly, historians are less tied to events and their alleged effects and concern themselves with conceptualizing networks of significance that cut across the period in question rather than linking them to a linear series leading up to the present. This leads to the third point concerning the historian's responsibility for developing and "inventing" his own sources that will enable him to answer his questions. Finally, this intimate connection between the questions and problems formulated by the historian and the development of sources meant to answer them means that the conclusions reached carry with them their own mode of verification.

Foucault's Discipline and Punish clearly falls within this general pattern inasmuch as it is not a narrative of the development of the prison but addresses a specific problem. It attempts to analyze the networks of significance surrounding the 'birth' of the prison[1], and it does so by examining not merely matters related to the prison, but matters relating to schools,

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[1]The subtitle here, like the title Les mots et les choses, is intended to be ironic.

factories, and hospitals, and it should be judged as to how well it answers its own questions.

In connection with this, it is interesting to note how Foucault himself characterizes his work to a group of historians. He explains his project in these terms:

> What is 'the birth of the prison' all about? French society in a given period? No. Delinquency in the eighteenth and nineteenth century? No. Prisons in France between 1760 and 1840? Not even this. It is about something more subtle: the well-considered motives, the type of calculation, the 'ratio' which was at work during the reform of the penal system when it was decided to introduce, though not without certain modifications, the old practice of imprisonment. In sum, it is a chapter in the history of 'punitive rationale' [raison punitive]. Why the prison? Why the reutilisation of this discredited system of locking-up?[1]

This passage is particularly revealing. It shows how Foucault has clearly adopted a 'problem' approach to the history of a particular period insofar as his concern is not to trace the various developments of the 'period' as a whole, but rather to tackle a very specific question (arising out of the present) whose answer is to be discerned there. The question, whose sense and purpose stems from the present configuration of our social and institutional framework ('why do we lock people up when they break the law?), becomes an historical problem (why imprisonment was 'accepted' as a solution to penal reform). And in this sense, Discipline and Punish is definitely a work of history. Indeed, as Foucault tells us, it is "a chapter in the history of

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[1]From Michelle Perrot (ed.), L'impossible prison (Paris: Seuil, 1980), pp. 29-39. This translation in Aymard and Mukhia (eds), French Studies in History, Vol. II (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1990), p. 327.

'punitive rationale [la raison punitive]." But precisely by characterizing his work in this way, Foucault also reveals that the work is not like other works of either social or economic or cultural history. Discipline and Punish is a chapter in the history of 'la raison punitive' which is neither a social nor an economic nor even a cultural category. It is quite properly a philosophical category. This is the sense of the expression 'philosophical fragment' that Foucault uses to characterize his work to this group of historians. Foucault seeks to show "the well-considered motives, the type of calculation, the 'ratio'" that operated (more precisely, was put into operation) within the penal reforms undertaken at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.

Note however that Foucault calls his work a philosophical fragment. That is, it is a piece of philosophy, more precisely, a piece of philosophizing about a particular manifestation of a particular kind of reason. Thus, he examines the kind of reasoning surrounding penal reform at the turn of the nineteenth century. But rather than focus exclusively on the reasoning expressed in discourse, he examines the reasoning revealed by the various practices that surround penal reform. Here is where the actual functioning of reason, of specifically punitive reason, is best discerned. Again, in response to the questions of historians, he says:

> In this piece of research on the prisons, as in my other earlier work, the target of analysis wasn't 'institutions', 'theories' or 'ideology', but practices - with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these

> acceptable at a given moment; the hypothesis being that these types of practice are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances - whatever role these elements may actually play - but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and 'reason'. It is a question of analyzing a 'regime of practices' - practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect.[1]

The importance of this passage lies in the way Foucault here clarified the archaeological approach by the addition of a genealogical purpose. The archaeological concern is still present inasmuch as the practices he is examining are treated according to "their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and 'reason'", and are not placed in a linear causal series leading up to the present. But note the genealogical inflexion; rather than talk about the conditions of <u>possibility</u> of particular discursive formations, he says more specifically that he is concerned with "the conditions which make these [practices] acceptable at a given moment". Thus, there is a reference to the self-consciousness of what people <u>think</u> they are doing as well as a reference to what actually gets accomplished which <u>together</u> point to the conditions of possibility of these particular <u>practices</u> which are themselves considered anonymously i.e. as neither translatable directly into the discourse held by those involved, nor imputable to a process - like the mode of production or the self-actualization of spirit - said or supposed to underlie them. Put in other terms, <u>practices</u> designate the

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[1]Quoted in <u>The Foucault Effect</u>, p. 75.

space where things said have a concrete effect in the world. Foucault's account of practices takes into account what human agents _think_ they are doing, along with what they _actually_ do without reducing one to the other but rather by showing the contingent and yet _effective_ character of their connection.

However, the question remains, which practices do we analyse? One might want to argue that strictly from the point of view of _history_, any and all practices are open to investigation (including, of course, that of the historian himself). However, from the _philosophical_ point of view this question becomes fundamental. Because what we are looking for here is a notion of practices that self-consciously, or, if you will, self-reflexively includes the very activity of investigating them as part and parcel of that investigation. The job of the historian may very well be to pass judgment on past events (and he does this in the very act of reconstruction), but it is the task of the _philosopher_ of history to give an account of his status within the act of reconstructing the past. The question he must ask is: which past? and why?

This is the problem Foucault's work now addresses, and it is to this problem that the notion of the 'history of the present' serves as a solution. Above I gave two of Foucault's descriptions of what he was trying to do with this book, and I noted that those descriptions were primarily addressed to a group of historians. The impact the book has had on _philosophical_ circles revolves less around the status and character of the

historical analysis itself than it does on the development of Foucault's notion of power/knowledge. Part of my argument, of course, is that one cannot understand the notion of power/knowledge without placing it within the context of the status and character of historical analysis. This, I think, is evident if we look at what Foucault, once again, claims to be trying to do in Discipline and Punish, but this time in the actual text. There he writes that the objective is to provide "a correlative history of the modern soul and of a new power to judge; a genealogy of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives its bases, justifications and rules, from which it extends its effects and by which its masks its exorbitant singularity." (DP, 23)

Here we see how the choice of studying the practice of imprisonment is conceptually linked to his earlier study of the practice of confining the mad and the analysis of the discursive practices surrounding the birth of the clinic; again, the target of his study, that which his 'correlative history' or 'counter-memory' challenges, are the standard histories of particular institutional practices that, in effect, maintain present institutional arrangements by recounting their historical origins. And as we saw in the last chapter, the function of this search for orgins, in effect, or practically speaking, "makes possible a field of knowledge whose function is to recover it, but always in a false recognition due to the excesses of its own speech." (NGH, 79; my emphasis) Foucault attempts to show the concrete

practical effects of those excesses of speech.

This is why Foucault chooses to study the prison; it is because the effects of the excesses of speech have become apparent.

Foucault places the 'birth' of the prison within the wider context of what he calls "a political technology of the body" which arose at the end of the eighteenth century in the 'interstices', as it were, of the development of various practices and the discourses that surrounded them. What this means is that this 'technology of the body' cannot be equated to, say, biology or to demographics nor even to medical practices, but rather is to be found between them or as arising out of the space they create. That is, Foucault suggest that there can be "a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them: this knowledge and this mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body." (DP 26) This 'technology', i.e. the political application of knowledge to different aspects of the social 'body', is not connected or exclusive to any particular institution or program. It is taken up or utilised by various institutions of programs in the formation and execution of their explicit projects, but the 'technology' itself "in it mechanisms and its effects [...] is situated at quite a different level" which Foucault then goes on to describe as a kind of "micro-physics of power, whose field of validity is situated in a sense between these great functionings

and the bodies themselves with their materiality and their forces." (DP, 26)

Such knowledge is revealed not through self-conscious affirmations nor by being presupposed as a hypothetical postulate. Such knowledge is revealed by the excesses of speech surrounding given practices. For example, the 'knowledge' or, as it has come to be called, the power/knowledge characterizing the practice of imprisonment is made evident through the prison revolts that were occurring as Foucault wrote Discipline and Punish. He tells us that this idea of "a political technology of the body is a lesson that I have learnt not so much from history as from the present." (DP, 30) And by 'present' here, he does not mean some vague, distrustful and dissatisfied sense of the 'way things are', but a very concrete present and the lacunae that characterize it. Such lacunae as those expressed in the various prison revolts at the time, and the ambiguities and paradoxes contained therein. Let me cite how Foucault describes this 'present' somewhat at length, because it holds a key to getting hold of his notion of 'power'.

> In recent years, prison revolts have occurred throughout the world. There was certainly something paradoxical about their aims, their slogans and the way they took place. They were revolts against an entire state of physical misery that is over a century old: against cold, suffocation and overcrowding, against decrepit walls, hunger, physical maltreatment. But they were also a revolt against model prisons, tranquilizers, isolation, the medical or educational services. Were they revolts whose aims were merely material? Or contradictory revolts: against the obsolete, but also against comfort; against the warders, but also against the psychiatrists? In fact, all these movements - and the innumerable discourses that the

> prison has given rise to since the early nineteenth century - have been about the body and material things. What has sustained these discourses, these memories and invectives are indeed those minute material details. One may, if one is so disposed, see them as no more than blind demands or suspect the existence behind them of alien strategies. In fact, they were revolts, at the level of the body, against the very body of the prison. What was at issue was not whether the prison environment was too harsh or too aseptic, too primitive or too efficient, but its very materiality as an instrument and vector of power; it is this whole technology of power over the body that the technology of the 'soul' - that of educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists - fails either to conceal or to compensate, for the simple reason that it is one of its tools. I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present. (DP, 30-31)

We get here a clear picture of how the couplet power/knowledge works. It is developed to understand a particular phenomenon - the prison - and _arises out_ of that phenomenon - the prison revolts. 'Power/knowledge' is not so much what the prisoners were revolting _against_, but rather is what their revolt _reveals_ (or, rather, suggests to someone like Foucault who then articulates it in those terms). The revolts, through their paradoxes and contradictions - the prisoners are revolting at once against lack of treatment _and_ overtreatment, against internal structures and external interference - betray the _effective_ structure of the prison, where the discourse that usually serves as its support and justification can be seen as an integral part of it. These prison revolts, then, offer Foucault the occasion and opportunity to analyse the system thereby

'revealed'; a system not so much previously hidden as excessively discreet. What you don't know can't hurt you.

But, of course, the point, purpose, and strength of Discipline and Punish lies in the fact that it is about a lot more than the prison structure. However, here we must be careful. Certainly the prison structures do not arise *sui generis* from inside the prison walls. Part of the force and interest of what Foucault shows us is precisely how prisons concentrate the various social projects and political goals that characterize (our) society's general self-understanding. The prison demonstrates not how these projects have been successfully realized, or for that matter how they have failed, but how such projects and practices *actually and effectively* take shape within the social body.[1] Or, one might want to say, how these projects and practices actually take shape and thereby effectively *shape* the social body, despite not only its 'best' intentions, but despite any intentionality at all. This is what Foucault's history of the prison is designed to show.

And thus it remains a *history* of the prison and not a metaphorical or microcosmic portrait of contemporary society, as some commentaries seem to suggest. Foucault is not suggesting that our society is a prison. He is asking what makes prisons in our society possible, and that involves investigating more than just the prisons themselves. It involves examining the

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[1]The notion of 'body' in Foucault is analoguous to the general search for 'materiality' as sought by the new historians in order to better account for ideas and cultural practices.

society in which prisons exist. In that sense, it is quite right to say that it is as much about the composition of 'modern society' as it is about the birth of the prison. But this, I am maintaining, for Foucault is analoguous to the historian's 'choice' of subject-matter as being guided by present concerns, not only to reflect those concerns but in some sense to respond to them. The historian, in doing this, is not trying to reduce the past to the present, nor the present to the past (although the risk is always there and, in fact, may very well be what defines the historical challenge) but simply trying to do history in a highly self-conscious, reflective way. That is, Foucault is not proposing a 'model' of contemporary society - one characterized by, as Taylor puts it, 'strategies without projects'[1] - but writing the history or genealogy of a highly suggestive and problematic part of it. That this is a political history, there can be no doubt; but it is a political history and not a political theory. Foucault is not concerned with the power of a Leviathan, but with the power relations that traverse the body politic. And, ironically, a considerable amount of 'light' can be cast on that body and the network of relations that sustain it by examining the way a part of it - the prison - works. The social body is reflected in the prisoner's body as it is 'formed' by the prison, for within this darkest region of the political field the condemned man represents the symetrical inverted figure of the king." (DP, 29)

[1] Taylor, p. 169.

Or, put in its contemporary context, the prison is to be understood as the shadow cast by the brightly lit self-conscious discourse surrounding liberalism's self-conception of liberty.

This brings me to another objection often raised about Foucault generally, but more particularly about Discipline and: Punish that is, what might by called its 'negativism'.[1] Foucault, it is said, destroys but offers no help in reconstruction. This kind of objection, quite reasonable on the face of it, stems from what R.G. Collingwood once called 'the principle of concrete negation' which holds that one cannot be said to have effectively 'negated' a position or point of view unless one is in a position to say or suggest what should go in its place. Granted, prisons as they actually are and have been constituted are flawed both in theory and practice, but what should we put in their place? Justice may indeed not be done by throwing people into jail, but surely some form of punishment must be exacted on those who break the law. Foucault may not approve of the social order and its current judicial structure, but whether he likes it or not it still affords him protection and a certain degree of security. He can point out its flaws and outline its insufficiencies, but unless he can show us something better, those criticisms lose their force and relevance. Or so, in a nutshell, the argument goes.

But this kind of argument would only really apply if

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[1] I use this term here rather than the more usual 'nihilism' because I wish to deal with the whole problem of Foucault's nihilism later on.

Foucault were proposing, in fact, an albeit primarily negative model of society and its prospects. But, if my argument thus far is correct, this is not the case; Foucault is not offering us a pessimistic, not to say fatalistic, account of the social order as everywhere and always repressive and dominating. Indeed, his account of power/knowledge is meant to free us from the Manichean conception of power relations of the ruler and the ruled and to replace it with a notion that is at once productive and effective, both in terms of the analysis itself and that which is analyzed. The use of the notion of power/knowledge is meant to show precisely in what ways the modern liberal pronouncements concerning liberty and autonomy are effectively translated in the concrete, real world, itself understood as a web of relations. That is, the notion of power is developed "in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisonally call its object, its target, its field of application, there - that is to say - where it installs itself and produces real effects."[1] And nowhere is this more evident - due to the revolts - than in the prisons; and once that institution shows the cracks in its functionings, it also reveals the structural similarities of other institutions, such as schools, factories, and hospitals.

In that sense, Foucault cannot be said to be

[1] Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 97. Hereafter referred to as P/K.

contravening Collingwood's principle of concrete negation because he is not attempting to 'negate' or 'refute' a point of view or perspective which has the prison as its focal point. In fact, he does not dismantle the notion of the 'prison' and leave nothing in its place; on the contrary, it quite concretely <u>places</u> the prison within a historical context that gives it pride of place. Foucault's work is indeed 'disconcerting' as Taylor says, but it is also much more than that, inasmuch as it "not only opens up realms of historical inquiry but at the same time tests those places in contemporary reality where change is desirable and possible."[1] Such a contribution may not resolve the concrete administrative problems connected with prisons, but then again it never pretended to. It may however help us understand them.

This discussion is also connected to the more ideologically-motivated objection that Foucault, in refusing to affirm any substantive normative claims, is in fact parasitically living off the very liberal structures he denounces but which in fact allow for his work to continue, and indeed flourish. But this too is a result of an overly theoretical reading of Foucault's notion of power that overlooks Foucault's attempt to develop a notion whose point is "not to formulate the global systematic theory which holds everything in place, but to analyse the specificity of mechanisms of power, to locate the con-

[1]Peg Birmingham, "Local Theory" in <u>The Question of the Other: Essays in Contemporary Continental Philosophy</u> (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 210.

nections and extensions, to build little by little a strategic knowledge (savoir)." (P/K, 145) But even when they do recognize his refusal to formulate a 'global systematic theory', the net effect of the notion of power on their view is simply the incoherent refusal to affirm the promises of freedom and truth such a notion relies on. That is, it is his rejection of theoretical totality which leads to his normative silence and his refusal to point us in any particular direction. As one recent critic has put it: "Foucault would assert that he does not reject emancipation but he refuses to identify or name it for fear of collusion in new totalitarian regimes of power/knowledge."[1] This is misguided; it is not a fear of collusion that fuels Foucault's so-called 'normative silence' but a vigilance and wariness of the function and effect that such naming and identification itself has. Things said are also things done. The genealogical use of the notion of power is meant to show how this is so. I shall examine this more closely in the next chapter - indeed, throughout the remainder of the thesis - however, at this point I would simply like to point out that Foucault's rejection of totality is of course in keeping with 'modernity's self-consciousness', to use Habermas, but it is also, and perhaps more importantly, akin to the new historians methodological rejection of total history. And also of course with the historian's traditional rejection of the philosophy of history understood as pointing the past towards the future. In-

[1] John E, Grumley, History and Totality: Radical Historicism from Hegel to Foucault (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 200.

deed, I would suggest that, if Foucault refuses to name or identify the emancipatory direction of his work, it is because his works are works of history and thus have nothing to do with the future. And in this, interestingly enough, Foucault is a lot less Nietzschean than most critics think. For it is Nietzsche's conception of the will to power and his commitment to the transvaluation of all values that lead him to direct his thought to a philosophy of the future. And as Benjamin Sax has recently pointed out, this is not at all the case with Foucault's genealogy which is "eternally tied to the present, destined to fight a rearguard action and without the hope of victory because no victory can be conceived of."[1] This difference is fundamental in terms of the philosophy of history and we shall return to it in the conclusion.

But what about the charge that Foucault's 'normative silence' masks an inability to 'come clean' or, to put it rather simplistically, to 'take a stand'? Some have characterized this silence in other terms saying that, on the contrary, "Foucault is largely successful in avoiding universalist arrogance as well as its relativist opposite because he advocates cosmopolitanism as the attribute of the engaged ethos"; however, others point out that, in fact, this "cosmopolitanism unnecessarily retreats from engagement at the crucial moment."[2] Indeed, what alternatives

[1] Benjamin C. Sax, "Foucault, Nietzsche, History: Two Modes of Genealogical Method" History of European Ideas (1989), p. 780.

[2] Mark Poster, Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In

does Foucault propose?

Most of the criticisms and objections are directed at Discipline and Punish, and the various other pieces in which Foucault discusses the notion of 'power/knowledge'. And, as I have pointed out, Discipline and Punish is read as providing a 'carceral' or 'panoptical' model of society as a whole. But what if, as I have also repeatedly suggested, we read it as a particular kind of history? Do these objections retain their force? Is it the role of the historian, as opposed to the social scientist, to look around for alternatives, for models aimed at administrative adaptability? Isn't it the task of the historian to tell us the 'truth' about the past, no matter how disagreeable it may be? Of course, it will not do merely to hide Foucault behind the historical profession, for I am arguing that he is not only an historian. However, I am arguing that he is more of an historian than these objections imply. These objections fault Foucault as a political theorist where his 'silence' is a serious liability. At this level he is variously described as an anarchist, a nihilist, or more curiously as "not a good revolutionary."[9] But what if we treat Discipline and Punish as a work of political history rather than political theory? What happens to the objections? Do they still

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Search of a Context (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 64-65.

[9]M. Walzer, "The Politics of Michel Foucault" in Hoy (ed.) Foucault: A Critical Reader (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 64.

hold or do they need to be reformulated? What does this do to the relevance of such questions as the following: Foucault obviously rejects the Marxist framework, but can it really be said that his critique of liberal institutions operate from within those structures? Does he not reject liberalism just as much as he does Marxism (and presumably any other ideological label) by his so-called 'silence' while nonetheless profiting by, and indeed flourishing within, those very liberal institutions he so consistently (and dare we say effectively?) criticizes? (After all, he was Professeur au College de France.)[1]

Foucault has an interesting response to these kinds of objections, and it is one that will lead directly into a discussion of what Foucault and other new historians understand their own relation to history, politics, and truth to be. It is claimed that Discipline and Punish read in connection with these other historical works begins to show to what extent Foucault can fruitfully be read as providing a philosophy of history that accounts for and develops the insights of the new history. One of the major characteristics of this new history is an awareness of the specific (i.e. culturally, politically, contextually interested) character, not only of its subject-matter (like traditional historiography), but of its very own practice. It is the tools and methods devised in order to account and deal with this difficult awareness that will retain our attention.

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[1]MacIntyre even here accuses him of being a lousy Nietzschean! Cf. his Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), p. 53.

An indication of the character of that awareness is contained in the response Foucault has for the charge that he at once thrives by means of and yet denounces liberal structures and institutions. He tells us:

> Liberalism, evidently, is neither an ideology nor an ideal. It is a highly complex form of government and of governmental "rationality". It is, I believe, the duty of the historian to study how it has functioned, at what cost, and with what instruments - this obviously for a given period and within a given situation.[1]

Do we have here the statement of a program, a formulation of a commitment on Foucault's part? Perhaps. In any case, what follows goes substantially beyond Foucault in that history is now being treated far more seriously than it ever has in the past.

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[1]My translation. L'impossible prison, p. 317.

CHAPTER THREE - HISTORY IN CONTEXT

The significance of the new history has generally been discussed in the literature in terms of its methodological innovations: its treatment of time, its statistical and quantitative use of various sources, of graphs and maps and tables. It is shown that history borrows a great deal from the social sciences. It is even seen as history's response to the encroachment of the social sciences; a response that has been judged more than merely effective.[1] Indeed, it has perhaps been too successful, according to some critics, in that history, in its desire to quantitatively back up its claims, seems somehow to have lost its way; history no longer seems to be saying anything meaningful about the past, and seems content to drudge up a great deal of data.[2]

To some extent, this is true. Quantitative historical research whose sole interpretative concession is reserved for the explanation of how to read its graphs does not seem to have much to do with history, whatever the paradigm. Having said that, however, one should not reduce the importance of this third paradigm merely to its methodological innovations. They are not simply a (jealous?) response to the prestige (sic) of the social sciences. They were developed to answer specifically historical needs. And those needs are defined by the tasks the historical profession has set itself. Georges Duby, an eminent

[1]Cf. Coutau-Begarie, op. cit.

[2]Cf. F. Dosse, op. cit.

practitioner of the profession, gives this account of what these quantitative methods are used for:

> To the extent that history is interested in structural forms, oscillations of very long frequency and very short amplitude; to the extent that it casts its gaze upon the deepest levels of the social body, towards those people who speak little and whose words are for the most part lost; to the extent that the day-to-day, the banal, that which no one seeks to preserve in memory, is for it more worthy of attention than the sensational, then it must find a multitude of very minute clues that differ little from one another and are scattered amidst paperwork and registers. [1]

The interesting reference here is to the memory of things not normally thought worth preserving. By whom? By historians, of course. The 'revolution in memory', as Jacques Le Goff puts it[2], effected by the new history not only involves giving voice to that in the past which remained shrouded in silence, but also is responsible for making the historian hear his own voice. This approach to the past drags the historian out from behind his lectern and places him 'in the field'. It also promotes a self-consciousness that for a long time seemed alien to the profession. By giving voice to a past heretofore without one, the historian becomes acutely conscious of how dependent the past is on what he is saying. This consciousness then increases the sense of responsibility the historian has of what he is saying in particular, and of what historians say generally. Thus, through a revolution in methods and objectives, a

[1] G. Duby, Male moyen age: de l'amour et autres essais (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), p. 245. My translation.

[2] Histoire et memoire, pp. 170-1.

whole new sense of how we are related and relate ourselves to the past is generated. This raises new questions. And, as Le Goff points out, within the discipline of history, "under the influence of new conceptions of historical time there has developed a new form of historiography - the 'history of history' - that, in effect, is most often the study of the manipulation by the collective memory of an historical phenomenon that had previously only been studied by traditional history." [1]

What interests us here is not so much how the collective memory of a particular culture manipulates particular historical phenomena[2], but rather, in contrast with this, how historians and the historical profession itself manipulate particular phenomena. I am claiming that within this framework Foucault's work, in earnest, begins to show its usefulness as a philosophy of history, here understood in its contemporary sense. Part of that originality lies in the way Foucault draws out the specific character of the practice of history, by showing how historical research itself is tied to its own institutional and practical conditions and how these in effect shape the ways in which historical research can take place. And he does this, not by theoretically drawing out the political assumptions of particular historians (thereby leaving the practice as such untouched) but by providing an example of a

[1] Ibid., pp. 172-3. My translation.

[2] Something Le Goff of course does very well. See his La naissance du Purgatoire (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).

history that _itself_ draws out those political implications.

To show this, I will compare _Discipline and Punish_ with another historical work that shares a similar concern with the political dimension of the manipulation of historical phenomena. By doing so, I hope to show to what extent Foucault's work shares many of the assumptions and commitments of the work done by the new historians, and also to what extent his work differs from theirs, and, indeed, goes beyond it. The work in question is Georges Duby's _Le dimanche des Bouvines_[1], which has become something of a classic of the genre.

Written ironically for a series entitled "Les trente journées qui ont fait la France", an obviously 'event-oriented' approach to history, Duby's book demonstrates perfectly the innovative approach of the new historians. Within it, he demonstrates not only the methods and objectives of the new history, but also asks some important questions about the writing of history and the purposes it is meant to serve.

The purpose of the series was to mark out thirty 'red-letter' days in the history of France and devote a volume to each 'day'. Of course, the text itself was not supposed to deal only with that particular day (in Duby's case, July 27, 1214) but to use that day as the focal point of the study. In other words, the traditional 'event-oriented' historian takes what happened on that particular day (eg. the battle of Bouvines) as

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[1]Paris: Gallimard, 1973. English translation by Catherine Tihanyi, _The Legend of Bouvines_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

what is historically significant and thus spends a good part of the text describing the events and such that 'led up' to it (its conditions) and then spends the rest of the text assessing the impact it had on subsequent events (its consequences).

There is some of this in Duby's book. But very little. In fact, the tone is set right from the beginning: the extraordinariness of this particular 'day' in the history of France was not that there was a battle (battles were fairly common currency in those days), but that it was a Sunday. In the thirteenth century parishioners weren't supposed to do anything on Sunday, let alone fight. But on Sunday, July 27, 1214, they did. And not only parishioners, but grand ducs, and even kings. This is what made this day memorable. And this is what interests Duby. Not the battle itself, but the fact that it has remained memorable.[1] And, ultimately, as an historian, his task is to show us the shapes that memory can take. The event, in itself, means nothing. Duby writes:

> Events are like the foam of history, bubbles large or small that burst at the surface and whose rupture triggers waves that travel varying distances. This one has left very enduring traces that are not yet completely erased today. It is those traces that bestow existence upon it. Outside of them, the event is nothing, and it is thus with them that this book is essentially concerned.[2]

[1]The battle is, however, painstakingly reconstructed from the sources. Reduced to its profile, it looks mildly pathetic. Duby sums it up thus: "...le roi de France a pris le comte de Flandre et quelques autres, grand nombre aussi de chevaliers; tombé a terre, il s'est relevé pour mettre en fuite un "faux" empereur, excommunié; ceci se passait un dimanche." Ibid., p. 191.

[2]Ibid., p. 8. English translation, pp. 1-2.

There are two ways one can treat these 'traces', that is, the evidence connected with the event. One can discuss the evidence itself and the character and circumstances of its preservation. Or one can manipulate the evidence in such a way as to make it reveal things despite itself. To take from it, as it were, information it did not 'consciously' provide.[1] Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive. And, in fact, Duby does combine both.

The memory of the Battle of Bouvines has had a fluctuating and unstable presence in French historiography. However there is enough documentary evidence to get a fairly clear picture of the actors and events of the day. But why? Why reconstruct the battle? And from whose point of view? The winners? The losers? Who are the principal actors? Whose movements do we watch? The king on his horse? The glinting knights? Or the unprotected throng of the foot soldiers? All of these questions are provoked by Duby's account because of the way he sets up his narrative. Rather than giving us the 'story' of the battle, he begins by presenting the actors and the scene. He then gives a documentary account of the battle (adapted for modern readers) which, of course, is a particular point of view (that of Guillaume le Breton). Why does Duby choose the point of view of Guillaume le Breton?

A substantial part of the book is devoted to a commen-

[1] We are obviously talking about 'written' documents and thus may perhaps be forgiven this reference to 'consciousness'.

tary of the battle from what might be called a 'socio-conceptual' point of view. What I mean by this is that Duby analyzes the 'battle' in such a way as to bring out the general concepts that structure it, or give it form. Thus, he examines the 'battle' in terms of the notion of 'peace' it is meant to procure, thereby demonstrating not merely its point or purpose, but the general conceptual space within which 'battles' took place at this period. That includes classifying the 'peace' according to guarantors and its ennemies, as well as the <u>kinds</u> of factors that are seen as a threat to it. Other 'socio-conceptual' frameworks or structures Duby draws out are those of 'war' itself; how it is conducted, who stands to win or lose by it, its general characteristics; also its relation to the notion of 'battle' discussed above, i.e. how the idea of 'battle' differs from the more general notion of 'war', and the more specific notion of a 'duel', distinguished especially by its decisive character,[1] which in itself leads to the 'socio-concept' of victory and how that notion plays itself out among the different 'orders' of society.

Essentially, the victory of Bouvines, as analyzed and described by Duby, was a <u>victory</u> in the incessant and, more importantly, unstable <u>warring</u> of the period that guaranteed and imposed a <u>peace</u> which re-established a particular order of the 'good' society.[2] So much for the reconstruction. Duby then

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[1] Ibid., p. 154.

[2] Those who pray, those who fight, and those who work. Cf. Duby, <u>Les trois ordres ou l'imaginaire du feodalisme</u> (Paris:

turns to an examination of the place this 'battle' took in the history of French historiography. That is, the re-counting of the battle became a symbol and a reminder of the victory of the conception Duby outlined, turning from a socio-conceptual analysis to a socio-political account of what role the battle played in the contexts in which it was recounted or deemed significant and worth recounting.

What is interesting about Duby's work is the way it combines social history and the history of ideas and comes up with what I have called a 'socio-conceptual' history of particular practices. I call it 'socio-conceptual' because it seeks to get at the actual 'lived' character of those practices through their distortive self-understanding or self-conception. I say distortive because if history teaches us anything it teaches that any account of any practice is always prey to certain illusions and somewhat distorted by intentions and interests both implicit and explicit. As Duby so succinctly puts it:

> ...men regulate their conduct, not according to their true condition, but to the image they have of it and which is never a faithful representation. They strive to have it conform to a cultural model of conduct that, in the course of history, adjusts itself for better or worse to material realities. [9]

What history can help us understand, at least for past societies, is the various connections and correlations and 'dissonances' between these "models of conduct" and the actual

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Gallimard, 1978).

[9]Duby, 'Histoire sociale et ideologies des societes' in Nora, Le Goff, Faire de l'histoire I, p. 148. My translation.

results they produce in practice. That is, the historian, in 'looking back' can trace the various developments and practices, can actually see them through the "distortive" lenses, as it were, of the self-justification and self-legitimation (or, in Foucault's terminology, the 'discourses') that also forms part of the 'socio-conceptual' whole. One could call these self-justificatory discourses, as Duby himself does, 'ideologies', as long as one does not restrict the concept to that of something like the false consciousness of social and economic realities characteristic of a certain class. It is not so much a matter of 'false' consciousness as it is one of 'limited' consciousness (the term here is used in a more or less neutral sense but it need not be); limited, that is, to particular purposes and practices. In fact, the concept of 'ideologie' as used by Duby resembles to some extent Foucault's notion of power in that it is more positive than it is negative, at least from the conceptual point of view. For it is the 'dissonances' between ideologies and the actual development of social practices that creates the space from within which the historian can work. For most of the historian's 'sources' are written documents and to that extent can be considered 'ideological' (they convey the structure of the various general conceptions that are current at a particular time). However, these sources come from various backgrounds (eg for the Middles Ages, ecclesiastical, canonical, and royal) which share many features but emphasize them according to their own purposes. The examination of these various intersections

itself suggests wider, implicit, themes and structures which the historian can pursue in various quantitative and serial ways. Indeed, these are what ultimately interest the historian, for, as Duby notes, given that "ideologies are really coverings [couvertures], systems of representation whose goal is to reassure and to provide a justification for people's conduct, it is indeed the forms, schemas, and themes that count and observation must situate itself at that level."[1] For it is through these forms, schemes, and themes, as discerned and developed by the historian, that will permit him to detect and trace the various developments of material and political structures. This, of course, is an extremely difficult task, in that there is always the danger that the themes, forms, and structures that the historian constructs, either from lack of quantitative support or even imagination, themselves merely translate and repeat the ideological characteristics, but this time at a more 'material' level.

This is why this first constructive level of analysis must be followed by a second, more critical, one. That is, once the historian has reconstructed the 'gap' or 'dissonance' between the ideological justification and actual material structures, then his study must turn to a critique of those ideologies. Duby writes:

> Such an analysis of these temporal gaps naturally must lead historians of society then to criticize these coherent systems of past ideologies, to demystify them

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[1] Ibid., p. 157. My translation.

> a posteriori by showing, at each step of historical development, how characteristics of the material conditions of social life that can be discerned are more or less travestied amidst mental images. That is, the historian must measure as exactly as possible - and the fact that in most documents expressions of the lived and dreamed for are confusedly mixed renders the task singularly difficult - the concordances and discordances that at each diachronic point, are established between three variables: on the one hand, between the objective situation of groups and individuals and the illusory image they have for reassurance and justification; and on the other hand, between this image and individual and collective practices.[1]

The reason I cite Duby at this length is, I trust, more or less apparent by now. I would like to show that Discipline and Punish can fruitfully be evaluated and described along similar lines in that it traces the 'concordances ' and 'discordances' between the image of punishment and actual practical results.

As I have already noted, Foucault's account of 'the birth of the prison' is set up, as are many of the new histories being written at the time, in the form of a problem needing resolution rather than as a narrative to be recounted. The problem is how did the prison, as the form of punishment, come to replace the older system of corporal punishment. Such a problem, of course, bears Foucault's stamp, in that he has pointed out yet another important discontinuity. However, as we have also seen, the choice of this particular discontinuity stems not from mere historical curiosity, but from the very real and contemporary contradictions that find a voice in the prison revolts

[1] Ibid., p. 158-159. My translation.

that were irrupting in French prisons at the time. These contradictions and paradoxes, discussed in the last chapter, can be likened to the 'discordances' Duby's historian must trace between the 'objective situation' of the prisons (as revealed by the prison revolts) and the illusory image that justifies its structures (in Foucault's discussion, the various projects of penal reform); but as well as this, which is only one side of the equation, the historian must trace 'dissonances' and 'discordances' between that image (and its relation with other projects for society that inform educational, medical and political reforms) and collective and individual practices (that make up schools, hospitals, and political institutions).

This approach is implicit in the way Foucault sets up his work. The first two sections deal with the two discontinuous practices of punishment. Or rather it deals with the 'images' that are developed to justify these practices. And part of Foucault's purpose in these sections is to show that the discontinuity between both periods lies more in the images than it does in the practices. That is, the practices, although radically different, remain 'corporal' even though the 'images' that justify them suggest that punishment has moved from the body to the 'soul'. And it is precisely within the 'discordance' between the images and the actual practices that have resulted that Foucault places his study. Elsewhere in this study I have called what is doing as showing how 'things said' are also 'things done'.

The whole first section deals with the practice of punishment in the Old Regime, where punishment was exacted on the individual's body in full view of the public. The body here represents (this is, after all, the Age of Representation[1]) the social body and the punishment is a graphic display of the power of the sovereign.[2]

The second section deals with the practice of punishment at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. The locus of power is no longer in the sovereign whose head has been sliced off (the guillotine itself is an important symbol of the transformation of the manifestation of power: rather than killing slowly for maximum effect, it slices efficiently and - presumably - painlessly) but is rather being established within the social body itself. This is because the social body has changed (i.e. actual practices); for example, social and economic practices no longer emanate (for the most part) from the king's coffers and court, but rather have developed a complicated network of patterns of trade.[3] The point here, however, is not to discuss the development of those patterns, but to see how they are reflected in patterns of punishment. And these patterns of punishment justify themselves by noting changing patterns of crime. In fact, contemporary his-

[1]Cf, Les mots et les choses.

[2]Cf. Surveiller et Punir, pp. 60-1.

[3]Cf. F. Braudel, The Structures of Everyday Life, trans. S. Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

torians have noted at the end of the seventeenth century "a considerable diminuation in murders and, generally speaking, in physical acts of aggression; offences against property seem to take over for crimes of violence; theft and swindling, from murder and assault; the diffuse, occasional, but frequent delinquency of the poorest classes was superseded by a limited but 'skilled' delinquency" (DP, 75), and in this they are wholly supported by those who, at the time, were advocates of penal reform. The reform was required not because punishment was unnecessarily cruel and inhuman, but because it was inefficient and ineffective. The desire for more efficient control over the social body is the context within which we are to understand the call for reform and not in some vague 'humanitarian impulse'. There is much more to it than that. Foucault writes:

> In fact, the shift from a criminality of blood to a criminality of fraud forms part of a whole complex mechanism, embracing the development of production, the increase of wealth, a higher juridical and moral value placed on property relations, stricter methods of surveillance, a tighter partitioning of the population, more efficient techniques of locating and obtaining information: the shift in illegal practices is correlative with an extension and a refinement of punitive practices. (DP, 77)

The individual's body no longer represents the social body, and the punishment inflicted on that body can no longer effectively control (impose an order on) that body. The social body is now a network of work and money and distribution; effective control of that body must traverse that body, not through its representative, but through the actual individual bodies that make it up. This can be accomplished, in part, by

reforming the prisons, whose primary philosophical and political objectives is: "to make of the punishment and repression of illegalities a regular function, coextensive with society; not to punish less, but to punish better; to punish with an attenuated severity perhaps, but in order to punish with more universality and necessity; to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body." (DP, 82)

The whole third part of Discipline and Punish focusses on the 'socio-concept' of discipline as it 'deploys' and is 'dispersed' throughout various practices and the 'images' that were developed to justify those practices as they are found in schools, in the military, and in the workplace. "Discipline", as a concept in theory and practice, arose as an 'image' with which one could understand (and therefore extend the possibility to manipulate and control) the social body, for the idea of 'discipline' "is no longer simply an art of distributing bodies, of extracting time from them and accumulating it, but of composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine." (DP, 164)

The notion of discipline is used by Foucault as an example of the functioning of knowledge and power. That is, Foucault has elaborated, if I may continue with my terminology, the 'socio-concept' of discipline as it exists in the talk and projects and images that surround it and within the institutional framework where it is exercised and with the discordance between these two levels. Thus, the purpose of his

work is not to argue the connection between power and knowledge; indeed, the connection between power and knowledge is more of a premiss than it is a conclusion, and it is a premiss that is shared by other historians (like Duby) who wish to draw out the connection between politics and the history of ideas; not politics and (traditional) ideology, but politics and the practices where ideas come to play, and, ultimately, the effective results of the various combinations. And it is not merely a matter of rendering 'those who know' accountable for 'what is done'. Foucault insists that it is not simply "at the level of consciousness of representations and in what one thinks one knows, but at the level of what makes possible the knowledge that is transformed into political investment." (DP, 185) Again, Foucault wants to show not only 'what is done' by power/knowledge but thereby to show what, in fact, 'what is done' itself does.

This is why Discipline and Punish is a work of history and not a theoretical or sociological blueprint model of society. In it he describes an important element of, to borrow a concept dear to the new historians, the "imaginaire", but this time, of modern society. But, I would argue, where he goes beyond those historians is in more systematically tracing that "imaginaire" within the practices of knowledge (those institutional settings and the various texts and rules they surround themselves with) and then by drawing out the political character of those practices. The whole third section is an example of this approach. By examining in sometimes surprisingly minute detail

some of the effects of disciplinary practices, Foucault actually shows us the 'other side of the coin' of the usual self-conception of ourselves as autonomous, free, self-determined individuals. He is not denying that self-conception, on the contrary; but what he wants is to see on what concrete practices such a self-conception rests, how does it translate in institutional terms, what shadow does such a self-conception cast.

Foucault's originality here is that he shows us not the <u>opposite</u> of these self-conceptions, but their concrete institutional supports. We can conceive ourselves as free individuals because some individuals are imprisoned. We can conceive of ourselves as autonomous, because some of us are constrained. And finally we can conceive of ourselves as self-determined because some are carefully controlled. We can 'think' of ourselves in these ways because the world we 'live' in has a particular institutional and practical configuration. And those self-conceptions we find most convincing will indeed reflect that configuration, but it will not do so directly nor transparently. In effect, Foucault has shown us that even concepts cast shadows. Free modern democratic societies made up of free autonomous individuals; both are concepts that find their institutional support in the various 'disciplines' that actually make concrete individuals. Indeed, the more discipline is involved, the more individuality is refined.

> In a system of discipline, the child is more individualized than the adult, the patient more than the

> healthy man, the madman and the delinquent more than the normal and the non-delinquent. In each case, it is towards the first of these pairs that all the individualizing mechanisms are turned in our civilization; and when one wishes to individualize the healthy, normal and law-abiding adult, it is always by asking him how much of the child he has in him, what secret madness lies within him, what fundamental crime he has dreamt of committing. (DP, 193)

Here we see how the abstract conception of the individual is referred back to concrete institutional practices in order to give it content whenever that content is called for. Considered individually each of us can, of course, relate to the abstract conception since we simply give it content through our own lives; but because our lives are shared with others and are thus social, then it is not surprising that those contents sometimes conflict, giving rise to processes and procedures of normalization (schools, hospitals, social security, etc.) But, then, what of the abstract conception, what purpose does it serve? According to Foucault: it removes attention from these processes of normalization and the ambiguity that surrounds what in fact it is they accomplish (despite their own 'best' intentions).[1]

This passage also shows to what extent Foucault's work can be seen within the context of the work of those historians who seek to elucidate the imaginaire of particular societies, in order, ultimately, to elucidate and illuminate our own. Duby drew out the concept of the 'Three Orders' and Le Goff that of

[1]For a lucid account of the ambiguity contained in this process, cf. W.E. Connolly, Politics and Ambiguity (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), Chapter 1.

the 'Purgatory' and their significance within the space created by the 'discordance' it provoked between the ideas they expressed and the practices they generated. Where Foucault's work differs, of course, is that he is tackling the imaginaire of our own society. No where is this better exemplified in his work than in the use he makes of the image, and the practices thereby generated, of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. Foucault turns it into a concept: "le panoptisme" and shows how it expresses, both 'ideologically' and in its practical transformations into actual prisons, schools, and factories, the modern process of 'discipline'. That is, it is not to be considered as a model or a blueprint of modern society, but the force of its imagery helps us understand and identify the 'discordance' between the modern ethos, as it were, and our modern practices. Foucault writes:

> The fact that it should have given rise, even in our own time, to so many variations, projected or realzed, is evidence of the imaginary intensity that it has possessed for almost two hundred years. But the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use. (DP, 205)

It can and must be 'detached' because it is what provides us with the tools to grasp the discordance and dissonance between theoretical projects and their practical results. That is, the Panopticon as a conception informs in being distorted by both the theory and practice of institutional reform and thus serves as a yardstick for conceptualizing the discrepency

or dissonance between the two. It serves to help us get a hold of what 'things said and things done' themselves do. It serves as a graphic illustration and 'image' of the structure of modern power relations and suggests how they could be characterized.

I have put considerable weight on the circumstantial context of Discipline and Punish as suggested by Foucault. And I have insisted that it is not for Foucault simply a matter of current events 'suggesting' or 'provoking' certain kinds of research as most historians indicate in the prefaces to their works. If we are to take Foucault seriously when he claims to be a 'specific' intellectual[1], then the connection between 'events' such as prison revolts and books such as Discipline and Punish is closer than that. By this I do not mean that the 'results' of his research have only a specific spatio-temporal reference (Paris in the mid-seventies), although most historians realize that their work is necessarily short-lived; but the concepts he develops and uses do profit by and find their justification in that specificity. How better to describe the power social institutions have on (or display through) individuals than by examining that institution which actually 'constructs' those individuals? How better to describe that power than through its most concrete manifestations? Where is power more evident than in the prison? And are not prisons part of our social framework?

But this raises the question of how far Foucault's

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[1]Cf. interview with G. Deleuze in Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory, Practice (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 207ff.

notion of power extends; what conceptual weight it carries when it is applied outside of the prison walls, as it were.[1] Foucault is not providing a theoretical reconstruction of modern society, but rather is constructing conceptual tools for analyzing particular features of it. But how useful are these tools when applied to matters they weren't originally designed for? Are they precise instruments engineered for precise jobs, or are they tools for the _bricoleur_? How specific is a specific intellectual? For example, does power apply to _all_ relations that make up modern society? Does power apply to everything that goes into the formation of the modern individual? Does power apply to sex?

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[1]Walls that can be found in schools, factories, and hosptials as well.

CHAPTER FOUR - HISTORY AND TRUTH

Part of the reason Foucault chose to study the prison was the exemplary way it revealed the effective discordances between projects and practices. The actual effectiveness of these discordances - the real historical results of the putting into practice of specific projects - was described by Foucault in terms of the connection of knowledge and power. The point of connecting knowledge and power is not to say that knowledge or knowledge-claims are ideological masks concealing the real world of power-relations; it is rather to show how knowledge itself _is_ effective, has real effects in the world. The point is to bring knowledge _into_ history; not to show how it has developed over time, over, that is, the processes in which it has been invested, but rather how it has deployed itself in or through time, how it effectively and concretely has operated. With the conception of power/knowledge, Foucault was trying to counter what he described at one point as the "great biological image of a progressive maturation of science"; an image that is not "pertinent to history." (P/K, 112) The idea of power/knowledge is a conceptual innovation that follows through on the rejection of speculative philosophy of history. Indeed, connecting knowledge and power is a way of producing a concrete, "effective" history. It serves as a foil to the abstract, continuist, edifying but illusory history linked to the 'transcendent' categories of language and meaning. Foucault tells us that:

> ...one's point of reference should not be to the great model of language (<u>langue</u>) and signs, but to that of war and battle. The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning. History has no 'meaning', though this is not say that it is absurd or incoherent. On the contrary, it is intelligible and should be susceptible of analysis down to the smallest detail - but this in accordance with the intelligibility of struggles, of strategies and tactics. Neither the dialectic, as logic of contradictions, nor semiotics, as the structure of communication, can account for the intrinsic intelligibility of conflicts. 'Dialectic' is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing it to a Hegelian skeleton, and 'semiology' is a way of avoiding its violent, bloody and lethal character by reducing it to the calm Platonic form of language and dialogue. (P/K, 114-115)

In other words, understanding history as the deployment of anonymous strategies is itself strategic. The emphasis on power-relations and their characterization in terms of struggles and tactics is meant to counter the tendency of history to reduce conflict to development, and to downplay the implicit violence in the application of various projects and practices by recounting the historical process in such terms as the progressive unfolding of new dimensions of thought and language. This smooth, continuist reading of history seems, in effect, to be saying: "Our job, as historians, is not to dwell on the past; but to distill from it that which should be preserved, that which is worth preserving." Stated in such a bald form, one is not surprised to find someone like Foucault insisting that the task of the <u>philosopher</u> of history is to be suspicious of such a history and critical of its results. If the idea of the cunning of reason as formulated by Hegel seems to be the epitome

of this smooth, continuist, untouched and untainted reading of history, then Foucault's notion of 'power' is a direct counter to Hegel's notion of 'reason'. If, for Hegel, history is the process whereby the Absolute realizes itself in and through time, for Foucault, history is a process whereby power deploys itself over and across time and space. Having said that, however, one should note that if, for Hegel, the Absolute finds full expression in the State, for Foucault, on the contrary, power does <u>not</u>. Rather, as Foucault tells us:

> ...power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (HS, 93)

So what do we have here then: Nietzsche vs. Hegel? Power vs. Reason? Or, for that matter, why not: history vs. philosophy? This last opposition seems relevant, if one understands philosophy as the search for <u>truth</u> regardless of contextual constraints. History a la Foucault, that is, history understood in terms of power-relations, would be, not the search, but the analysis of truth <u>as</u> productive of contextual constraints. Thus, Foucault's kind of history contrasts with philosophy inasmuch as it is not concerned with establishing the transcendantal conditions of truth, but rather is intent on "seeing historically

how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true or false." (P/K, 118) Such a history is based on the idea that: "Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint." (P/K, 131) These 'forms of constraint' are what must be analyzed historically. That is, Foucault's genealogical investigations are premissed on the idea that:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (P/K, 131)

Many critics of Foucault latch onto such statements as in effect 'revealing' his commitment to a 'social ontology of power'[1] and an incoherent relativist theory of truth[2] that seems to denounce truth in the name of truth and deny freedom in the name of liberation. This latter point is taken up by Taylor in his critique of Foucault.[3] He cites the passage above and then adds to this a citation where Foucault states that: "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth," and that

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[1]Thomas McCarthy, Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 50ff.

[2]Joseph Margolis, The Truth about Relativism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 201-203.

[3]Charles Taylor, 'Foucault on Freedom anf Truth' in his Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 152-184.

further, this "is the case for every society..." (P/K, 93) What bothers Taylor and other critics about such a view that links the production of truth to particular 'regimes' is that it "means that we cannot raise the banner of truth against our own regime," and, worse, "that liberation in the name of 'truth' could only be the substitution of another system of power for this one, as indeed the modern course of history has substituted the techniques of control for the royal sovereignty which dominated the seventeenth century."[1] As we have seen in the preceding two chapters, such a reading of Discipline and Punish is simplistic and near-sighted at best; and more probably, as we shall see, deliberately distortive. While the passages do make claims about 'each' and 'every' society, and thus enable some critics hastily to conclude that Foucault is here expressing at once a speculative philosophy of history and a general theory of truth, the real purpose of characterizing his work in this way enables them conveniently to dismiss his 'position' as incoherent. Thus, Taylor writes:

> The 'truth' manufactured by power also turns out to be its 'masks' or disguises and hence untruth. The idea of a manufactured or imposed 'truth' inescapably slips the word into inverted commas, and opens the space of a truth-outside-quotes, the kind of truth, for instance, which the sentences unmasking power manifest, or which the sentences expounding the general theory of regime relativity themselves manifest (a paradox).[2]

This formal, or in Foucault's terms, discursive refuta-

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[1]Ibid., p. 178 (my emphasis).

[2]Ibid.

tion of Foucault's position is itself an example of the way power, knowledge, and discourse are linked. Taylor complains that Foucault's so-called "general relativity thesis will not allow for liberation through a transformation of power relations".[1] However, Foucault's point is that a transformation of power relations does not in itself lead to liberation _and that the discourse surrounding the possibility of liberation is itself connected to that fact_. This becomes evident when we consider, not a formalized, abstract conception of Foucault's 'position', but the actual works. In order to understand the connection between discourse and power and truth and liberation we must examine what Foucault has to say about sex.

The picture of Foucault as a theoretician of power is usually based on claims he made in the course of interviews. I have been insisting throughout this thesis that if we look at the _works_ he produced - all of them, with the exception of _The Archaeology of Knowledge_, in the form of histories - a different Foucault emerges. What we find is a philosopher of history who, like most contemporary philosophers of history, rejects speculation, and yet attempts to make sense of history nonetheless. In fact, a lot of Foucault's apparent posturing, his deliberate elusiveness and occasional evasiveness is due, not as suggested above to a fear of collusion with dominant patterns of thought and action, but to a genuine effort to _think_ in terms other than

[1]Ibid.

the established ones,[1] and this without slipping back into those patterns and without, like Plato did to Socrates, reifying that way of thinking. Thus, the best way to understand the notion of power is to see how he employs it in his histories, and not to treat it apart, as either an independent theoretical construct or some kind of ground for his histories, because, he reminds us, "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is a name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society." (HS, 93) And one of those complex strategical situations that characterizes contemporary society, other than, but related to, the one surrounding punishment and control, is the one surrounding modern 'sexuality'.

The first volume of The History of Sexuality was initially meant to be an introduction to a proposed six-volume study of the formation of the notion of 'sexuality', an historical object, according to Foucault, that did not exist prior to the nineteenth century. That study never materialized, as we know, to be replaced by an examination of ancient practices that were, in effect, constitutive of a 'self'. We shall discuss this latter project in the next and last Part of this thesis. However, a brief look at the first volume here is important for the response to the objections mentioned above.

Throughout our examination of Foucault's work we have

[1]For a reading of Foucault as introducing a new way of thinking about thinking, cf. James Bernauer, op. cit.

been confronted with a tension between history and philosophy. Foucault's genealogies are clearly a challenge to philosophy's 'lofty' self-conception. Indeed, Foucault's work as a whole can be seen as a philosophically sensitive series of histories that seek to reveal and expose philosophy's distorted and misleading appropriation of the past. And the way Foucault does that is by showing how ideas and concepts do not circulate from mind to mind, self-transparent and self-contained, but rather circulate from body to body through networks that traverse various institutions and practices. He attempted to demonstrate this in <u>Discipline and Punish</u> by examining the institutional and practical network of punishment. In <u>The History of Sexuality</u>, what he would like to show is how the <u>discourses</u> emanating from these institutional and practical networks can in effect <u>conceal and thereby maintain</u> the 'deployment' of those networks. He attempts to show this, not in a context-independent theoretical way, but in a concrete historical analysis of how the discourse surrounding sexuality in effect permits the deployment of a domination the discourse itself loudly denies. To put this in the terms of Taylor's objection to Foucault's work cited above, he is trying to show how discursively 'raising the banner of truth against our own regime' can in effect merely be the perpetuation of that regime.

The major <u>explicit</u> thrust of the discourse surrounding sexuality is the claim that, since the end of the seventeenth century, we have been sexually repressed, that if only this re-

pression were removed, if only we were allowed to express ourselves sexually, then we would be liberated and free. Foucault calls this the 'repressive hypothesis'. Our sexuality has been silenced, i.e. repressed. Foucault wants to show that sex has been anything but silenced, that it is endlessly talked about, that it is "put into discourse" (HS, 11) and how this discursivity is linked to power.

On the surface, sex and power are linked through the notion of repression because "then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression." (HS, 6) Indeed, through the constant and repeated reference to repression "we are conscious of defying established power, our tone of voice shows that we know we are being subversive, and we ardently conjure away the present and appeal to the future, whose day will be hastened by the contribution we believe we are making." (HS, 6-7) But the very basis of the claim of repression, and the hope of a future liberation, rests on the premiss that sex has indeed been 'silenced', that it remains 'unspoken'. However, Foucault shows that rather than being silenced, there occurred at what he calls the discursive level "an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause <u>it</u> to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail." (HS, 18) Thus, while the repressive hypothesis focusses, indeed <u>diverts</u>, attention to the simple fact that it was "no longer

named, sex was taken charge of, tracked down as it were, by a discourse that aimed to allow it no obscurity, no respite." (HS, 20) Actually, it is misleading to speak of _a_ discourse because it has led many critics to ontologize or reify this notion and the power said to underlie it; rather, as Foucault writes "we are dealing less with _a_ discourse on sex than with a multiplicity of discourses produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions." (HS, 33) Thus, the proposed study would have as its task the examination of the deployment of discourses concerning sexuality through the domains of demography, biology, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, ethics, pedagogy, and political criticism in the interplay of their theoretical and practical configurations.

Such an investigation is hampered by the repressive hypothesis whose promise of a future liberation serves only to conceal and guarantee the spread of a particular configuration of power. Thus, Foucault claims that the _actual_ function of the repressive hypothesis is merely to render this exercise of power tolerable because, Foucault tells us, "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms." (HS, 86) And these mechanisms are hidden, at least as far as sex is concerned, in a binary and binding conception of repression and liberation.

This is why Foucault proposes to investigate sexuality _historically_, by which he means in terms of power and knowledge

as these are expressed in various discursive practices. He writes:

> Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must reconstruct, with the things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden, that it comprises; with the variants and different effects - according to who is speaking, his position of power, the institutional context in which he happens to be situated - that it implies; and with the shifts and and reutilizations of identical formulas for contrary objectives that it also includes. (HS, 100)

Only an historical investigation can do this. The notions of power and discourse are the means by which such an investigation can be undertaken. Foucault does not conceptualize history itself, as a process, as a function of power and discourse, considered in themselves; rather, the notions of power and discourse are a function of Foucault's historical investigations. And thus they should be challenged on those grounds.

This brings me back to Foucault's critics. It is not only that they are missing the point by theoretically trying to refute what is essentially an historical question (motivated, as we shall see, by a misguided - and often concealed - theoretical conception of history), but, more importantly, that the attempt to prop up a straw Foucault on the theoretical stage, <u>in effect</u>, diverts attention from the effective historical critique of truth

and liberation Foucault's work _actually_ provides.

However, this last point is a matter for concern. For even if we grant the overall effectiveness of Foucault's analysis of the discourse of sexuality (an analysis that, at this point, was yet to be done) then it does seem that we are, in some sense, 'trapped' in these systems or networks of power-relations, and, further, that if one rejects that acknowledging these networks does not thereby _effectively_ liberate one from them, then one is left with the important question about what Foucault's historical investigations are actually _for_. What, if anything, does follow from the recognition of our embeddedness in these networks of discourse and power? Does Foucault suggest anything we might e be able to do? Is there even any sense, given the anonymity Foucault presupposes and argues for, of speaking of a 'we'? What, then, is the purpose of Foucault's histories, if it is not 'truth' or 'liberation'? These will be the questions addressed in the last Part of this thesis.

PART IV - THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE - THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Many critics of Foucault ultimately want to claim that his Nietzschean stance is untenable on _philosophical_ grounds. And in order to do this, critics like Taylor and Habermas try to show how Foucault's work leads to something like theoretical nihilism. However, there is a certain straw man quality to this kind of argument inasmuch as it refuses to confront Foucault's work head on. His work, as we have seen, is intent on showing how philosophy itself rests on historical grounds; Foucault sets himself the task of exploring those grounds genealogically.

Critics such as Taylor and Habermas do of course recognize the historical dimension of philosophy; and indeed their work, different as they are from one another[1], can be read as attempts to account for, and accommodate, history within a broadened philosophical framework. Their mistake is to think that Foucault's challenge is at this theoretical level. Foucault's genealogies are in a sense a _practical_ challenge to a philosophical appropriation of history by showing how history _in effect_ traverses such appropriations. And the concentration and ultimate dismissal of what is called Foucault's theoretical stance serves only to divert attention from the effective critique Foucault's genealogies make of these philosophical appropriations. That is, more generally, such a move tries to sidestep

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[1]The works I have in mind are Taylor's _Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity_ (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989), and J. Habermas's _The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity_ (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

a direct confrontation between philosophy and history; not between philosophy and _its_ history, but between philosophy and history as such.

Now, one of the main features of the argument that runs through this thesis is that history as such can no longer refer to an historical process but to the practice of historical reconstruction. This is a consequence of the rejection of speculative philosophy of history. Philosophers and historians are no longer concerned with making sense of history as a process but rather are concerned with history as a practice, and this in spite of a predominant _picture_ of history that sees the past in itself as somehow leading to the present. However, it is increasingly recognized by philosophers of history that this is indeed only a picture, a picture that dissolves once we consider the actual _practice_ of history. That is, although we like to think that there is a distinction between the past as such and the historian's reconstruction of the past, on reflection we must concede that there is no such distinction. At least, not in an unproblematic sense. As Raymond Martin has recently put it:

> For theoretical purposes, we distinguish between _the_ past and _our_ past, between what really happened and our best interpretation of what really happened. For practical purposes, the distinction collapses. We have no direct access to _the_ past. We have direct access only to the present and to _our_ past, which is an artifact of the present.[1]

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[1] Raymond Martin, _The Past Within Us_ (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 4.

Once the collapse of this distinction is recognized, a fundamental shift occurs in the philosophy of history. It is transformed and renewed. That is, it faces a new question, or a new set of questions. Having nominally rejected speculative philosophy of history, it now confronts the gap that an actual rejection leaves. What a renewed philosophy of history must do is make sense of these changes in historical practice rather than continue to make sense of the historical process.

One of the most important matters the philosopher must try to make sense of when confronted with the new historical practice takes the form of a question: what, if we admit that we have no direct access to the past, that the past is, as Martin puts it, 'an artifact of the present', what then is the function of history or historical research? The question now, indeed the central question for a renewed philosophy of history concerns the function and purpose of history. It is now tantamount for philosophers to ask to what use, given that it is an artifact, the past is being put. What, in other words, is the practice of history used for? And the answer the philosophy of history gives is also the answer to the question posed in the preceding Part concerning which practices and discursive discordances are to be focussed on and scrutinized. In other words, it aids us in answering what is politically and, as we shall see, ethically relevant.

The question of the function and purpose (indeed the value) of historical investigations is of course not new. In

fact, it has a fairly standard answer: knowing where one comes from is, in an important sense, knowing who one is. This is a traditional - and often traditionalist - answer to the general question. Raymond Martin sums it up quite nicely:

> Our past, it seems, is behind us: fixed, stable, and secure. Our future is not fixed, but open. We can know our past, but we can only speculate about our future. Our present, neither stable nor secure, constantly and swiftly recedes into the past. Only by interpreting the past, and then viewing the present through the lens of this interpretation, can we locate ourselves in a stable world. If we cannot know what we will be, and cannot directly interpret who we are, at least, it seems, we can know what we have been. And in knowing what we have been, we discover who we are.[1]

This, on the surface, appears to be a fully acceptable, unproblematic account of the purpose the study of history serves. (One can imagine history teachers using it in their introductory lectures or researchers using it order to get grant money.) Indeed, not only does it appear acceptable, it is, when considered more closely, frankly seductive. It, in effect, promises a great deal; it promises that history can tell us "who we are", something that has eluded both science and religion, one might say. However, on even closer inspection, this seductive characteristic attributed to history should, from a philosophical perspective, make us suspicious. For in what sense can it be said that "knowing what we have been" does in fact enable us to "discover who we are"? Who does the "we" refer to? That is, history can indeed show us what people have been like in the past; or, more precisely, it can show how people have

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[1] Ibid., p. 3.

been understood, both institutionally and in theory and practice, in the past. But in what sense does that tell us who _we_ are, today, in the present? This account of the purpose of history seems to presuppose the _picture_ of history which sees the past as leading to the present. However, if that picture is rejected in favour of an understanding of history as a reconstructive effort, then the question becomes that of finding out how the reconstruction of what people have done in the past tells us something about ourselves and the present. History does this negatively as it were; that is, history, by recounting what people have done in the past, tells us, not who we are, but _who we are not_. History, by showing and describing various ways of life and circumstances, shows in effect the different ways people were but no longer are. It shows how the present is different from the past; how the present is unlike the past in specified and specifiable ways.

This seems to be an obvious point. However, it is obscured by the assignation of the pronoun 'we' to both the past and the present, an assignation that not only obscures the actual relation between the past and the present but relies on a picture of history that is otherwise discursively denied. The effect of this is the concealment of those differences in the past that would, if exposed, reveal the _particularity and contingency_ of the present and thereby weaken the effectiveness of the structures that support it. That is, because the particularity of the present is obscured, the structures that

maintain it remain unchallenged and effectively unchallengeable.

An example of this can be found in the work of Charles Taylor, whose criticisms of Foucault, we will recall, were considered briefly in the last chapter of Part III.

In the examination of his criticism, it was mentioned that Taylor presupposed his own particular agenda that, in many ways, is the polar opposite of Foucault's project in the sense that his understanding of history is almost point for point the position Foucault combats. Taylor himself recognized this. Recall that his essential criticism of Foucault concerned the notion of power and is summed up in his claim that: "Power can only be understood within a context; and this is the obverse of the point that the contexts can only be understood in relation to the kind of power which constitutes them (Foucault's thesis)."[1] Now, I have already argued that I think Taylor is wrong in attributing this 'thesis' to Foucault. Power does not constitute contexts for Foucault; it is a concept he uses to render their configurations (in terms of the relations that constitute them) intelligible. Or put in other words, the notion of power does not bear the ontological weight Taylor assigns it. (Foucault assigns that weight to the notion of relations, as we shall see later.) However, the point I wish to draw attention to here is not this mistake but what it reveals about Taylor's own ontological commitments. In other words, the importance of this passage lies in the way Taylor shifts the

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[1]Taylor, op. cit.

ontological weight accorded Foucault's notion of power back onto his own notion of context. Ontological weight he does not actually argue for, relying, it seems, on the idea that in reversing Foucault's point he also achieves a reversal of its supposed unintelligibility.

In fact, Taylor is not only objecting to Foucault's particular kind of history because of this alleged reversal of power and context. Perhaps more fundamentally, Taylor is objecting to the kind of history that refuses to judge or evaluate the historical process in terms of relative gains and relative losses (of progress or of regress). This, after all, is why Taylor finds Foucault's work "disconcerting".[1] History is supposed to provide us with a sense of identity and not merely serve to 'unmask' that identity as the fabrication of power-relations. Here, I would claim, is where the real debate begins. Foucault presents Taylor less with an unintelligible option than with a fundamental opposition, one that goes straight to the heart of the matter. Taylor does not see the opposition Foucault presents to his position because he reads him exclusively in terms of a <u>theory</u> of truth[2] rather than in terms of a particular mode of historical understanding. This is particularly evident when Taylor himself appeals unself-consciously to <u>history</u> in order to refute Foucault's alleged

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[1] Ibid., p. 152.

[2] Cf. his reply to Connolly in "Connolly, Foucault, and Truth" <u>Political Theory</u>, Vol. 13, No. 3 (August, 1985), pp. 377-385.

conception of truth. He claims that Foucault misunderstands what Taylor calls the 'reality' of history because he "tidies it up too much, makes it into a series of hermetically sealed, monolithic truth-regimes, a picture which as far from reality as the blandest Whig perspective of smoothly broadening freedom."[1] Taylor insists on presenting Foucault in terms of a misguided theory of truth in order to make room for his own conception of history. If Foucault's conception of history is a discontinuous series of 'hermetically sealed truth-regimes' then Foucault must understand himself as an 'outsider' of that process, as identityless, a mere 'recorder' of various forms of domination. However, such a position, according to Taylor's ontology, is not possible. He tells us:

> We have <u>already</u> become something. Questions of truth and freedom can arise for us in the transformations we undergo or project. In short, we have a <u>history</u>. We live in a time not just self-enclosed in the present, but essentially related to a past which helped define our identity, and a future which puts it again in question.[2]

The conception of history that Taylor is proposing is not actually argued for in the paper on Foucault. Fortunately, a more detailed and sustained defence of that conception is available in Taylor's recent <u>Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity</u>.[3] Foucault is mentioned here and there in that work, along with a great many others, but he is not Taylor's

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[1] 'Foucault on Freedom and Truth', p. 182.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989.

main concern. Taylor's main objective is to give us a particular reading of history such that it can provide us with the moral sources that enable us to establish our identity as (moral) selves. He obviously subscribes to the view that history is in some sense formative of our identities. The problem, of course, is with which identity he is speaking of. We must, given what we have said about historical practice, remain suspicious of his appeal to 'we' and of the definite articles in the subtitle: The Making of the Modern Identity. We might agree that history does indeed provide sources which establish 'our' identities as (moral) selves, and that is precisely why suspicion is called for. That is, Taylor has more in common with Foucault than he is willing to admit. Because Foucault too is concerned with the self and its sources, as well as with the formation of the modern identity. The 'self' is the explicit concern of the last two (published) volumes of Foucault's History of Sexuality, while the modern identity is a constant throughout his work. But while Taylor seeks to establish the identity of the modern self, Foucault aims at its dispersal. And they both do so by means of their individual reappropriation and manipulation of the historical record.

Both Taylor and Foucault appeal to history for similar reasons based on similar assumptions. Connolly has pointed out some striking commonalities between the two thinkers. He characterizes them as follows:

> (1) An episteme sets (in Taylor's language) "the limits of the thinkable" for an age, even though those limits

> do not necessarily correspond to the limits of thought as such.
> (2) The correspondence theory of truth does not coalesce with modern understandings of finitude as those understandings find expression in theories of life, labor, and language.
> (3) The premodern mode of attunement to the world no longer is available to us, although Taylor seems to think that a new form of attunement between self-identity and the world might become available.
> (4) There is more to being than knowing, or, in the formulation Foucault would prefer, there is more to life than knowing.
> (5) Language is impoverished if it is forced into a designative philosophy of language, and the prediscursive realm from which discourse is formed never can be drawn fully into discourse.
> (6) The strong theory of the subject as sovereign or universal no longer is sustainable.
> (7) The death of God does or would spread an infection throughout prevailing understandings of truth, the self, rationality and morality.[1]

The reason for this last remark signals Taylor's as yet undeveloped theistic solutions to the problems raised in his book. Obviously, for Foucault, this possibility is a non-starter. These are huge matters, of course, way beyond my scope; but not completely irrelevant insofar as Taylor's theistic appeal may not be required in order to move forward with the assumptions just outlined. As for moving beyond them, that is not my concern.

However, although there do exist these commonalities between Taylor and Foucault, very real differences remain. What are we to make of these? Taylor's account of them is unhelpful because they are distorted by the lack of recognition of the similarities outlined by Connolly. What we have to do

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[1] W. Connolly, 'Foucault and Otherness' Political Theory, (August, 1985), p. 367.

then is look briefly at what Taylor is attempting to do in Sources of the Self.

The foe of Taylor's big book is clearly not Foucault but the epistemological naturalist and his idea of a disengaged self. Indeed, when he does openly attack Foucault it is due mainly to what he considers to be Foucault's own disengaged commitment, as least as far as the archaeologist is concerned. Foucault's alleged assumption of the possibility of total disengagement and the subsequent characterization of the process of history as a series of 'regimes of truth' that are exclusionary and dominating can only operate, according to Taylor, because of a systematic blindness to an unacknowledged commitment to a 'hypergood' that transcends that domination. A hypergood is a second-order qualitative distinction that defines "higher goods, on the basis of which we discriminate among other goods, attribute differential weight or importance to them, or determine when and if to follow them."[1] In other words, they provide the standpoint from which we judge various other goods. For example, the hypergood Foucault appeals to but refuses to acknowledge is "connected to the principle of universal and equal respect."[2] However, it is not merely the lack of acknowledgement that bothers Taylor about Foucault. Human beings often act and discriminate without a highly developed or articulated sense of their ultimate commitments. Rather, it is the claim which he

[1] Taylor, Sources of the Self, p. 63.

[2] Ibid., p. 71.

imputes to Foucault that all such hypergoods are by nature exclusionary and dominating. As I have argued, Foucault is not putting forward a thesis about the historical process at all, and certainly not the particular thesis Taylor here attributes to him. His works are presented as particular kinds of histories. Not as the history of such-and-such a la Taylor, but as the genealogical treatment of particular problems. It is true that the genealogical approach is motivated by the desire to undermine or 'unsettle' the hold hypergoods may have on us, by showing the various relations that underpin their, shall we say, hyperstatus. And it may be that this motivation stems from the stronger - perhaps debatable but by no means implausible - assumption that all such hypergoods and the status conferred on them have inherent and irreducible exclusionary and distortive elements. There are, after all, good historical reasons to hold such a view.

However, even if we grant Taylor his point that showing that some hypergoods are illusory or distortive does not mean they all are, it remains the case that some are, and one would expect that Taylor would be especially preoccupied by them. And given the kind of cases people like Foucault put forward, one might even expect that anyone wishing to argue for a given hypergood would set the counterexamples front and center to show how the proposed hypergood is different. Taylor does not do this, primarily because he is after what he considers to be bigger fish. The real culprit is not bad or distortive hyper-

goods, but a 'naturalist epistemology' that denies us the capacity (and opportunity) to distinguish between good and bad hypergoods. This capacity is denied because of the recognition that there are no independent or objective criteria for deciding between moral alternatives; independent and objective here meaning criteria which "could be established even outside the perspectives in dispute and which nevertheless would be decisive."[1] But the way to decide moral issues, according to Taylor, is not to rely on this "bad model of practical reasoning" but rather to "convince me by changing my reading of my moral experience, and in particular my reading of my life story, of the transitions that I have lived through - or perhaps have refused to live through."[2] This line of reasoning is interesting because if one replaces 'my moral experience' and 'my life story' with <u>history</u>, then once again we see how close Taylor is to Foucault, for what else was Foucault doing than trying to <u>change</u> standard historical readings of current self-understandings, to reveal how they have been illusory and distortive? But again, the closeness also reveals the fundamental opposition. Foucault seeks to unsettle or shake up the hold present configurations have on our thinking and acting. Taylor seeks to provide the best possible account of those hypergoods that in some sense <u>move</u> us, or empower us. That account - the best account we can find - is, he admits, provisional. It must raise and

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[1]Ibid., p. 73.

[2]Ibid.

face "this or that particular critique"[1] and, presumably, it must be able to answer them. My point here would be that Taylor occasionally raises but hardly faces (let alone answers) the critique of hypergoods put forward by Foucault, who can be seen as simply making sure that the provisional status is maintained.

But what about Taylor's claim that Foucault, too, even if he doesn't admit it, is moved by particular hypergoods; hypergoods that Taylor is valiantly trying to account for? Here we see how tied Taylor is to his naturalist foe in that he sees much of his task as arguing for the plausibility and basic existence of hypergoods. Foucault recognizes the existence of hypergoods and the role Taylor gives them. As far as the naturalist foe is concerned, Foucault is on Taylor's side. For example, Taylor is targetting those who reject frameworks; so is Foucault. Taylor sees these frameworks as empowering or enabling; Foucault sees them as constitutive and productive. Taylor wants to give the best account of the current situation; Foucault wants to point out its constitutive relations and its "conditions of possibility". The difference between the two stems from their rival ontologies. For Taylor, the function and purpose of frameworks is to enable us to articulate what it is to be fully human. They provide us with an identity. Taylor's job as a philosopher is to help us with that articulation by seeking out the sources of our identity that are constitutive of the modern

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[1] Ibid., p. 74.

self. Foucault's genealogical challenge to Taylor's project raises the historical question of whose sources are being used on order to ground which self? For surely one of the fundamental characteristics of modernity (since we are, after all, talking about the modern self) is the explosion of identities it has to offer. (Opponents describe this as rampant individualism; proponents as the prerogative of freedom.) Foucault's relational ontology is an attempt to recognize the irreducible character of this diversity, and to trace its 'descent'.[1] Taylor's ontology also wants to account for this diversity; nevertheless it is fueled by a unifying thrust. In other words, Taylor is sensitive to the cost of such diversity (as far as personal identity is concerned) and he seeks to meet the challenge by grounding personal identity in a particular kind of history. But then any history which seeks to establish a particular identity is subject to Foucaultian genealogical analysis whose task is to draw out the historical relations that underpin any particular identity.

Taylor seems to think he can avoid this because he claims to be giving us the making (or history) of the modern identity. However, as I have been arguing throughout the thesis, the attempt to write the history of anything is generally no longer considered plausible, let alone the history of the modern identity. That is, Taylor recognizes the historical character of the formation of identity, and he tries to

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[1]Cf. his 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' op.cit.

account for this philosophically by writing a history that shows how a particular (i.e. historically contingent) identity has been formed over time, the purpose of which is to conceal the particularity of that formation. This is the point of calling the result of this history as the modern identity. In other words, he attempts to use history in order to ground in a non-historical way (i.e. a way that does not recognize the situatedness and 'artifactuality' of its own attempt) an ontologically particular identity (as artifact of the present).

The reason Taylor doesn't see that he is doing this is because his understanding of history is marred by his particular ontology of self-identity that itself seems overly dependent on a strictly negative assessment of what he calls an 'identity-crisis'. A sense of self-identity for Taylor is quite simply a sense of 'knowing who I am' and to know who I am is to know where I stand. One might want to say here: in relation to what? But this is not what Taylor is after; he means: knowing who I am means knowing where I stand within what he calls a moral space bounded by 'strongly qualified horizons' that tell me, in effect, who I am. Remember this is a constitutive or ontological claim, such that "living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency."[1]

Someone like Foucault would of course agree that human agency is bounded by such qualified horizons; however, he would refuse to put the ontological weight here, principally

[1] Sources of the Self, p. 27.

because of the implication Taylor himself draws, namely, that 'stepping' outside of these qualified horizons would mean to step outside of "what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood."[1] Indeed, one of the primary functions of Foucault's histories is precisely that; to allow us to step outside of particular qualified horizons. This is an impossibility for Taylor because it would mean stepping outside of human agency altogether. However, it isn't a problem for Foucault because the ontological weight of the frameworks belongs to the present and not to human persons; and one can 'step outside' of present frameworks by exploring those of the past through writing histories that trace the networks of relations that traverse various institutions, practices and discourses. Why isn't this an acceptable alternative, one which accepts the need for and possibility of rejecting particular qualitative frameworks? Why does it have to be all or nothing? Again, Taylor seems much too tied to the terms of his naturalist foe who, on Taylor's account, rejects all frameworks and promotes the idea of a disengaged self. A self that for Taylor would be incapable of moral discourse.

One might accept this critique of the totally disengaged self and yet be dissatisfied with where Taylor takes it. He comes back again to the notion of identity-crisis. To suffer from an identity-crisis is to suffer from a lack of orientation. It is, according to Taylor, not to know where one stands vis-a-

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[1] Ibid.

vis others and the world. And it is, as he says, "a painful and frightening experience."[1] This is true, but then so is moving away from home, having a child, falling in love for the <u>second</u> time, etc. What all of these experiences have in common, one might say, besides the pain and fear, is that they are cathartic. They are fundamentally disorienting, but they usually lead to reorientations and reevaluations, the very stuff of moral reflection. However, this isn't the route Taylor takes. He appears to read the notion of identity-crisis as a state that is all-pervasive, at least in the present. He points to the presence of this 'state' and argues that its very possibility shows "that our identities define the space of qualitative distinctions within which we live and choose."[2] But again the reference to the we and to our identities is precisely what is at issue. Of course, what he means by 'we' is "we moderns"[3] but that too is far from unambiguous. Are "we moderns" as a whole suffering from an identity-crisis? So it seems. But how much mileage can one reasonably expect to get from such an idea? People undeniably suffer identity crises. It may even be a widespread phenomenon (if one can call it <u>a</u> phenomenon). But why couldn't we describe it as the consequence of the fact that there are many identities being lived and chosen and that the world is a much smaller place than it used to be? There is bound to be a

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[1]Ibid., p. 28.

[2]Ibid., p. 30.

[3]Ibid., p. 11.

certain amount of disorientation in a world where horizons are not only widened but multiplied.

But then we should blame Taylor's naturalist foe, because, after all, he is the one on Taylor's account who claims to be 'free from all frameworks'. And this is simply not possible. But then Taylor says something interesting. He tells us that, in practice, someone who claimed to be free from all frameworks would be seen "as deeply disturbed" and "pathological"[1]; that "the imagined agent of naturalist theory is a monster."[2] Well, never mind the imagined agent of naturalist theory, Foucault's histories have shown that one need not claim to be free from all frameworks to make one wary of articulations that claim to be morally empowering and enabling. Morally empowering for whom? At what cost? Maybe the naturalist isn't the one that poses the greatest threat.

Of course, Taylor may here snap back that it still remains the case that Foucault is committed to certain goods he is not acknowledging or articulating. As he says: "It is a form of self-delusion to think that we do not speak from a moral orientation which we take to be right. This is a condition of being a functioning self, not a metaphysical view we can turn on or off."[3] Yes, but which self are 'we' here talking about? Does it function all the time and in all circumstances and situations

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[1]Ibid., p. 31.

[2]Ibid., p. 32.

[3]Ibid., p. 99.

with the same orientation? Such an orientation may indeed be the condition of a functioning self - which by the way is also Foucault's point in the latter two volumes of his History of Sexuality (a point I shall be examining in the next two chapters) - but surely not of living bumbling human beings! Taylor seems to me to be simply missing the point, and I would argue it is an important one, when he asks of Foucault and other 'neo-Nietzscheans' "what meta-considerations can overrule our best account of our actual moral experience."[1] The point of Foucault's genealogies is precisely to provide historical considerations that - not overrule - but question the hold various 'best' accounts have on our (or anybody else's) moral experience.

This brings us to a final point that Taylor makes. He says that: "The negative focus on the good as a source of crushing guilt or, alternatively, of a smug sense of superiority ends up making us unwilling to admit how a constitutive good can interpellate us, move us, empower us."[2] In many ways this seems to be the major point of his big book and it is a point well taken. This is a problem for Foucault and the kind of history he writes. But, of course, it is not only Foucault's problem. I would argue that it is a problem implicit in the idea of history itself. What indeed are we to do with the historical knowledge that we have? The blood and waste and injustice revealed by his-

[1] Ibid., p. 99

[2] Ibid., p. 103.

tory can at times be physically paralyzing and can blind one to hope and the ability to distinguish between the truly good and its many supposed disguises. It seems that history leads inevitably to suspicion, one might say to a seductive suspicion, and Taylor's point becomes all the more relevant.

But is Taylor's solution plausible? Is it even attractive? Is the answer to write histories that have as their primary purpose the goal of empowering or moving us? Does this belong to _history_? Note that Taylor's point here is that inveterate suspicion, if I may put it that way, "ends up making us unwilling to _admit_ how a constitutive good can interpellate us, empower us." What would it mean to _admit_ that a constitutive good can move me, other than expressing the fact that I am so moved? What role does the idea of admission play here (is it like confessing one's guilt? or demanding forgiveness?) I would suggest here that the reason that Taylor worries about the kind of history Foucault writes as in effect 'de-moralizing' - which his notion of empowerment is meant to counter - actually conceals the suspicion on Taylor's part (apparent in the final pages of the book) that the kind of history he has tried to write simply cannot do what he would like it to do, that is, ground his particular ontology of the person, for the simple reason that history, increasingly recognized as a practice and not a process, cannot _ground_ anything.

In any case, as far as the study of history is concerned (which is, after all, our subject), it simply does not follow

that if one does not articulate the goods one upholds, one cannot therefore criticize those that, in practice, distort and exclude others. Indeed, one might even argue (as I will proceed to do in the next chapter) that, in certain cases, precise articulation may effectively prevent one from identifying particular distortions for the simple reason that the articulation itself depends on those distortions. This is the case with self-identity, the subject matter of the latter two volumes of Foucault's History of Sexuality.

CHAPTER TWO - FROM SELF-AWARENESS TO SELF-WARINESS

There was an eight year interval between the publication of the first volume of the History of Sexuality and the second and third volumes (and the promise of a fourth). The most notable feature of these last two volumes is the extent to which they differ and deviate from Foucault's original 'plan'.

Aside from the tone Foucault adopts and the alleged 'return to the subject'[1] that characterizes these works, what strikes the reader most is that these books are less about sexuality than they are about the self. And even putting it this way is slightly misleading inasmuch as the works are less about something one can call *the* self than they are about individual *conduct*. And specifically they deal with the conduct of individuals vis-a-vis their relations with their own *desires*, which of course includes sexual desire. In other words, Foucault wants to write the genealogy of the conduct of *desiring subjects*, by which he means the analysis of "the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen." (UP, 5) We can see here the connection such a project has with what was discussed in the first volume of the History of Sexuality,

[1]Cf. Ferry and Renaut, La pensée 68: Essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), pp. 178ff.

especially in terms of the primary premise of that work, namely, the 'repressive hypothesis'. That hypothesis holds that bourgeois society has completely repressed our 'true' sexuality and only by 'liberating' it from this repression can our 'true nature' be expressed. Freedom lies in the emancipation of our sexual selves. What Foucault discussed in that first volume was how this 'hypothesis' of sexual repression was linked to an all-pervasive and excessive 'talk' <u>about</u> sex that effectively formed the grid of relations and structures that locked individuals into particular configurations of power.
What Foucault found lacking in the earlier approach - and what I characterized as a misguided extension of the concept of power - was an account of the relationship of the individual to himself as a 'sexual' subject in order to understand why liberating one's 'sexuality' was seen as the liberation of one's 'true nature'. Traditionally, the 'natural' pole of human being (as opposed to the 'spiritual' pole) is connected with the passions and <u>desire</u>, and thus he had originally set out his study as a genealogy along the following lines: "to study the games of truth [<u>jeux de verite</u>] in the relationship of self with self and the forming of oneself as a subject, taking as my domain of reference and field of investigation what might be called the 'history of desiring man'." (UP, 6)

Here is the point of rupture with the old project. Foucault found himself at a crossroads: either sketch a brief history of this desiring subject in order to get clearer about

the power configurations connecting sexual discourse, sexual repression and the alleged forthcoming 'liberation' <u>or</u> "reorganize the whole study around the slow formation, in antiquity, of a hermeneutics of the self." (UP, 6) He opted for the second, I suggested, because it had become obvious to him that, while the development of discursive formations and practices of power had been conceptually useful in understanding and responding to the confugurations of the present, his approach still remained <u>external</u> insofar as he had not yet adequately accounted for how individuals related <u>themselves</u> to those configurations.[1]

The method remains essentially the same: an examination of discursive and practical relations and their interconnections, which Foucault now characterizes as <u>truth-games</u> ("jeux de verites")[2] by which he means the analysis "of the games of truth and error through which being is historically constituted as experience; that is, as something that can and must be thought." (UP, 6-7)

But why Antiquity? Why this 'return' to the Greeks? The reason for this is connected to what I am calling a notion of self-wariness. When discussing why he chose to study the Greeks rather than continuing with his more usual concern with the 'Classical Age', Foucault remarks:

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[1]Foucault is here implicitly responding to the criticisms of people like Taylor who complain that Foucault never deals with the <u>self</u>-understanding human agents have of themselves.

[2]Whose conceptual function clearly resembles that of Wittgenstein's language-games, cf. Part III, Chap. 3 of this thesis.

> After all, what would be the value for the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeableness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield from himself? There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. (UP,8)

This is an important statement, despite its wistful tone ("There are times in life..."); indeed, it echoes a common theme in Foucault's work[1] which, along with its obvious and much discussed anti-foundationalism, also promotes what might be called a 'de-substantialization' of the self. In the last chapter I argued that Taylor was wrong to lump Foucault with those who argue as disengaged selves; more precisely I should day that Foucault does not presuppose a disengaged self but sets the task of disengagement as the task of philosophical activity. Note that Foucault characterizes philosophy as an activity and not as the elaboration of a doctrine or theoretical construct. This, I have been arguing, is why his philosophical questions have consistently been connected to historical research, for, as he says bluntly:

> There is always something ludicrous in philosophical discourse when it tries, from the outside, to dictate to others, to tell them where their truth and how to find it, or when it works up a case against them in the language of naive positivity. But it is entitled to explore what might be changed, in its own thought, through the practice of a knowledge that is foreign to it. (UP, 9)

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[1] Cf. Madness and Civilization, but especially the opening remarks of L'Ordre du discours (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 7ff.

Thus the appeal to history; it takes us away from our familiar world. He insists, however, that although he is clearly 'doing' history in these works, they are not to be considered the works of an 'historian'. These works are clearly works of historical research but they are presented philosophically, from philosophical motives. Foucault calls them a philosophical exercise whose "object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently." (UP, 9) Here we have perhaps the best statement yet encountered of what I mean when I characterize Foucault as offering a philosophy of history, one which discusses not what history means or is, nor the epistemological status of historical knowledge, but what history, ultimately, is for.

While this may help us understand why Foucault consistently attaches his philosophical questions to historical ones, it still does not tell us why Foucault now chose the Greeks and Romans. Is Foucault - a professor at the College de France for some time now - simply paying his dues and returning to the canon?[1] Foucault, whose work until then had consistently restricted itself to a certain periodisation of history (Renaissance, Classical Age, Modern Age, the Present), insists that by distancing himself from this periodisation he was able to get a better perspective on what he had consistently been trying to do

[1] MacIntyre seems to make a big deal out of Foucault's professorial status, cf. Three Rival Theories of Moral Inquiry, p. 53.

(which he now characterizes as a 'history of truth'), that is: "analyzing, not behaviors, or ideas, nor societies and their 'ideologies', but the problematizations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought - and the practices on the basis on which these problematizations are formed." (UP, 11) However, this new perspective that has been opened up applies not only to his own work, it also clears up a certain perspective on the present that is otherwise left more or less unnoticed. He writes:

> ...in raising this very general question, and in directing it to Greek and Greco-Roman culture, it occurred to me that this problematization was linked to a group of practices that have been of unquestionable importance in our societies: I am referring to what can be called the "arts of existence". What I mean by the phrase are those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also 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. These "arts of existence", these "techniques of the self", no doubt lost some of their importance and autonomy when they were assimilated into the exercise of priestly power in early Christianity, and later, into educative, medical, and psychological types of practices. Still, I thought that the long history of these aesthetics of existence and these technologies of the self remained to be done, or resumed. (UP, 10-11)

Foucault adds that his works can be considered as a first chapter in such a general history. Note that they are characterized as chapters in a history and are not thus offered as some kind of alternative model that one might or might not adopt.[1] They are not prescriptive in that sense. But they are prescriptive in another sense, inasmuch as they do seek to draw

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[1]Contra Taylor's comments about the 'desirability' of such an option. Cf. "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," p. 183.

out ethical implications, not so much out of the results of the investigation or research, but as arising through them.

It is clear from this passage that the concern with the concept of an "art of existence" is the main goal of the proposed history. Foucault is careful to note that the concept is not totally eclipsed from the present - as one would expect, given Foucault's ontological understanding of the present - although it has lost some of its autonomy by being integrated first into Christian and then into 'modern' medical, educational, and psychological practices. Practices that, of course, Foucault's earlier work sought to analyze. However, his history is not meant to retrieve the wholeness of those practices of the 'art of existence', nor are they set up in order to describe, as Dreyfus and Rabinow put the question, "an attractive and plausible alternative". Foucault's response is important. He tells us:

> I am not looking for an alternative; you can't find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by other people. You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions, and that's 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.[1]

Here is another reason for the use of the idea of wariness connected to the notion of history. History is to

[1]Dreyfus and Rabinow, pp. 231-232.

keep us on our guard, keen to the dangers of seductive solutions and unspecified promises with which we normally and unthinkingly accept as valid, self-evident, or matter of course. Thus its prescriptivism is primarily negative and connected to the political character Foucault emphasized in his earlier work. That is, the ethical considerations of the last two volumes of the History of Sexuality are intimately linked to the political concerns of the first volume, inasmuch as they are directed, as Bernauer has pointed out, to "an effort to get at a form of becoming a subject that would furnish the source of an effective resistance to a specific and widespread type of power."[1] This is done, through the study of history, by producing "a de-familiarization of the 'desiring man' who lies at the root of our willingness to identify with the form of individual subjectivity constituted for us in the modern period."[2] In other words, the point and purpose of history is to enable us to become self-wary in such a way that the identities 'we' (as identified) recognize are loosened such that 'we' (as anonymous individuals) can grasp them for 'our-selves' autonomously and independently. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

First, I would like to examine how Foucault effects this 'defamiliarization'. Note that this is something that must be done because otherwise what happens is that most histories simply read backwards from the present in order to classify the exper-

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[1]Bernauer, p. 166.

[2]Ibid.

ience they set out to recount. Here Foucault is consistently using the methods used in the earlier works of not looking for 'precursor' ideas but looking instead at the formulation of different problems. However, by going back all the way to the Greeks, Foucault is not only seeking to trace the genealogy of the configurations of relations that continue to have a hold on us. He is not merely trying to <u>identify</u> them. He wants in effect to allow us the opportunity to 'disengage' ourselves from them. This is the purpose of 'defamiliarization'. And in many ways it resembles the play of continuity and discontinuity that characterizes his earlier work. However, the continuity/discontinuity distinction is not here meant to characterize the historical <u>process</u> but rather to characterize the understanding of the <u>self</u>.

One might describe Foucault's philosophy of history at this point as a reversal of the traditional analogy between history and the individual human being. Traditionally the development of history is divided up into the developments of specific communities, and the development of those communities is often described by analogy as the development of a human person: infancy and childhood (dependence on another power - imperial or other, for example); awkward adolescence (moments of defiance, desire for independence, economic and political immaturity); adulthood (full independence and autonomy). But, of course, the analogy is not restricted to the notion of development; the communities themselves are characterized analogically to human

persons such that they can be 'proud', 'insulted', 'defiant', 'gentle', 'enraged', 'humiliated', 'threatened'. And because communities are said to provide the 'identities' of the particular individuals within them, then those characterizations automatically apply to the individuals as well.

Foucault reverses the analogy by characterizing the individual human being in terms belonging to history (i.e. historical practice). Thus, the identity of the self, as it were, which is the historical component of the individual human being is characterized in terms of continuity and discontinuity and in terms of various configurations of relations. To put it in the terms discussed in the preceding chapter, while Foucault accepts that the self is describable in terms of the practices it is 'embedded' in, those practices themselves are not described in the substantial manner of historical presentation but in the relational and discontinuous manner of historical research. Thus to describe those practices historically is not to trace their origins but to investigate how present configurations are continuously and discontinuously related to the configurations of the past. It is this kind of investigation that produces the 'defamiliarization' he is after, whose goal is to 'free' us, or 'loosen' us from the embeddedness in current practices and thereby make room for new possibilities.[1]

[1]Concerning the criticism that Foucault calls for new possibilities but does not himself propose any: it is precisely not the task of the philosophy of history to propose new possibilities for the future. If his point, as we shall see, is to enable individuals to be effectively free and autonomous, then he has no business, at the same

Thus Foucault turns to the Greeks, who have pride of place in our culture's self-understanding and yet whose practices are in so many ways unfamiliar; especially those practices revolving around sex. However, unfamiliarity also presupposes familiarity and, as it turns out, Foucault is intent to focus as well on the _continuities_ surrounding the self-understanding of sexual practices between the Greco-Roman world and the Christian world. The point is, of course, Foucault is interested in the _self-understanding_ that define those practices and not the practices themselves which, it has long been observed, differ substantially both from those of the early Christians as well as those considered acceptable today. Just to note some of the major points of difference between pagan sexual practices and Christian ones: they usually revolve around such notions as the nature of the sexual act, where it is connected to sin, the Fall for Christians and given positive connotations for the pagans; other practices revolve around notions of monogamy and fidelity, as well as chastity. And finally, of course, the acceptance and even valorisation of homosexuality in the pagan world is often contrasted with the (until recently) unconditional exclusion of it in Christianity. The general character of these comparisons usually lead to the conclusion that while Christianity seems obsessively concerned with sexual practices, the Greeks appear to be largely indifferent.

However, Foucault argues that this appearance of indif-

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time, to tell them what to do.

ference stems from the fact that sexual practices for the Greeks were neither codified nor monitored in the same way that such practices were to be within Christianity. They were nevertheless discussed, and evoked similar concerns. For example, monogamy and fidelity were encouraged because there was a fear that unproductive sex had negative effects on a given individual (i.e. involves 'spending' too much of one's vital energy). As well, homosexual practices were of course accepted, but the image of the effeminate and flaccid male was also current and carried with it clear negative connotations. And, finally, there was clear valorisation of sexual abstention (one need only think of Socrates) and its connection with the achievement of truth and wisdom. Thus, we see here important continuities between the attitudes towards certain sexual practices.

So much for continuity and familiarity. What is so different (i.e. discontinuous and unfamiliar) about the Greek attitudes towards these sexual practices is that they are not presented as a set of rules for the relation between the sexes but are rather "an elaboration of masculine conduct carried out from the viewpoint of men in order to give form to their behaviors." (UP, 22-23) And, furthermore, this elaboration does not take the form of a set of prohibitions or interdictions but rather as, for the individual male, a "stylization of an activity in the exercise of its power and the practice of its liberty." (UP, 23) Here, the purpose of studying the Greeks becomes exceptionally clear inasmuch as the effect of

defamiliarization reaches its peak. And yet, again, such a defamiliarization contains within it an element of familiarity (otherwise it would not be described as unfamiliar, but as incomprehensible or unrecognizable) in that the problematisation of sexual practices in connection with this notion of 'stylisation' is describable in terms of an individual's personal freedom, autonomy, and self-mastery; notions definitely 'familiar' to 'our' self-understanding.

The concept that holds together the twin poles of familiarity and unfamiliarity, continuity and discontinuity, is that of problematization. The interest of the problematization of sexual practices for Foucault is that it opens up a new conceptual dimension of moral or ethical reflection and activity. While morality and ethics usually involve discussion concerning codes and conduct, Foucault's problematizing approach brings out a third dimension which he calls the self-constitution of the subject vis-a-vis these codes and the conduct required by them. That is, this third dimension involves the individual's choosing to conduct himself according to the prescriptions of the code. In other words, within any given code, and within the conduct it prescribes, "there are different ways to 'conduct oneself' morally, different ways for the acting individual to operate, not just as an agent, but as an ethical subject of this action." (UP, 26) Thus, one might say, there is an internalization effected between the code and the conduct, and this internalization is what one would call the 'moral subject'. The

moral subject is thus something <u>constituted</u>.

An individual is not merely related to the - in this case 'moral' - world (via codes) but also to oneself, and this is not simply in terms of self-awareness, but in a practical and constitutive sense. Or, as Foucault puts it, there is no particular moral action "that does not refer to a unified moral conduct; no moral conduct that does not call for the forming of oneself as an ethical subject; and no forming of the ethical subject without 'modes of subjectivation' and an 'ascetics' or 'practices of the self' that support them." (UP, 28) And Foucault of course sets as his task the examination of this third dimension of 'practices of self' found in Antiquity surrounding the 'problematization' of pleasure, desire, and sex.

Rather than go on in great exegetical detail - I refer the reader directly to the text for Foucault's legendary rhetoric is at a minimum and his clarity is exceptional - I would simply like to draw out the major features of this 'art of existence' Foucault is describing and connect it with the goal of what I have been calling 'self-wariness'.

Sex is a problem for the Greeks, but not the sexual act in itself. That is, the sexual act is not classified in any particular way and details about it are normally not discussed. One might say that sexual acts are a matter for concern but: "when they were the subject of questioning, what was at issue was the form they assumed, it was the activity they manifested. Their dynamics was much more important than their morphology."

(UP, 42)

There is, within Greek sexual activity, a general unity between act, desire, and pleasure (a unity which, Foucault notes, Christianity will dissociate). That is, the Greeks were not confronted with the problem between the desire for sex, the sexual act itself, and the pleasure one gets from it (it is not a matter of lack and satisfaction). What we have instead is the problem of _force_. That is, it is a matter of the _force_ (of nature) that unites the three terms. The problem of sexual _activity_ (and not the act considered in itself) concerns the _dynamics_ of the triad act-pleasure-desire, which itself is analyzed in terms of two variables:

1) quantity, or more precisely, _intensity_; homosexuality, for example, is not so much _abnormal_ or _unnatural_ as it is _excessive_; that is, the moral appreciation of homosexuality is not traced "by the nature of the act, with its possible variations, but by the activity and its quantitative gradations." (UP, 45)

2)the role or polarity, i.e. the positioning, of the free adult male; women, slaves, and boys were passive partners, considered more as partner-objects rather than equal partners, and moral concern was not extended to them.

Immorality, then, (for men, since this morality is for and by men) revolves around the notions of _excess_ and _passivity_. The sexual act itself is quite natural and therefore is valued; however, it remains a matter of _moral_ concern as well: because

natural, it is a force and a force that must be controlled. The question becomes: how is this control to be effected? Not from above, nor from without, but from within. What Foucault calls the 'use' (usage; chresis) of pleasure has to do, not with what is permitted or forbidden, but rather is a matter "of prudence, of reflection, and calculation in the way one distributed and controlled his acts." (UP, 54) The moral criteria involved in the use of pleasure cannot be codified or tabulated beforehand but are a matter of an individual's assessment of his need, an opportune moment, as well as regard for that individual's status. This is not to say there are no general laws that the individual must also take into account. The laws of nature and the city and indeed of religion cannot be disregarded. However, they serve as the context, or background, of the actions of a particular individual, and not as a code or a model to be adopted. Foucault writes:

> The few great common laws - of the city, religion, nature - remained present, but it was as if they traced a very wide circle in the distance, inside of which practical thought had to define what could rightfully be done. And for this there was no need of anything resembling a text that would have the force of law, but rather, of a _techne_ or 'practice', a _savoir-faire_ that by taking general principles into account would guide action in its time, according to its context, and in view of its ends. Therefore, in this form of morality, the individual did not make himself into an ethical subject by universalizing the principles that informed his action; on the contrary, he did so by means of an attitude and a quest that individualized his action, modulated it, and perhaps even gave him a special brilliance by virtue of the rational and deliberate structure his action manifested. (UP, 62)

This is an important passage because within it we see

how Foucault plays off the familiar with the unfamiliar. He describes a context in which moral or ethical conduct is individualized in a way that is alien to the present's universalizing approach to morality, and in that sense, is unfamiliar. But at the same time he describes a historical context that in many ways responds to certain difficulties characteristic of the present's universalizing morality; namely that that morality has an historical dimension which in effect relativizes the universalizing approach such that individualized and individualizing approach becomes relevant, and in that sense what Foucault is describing has familiar aspects.

But this does not mean that Foucault thinks that the Greek aproach is a solution to present concerns. He explicitly denies this on the simple grounds that the problems of the present cannot be resolved by using the solutions of the past. (If history teaches us anything, it teaches us that.) But that doesn't mean the past has nothing to offer the present. Because the past has provided solutions to its problems, and to the extent that its problems share certain similarities with present ones (which, we have seen, is ontologically required if there is to be historical reconstruction), what the past has to offer is perspective, a vantage point from which to view the present's 'self-entanglements', that is, the way the 'self' is presently constituted.

The present's view of the self is entangled with notions of freedom, autonomy, and truth. The Greek experience of sex -

the subject of Foucault's history - reveals another self entangled in related notions of freedom, self-mastery, and truth. His first volume showed how, in trying to untangle the knot tying together the notions of freedom, autonomy, and truth (the knot might be called 'the repressive hypothesis') the knot was only tightened further (talk leading to talk and only talk). Thus, rather than getting entangled further, Foucault turns to past knots which he can untangle because he is no longer completely tied to them. The knot freedom-autonomy-truth is not the same knot as freedom-self-mastery-truth. The latter he can and does untangle. And he does so, as mentioned above, by examining the 'use of pleasure' divided in the triple distinction of desire-pleasure-act. The virtuous 'use of pleasure' in Greek experience does not involve the proper ordering or balancing of the triple distinction. The virtue needed for the proper ethical 'use of pleasure' revolves around the notion of self-mastery, which is connected to the notion of freedom, not in the sense of the former leading to the latter, but in the sense of the one being constituted by the other. That is, self-mastery is necessary in order to be and remain free. Freedom is here understood as "a certain form of relationship of the individual with himself." (UP, 92) The opposite of freedom is not a natural determinism or a divine will but a slavery inasmuch as the opposite of self-mastery would be self-enslavement (<u>esclavage de soi par soi</u>). This freedom then is not a freedom from all constraints (a 'liberating' freedom) but "a power that one

brought to bear on oneself in the power that one exercised over others." (UP, 93) As well, in this ethical perspective, self-mastery is constitutive of freedom as well as truth inasmuch as the truth of the self is not seen as the elucidation and revelation of inner desire, but rather is conceived constitutively as the "mode of being of the moderate subject." (UP, 89; my emphasis) Thus, the goal or ideal of such an ethical perspective is as follows: "The individual fulfilled himself as an ethical subject by shaping a precisely measured conduct that was plainly visible to all and deserving to be long remembered." (UP, 91) One might say that in this ethical perspective the self - as opposed to being the inner truth that must be universalized in theory as is the case in the present - must be constitutively externalized in practice in order truly to be a self. This is what Foucault calls the 'aesthetics of existence' characteristic of the Greek experience.

Historically specific and thus capable of being untangled, Foucault shows how the knot of Greek experience has at least one string tied to the present, namely "that some of the main principles of our ethics have been related at a certain moment to an aesthetics of existence"[1] and that the possibility thus exists for an ethics based on an individual's creating a work of art out of his or her life. Thus, rather than proposing a 'return' to the Greek triad of freedom-autonomy-truth, Foucault seems to be arguing for a new triad one might describe as free-

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[1]Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 236.

dom-creativity-truth. This would be a new 'aesthetics of existence' where one's life is to be one's work of art. It is within this creative possibility that 'truth' resides.

Note that Foucault is arguing for a creative life and not a creative self, i.e. as in, for example, the radical freedom of the existentialist self. Foucault is careful to distinguish himself from a view such as Sartre's:

> From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as works of art. In his analyses of Baudelaire, Flaubert, etc., it is interesting to see that Sartre refers the work of creation to a certain relation to oneself - the author to himself - which has the form of authenticity or inauthenticity. I would like to say exactly the contrary: we should not have to refer the creative activity of somebody to the kind of relation he has to himself, but should relate the kind of relation one has to oneself to creative activity. [1]

And thus the need for the particular kind of historical analysis Foucault offers. It shows the different (creative) ways individuals have been related to themselves, thereby removing the necessity of current predominant ones. While all of this rather upbeat and positive, the removal of the sense of necessity does not by itself remove the effective constitutive relations individuals have to themselves. Foucault is pointing to a possibility not a reality. The reality is most individuals are bound and tied to particular 'selves' that leave little room for creativity. This is because most individuals do not see their 'selves' as a creative activity, but as something to be

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[1] Ibid., p. 237.

uncovered, discovered, recovered, and ultimately obeyed. This is the sense of self Foucault is combatting, the idea that one's _life_ should be devoted to discovering one's true self. These are the selves Foucault is _wary_ of (thus the need for and function of self-wariness rather than self-awareness). History shows that these selves are many, demanding of the individual things like submission, obedience, or renunciation. Amongst these possibilities, there is one that Foucault pays particular attention to; it is a self that calls for careful concern, and it is this concern for self that I would like to consider next.

CHAPTER THREE - THE SELF: A MATTER FOR CONCERN

The self is constituted. This is the fundamental claim of the last two volumes of the History of Sexuality. The self is not given, it is constituted through a set of practices within a given historical context. The self is thus an historical object, subject to change and transformation. Historical analysis and research enables us to identify those practices constitutive of different kinds of selves, and does not therefore provide the self with an identity (as some would have history do).

The point that Foucault is making is that the self is not the product of a particular activity in the sense that the product can be detached from the activity; the self is the activity. The self is constituted by a set of practices but it is not those practices; rather it resides in the way those practices are taken up. But taken up by whom? The answer is: by particular individuals.

In order to be clear about this, I would like ro re-introduce a concept used in Part II of this thesis, namely, that of the anonymous individual. This is the term I gave to all those individual human beings who people the historical process and are the subject-matter of historical reconstructions and yet remain unnamed. That is, they are the individuals that historians refer to when speak of peasants and warriors, or doctors, teachers and lawyers, vagabonds and bandits. I argued that the idea of an anonymous individual was an historical concept, as opposed for example to a sociological one, inasmuch as the prim-

ary reference is to the actual flesh and blood individuals who were peasants, doctors, criminals, etc. But another way, the subject-matter of both these disciplines may be the same: the activities of these people; but the reference is not. For sociology, the reference is to the function and role of the activities themselves; for history, the reference is to the (past) lives of human individuals. Sociology has as its goal the explanation of human behaviour; history the task of describing past human lives. The results of sociological investigations are destined for various administrative and governmental uses; historical investigations are undertaken with the view of achieving a particular kind of 'self-knowledge'.

I would like to use this concept of the anonymous individual in order to distinguish between the concrete (I am tempted to say <u>bodily</u>) individual human being and his or her <u>self</u>.[1] The attempt to distinguish them is not meant to say that there are individuals out there who are not also selves, or selves that aren't individuals.[2] Rather, the distinction is to help us understand the different elements involved in the way human beings relate, not only to the world and others, but to them-

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[1]One might want to say that the distinction is simply between the social, cultural, symbolic properties of human beings as opposed to their physical and biological ones. However, since this is a problem of <u>historical</u> reference, appeals to biology and physics are not really helpful. The distinction is not between physical and mental, but between <u>real</u> and hypothetical or ideal.

[2]The pronoun 'we' denotes or refers to a community and not to a 'self'; although the two can (but need not) have very close links.

selves as well. Indeed, the distinction I am trying to make is implicit in the very expression: one's relation to oneself. The 'one' here refers to the individual considered anonymously related to that same individual considered as a specifiable self with specifiable characteristics. And the relation is one of 'identity' when there is no conflict or gap between the individual considered anonymously and the individual considered as a particular self. That is, the self is complete, such that the individual totally identifies with it and does not distinguish himself from that self. More often than not, and perhaps today more than in the past, an individual can distinguish himself from that self and consider himself 'anonymously' i.e. independently of the different roles and functions he is 'said' to have and which make up his sense of self. And to the extent that he can do this, then the relation he has to himself is no longer one of _identity_ but instead becomes problematic and a matter for concern.

Which brings us to the third volume of Foucault's history of sexuality, _Le souci de soi_, usually translated as _Care of the Self_. The use of the term 'care' to translate 'souci' is to a certain extent quite appropriate given that the work does deal with medical texts devoted to what today we would characterize as 'health care'. However, _souci_ also can be translated by _worry_ and _concern_, as in having certain concerns or worries about some matter.

Both senses are reflected in Foucault's work inasmuch

as an increasing concern for self displayed in late Antiquity - that is, concern for what was seen as the self's 'fragility' - led to the preoccupation (another word for souci) by doctors and moralists in their writings to develop a careful practice of examination and care for one's self. This care and concern found expression in the writings of those doctors and moralists explicitly concerned with sexual matters and what they thought was a sign of "immorality and dissolutes ways" (CS, 39) of their society. However, what is interesting and remarkable (and obviously relevant to the present's 'concerns') is that:

> ...this desire for rigor expressed by the moralists did not take the form of a demand for intervention on the part of public authority. One would not find in the writings of the philosophers any proposal for a general and coercive legislation of sexual behaviors. They urge individuals to be more austere if they wish to lead a life different from that of "the throngs"; they do not try to determine which measures or punishments might constrain everyone in a uniform manner. (CS, 40)

We see here again the anti-universalist thrust of Foucault's analysis. He considers these writings of the moralists and philosophers of late Antiquity and their call for austerity precisely because they are not proposing a blueprint or model to be applied or constructed; it is rather addressed to individuals. Foucault is aware that this appeal to individuals is often seen as reflecting the more general weakening of the social and political structures characteristic of late Antiquity. Unstable periods are characteristically said to give rise to this kind of 'individualism' where people retreat into their 'private' lives where things can more readily appear 'under control'.

However, this kind of 'explanation' is historically suspect. Lumping together different phenomena under the rubric 'the rise of individualism' serves only to obscure matters that need to be carefully distinguished. The term 'individualism' can describe what Foucault calls different 'realities'. He distinguishes and describes three of these:

> Three things in fact need to be distinguished here: (1) the individualistic attitude, characterized by the absolute value attributed to the individual in his singularity and by the degree of independence conceded to him vis-a-vis the group to which he belongs and the institutions to which he is answerable; (2) the positive valuation of private life, that is, the importance granted to family relationships, to the forms of domestic activity, and to the domain of patrimonial interests; (3) the intensity of the relations to self, that is, of the forms in which one is called upon to take oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action, so as to transform, correct, and purify oneself, and find salvation. (CS, 42)

Note that Foucault calls what he is describing here different 'attitudes'. This of course is connected with the kind of 'ethics' we discussed in the last chapter that dealt not with codes and practices principally but with the way in which codes were understood and practices undertaken. The same applies here. He acknowledges immediately that these different 'attitudes' need not be mutually exclusive; although different periods in history can be seen as characterized by the predominance of one or the other. For examples, he uses ancient warrior societies as exemplifying the first; nineteenth century bourgeois society the second; and certain early Christian ascetic movements as typical of the third.

The point of making these distinctions is to show that

the period he is describing , while obviously fitting in a general way with the third 'attitude' described above, displays a specific kind of 'individualism' - if one can even call it that - which revolves around the general idea of a 'culture de soi'. Foucault argues that this idea reaches far back in Greek culture and is characterized by the general principle that one should take care of oneself (prendre soin de soi-meme). One finds it in Xenophon, Plutarch (when discussing the Spartans), and of course in Plato's Socrates. It is the guiding principle of what Foucault calls the 'art of existence' of the period he is describing, and in the course of its development it had taken on a very general sense which Foucault summarizes as follows:

> ...the principle of care of oneself became rather general in scope. The precept according to which one must give attention to oneself was in any case an imperative that circulated among a number of different doctrines. It also took the form of an attitude, a mode of behaviour; it became instilled in ways of living; it evolved into procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught. It thus came to constitute a social practice, giving rise to relationships between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at times even to institutions. And it gave rise, finally, to a certain mode of knowledge and to the elaboration of a science [_savoir_]. (CS, 45)

Thus, if one still wants to call this 'care or concern for the self' an individualism, then it is certainly not the kind of individualism characterized by autonomy and independence as in the first model; nor by the retreat into privacy typical of the second; nor even is it properly applied to the third model of purification and salvation. If we describe these 'individualisms' as the relation _one_ (considered anonymously) has

with <u>oneself</u>, then the first identifies the self with the will; the second with the private enjoyment of one's possessions; and the third with one's purified soul. As distinct from these, Foucault describes a relation with oneself as the care one gives to a fragile and vulnerable body in need of constant attention. In other words, it is something that takes a great deal of time and effort. The point of considering the self as a fragile body emphasizes that the relation with the self is not something that is sought after as a goal, end, or as a prize, or discovery, but as a continuous process. It is not the culmination or point or object of all other activities but relates to the <u>way</u> those activities are undertaken; it is not the focal point but the <u>center</u> of those activities. The concern for self should be seen principally as "a change of activity: not that one must cease of all other forms of occupation and devote oneself entirely and exclusively to oneself; but in the activities that one ought to engage in, one had best keep in mind that the chief objective one should set for oneself is to be sought within oneself, in the relation of oneself to oneself." (CS, 64-65)

The interest of this relation to self is that, while still connected to the ethics of self-mastery, there is what Foucault calls an "inflechissement", a bending, a slight change of direction or accent. What we have at this point is a unique situation where the self is poised, as it were, between a complete immersion and identification within given practices and an abstract universalism. The sexual morality promulgated by doc-

tors and philosophers testifies to this in that it continues to demand "that the individual conform to a certain art of living which defines the aesthetic and ethical criteria of existence. But this art refers more and more to universal principles of nature or reason, which everyone must observe in the same way, whatever their social status." (CS, 67) This shift towards universal appeals does in effect dislocate the self from its embeddedness (like a bone dislocated from its socket) without, however, abandoning the individual body, as it were (that is, the individual person acting out her life at a particular time and place - we are still within the ambit of an 'aesthetics of existence'). Here we see more clearly the point and purpose of Foucault's advocacy for the cogency of such an 'aesthetics of existence'. It is a mode of existence that is free from the unquestioned habit of local practices as well as resistent to the call to universal norms and rules directed for and directed by what Bernauer calls 'a science of life' in the sense that characterizing "human existence as a work of art is to remove it from the domain of the scientifically knowable and free us from the obligation of deciphering ourselves as a system of timeless functions that are subject to corresponding norms."[1] This, of course, is the interest the 'aesthetics of existence' has for the present; it is clearly not what best describes the Greek experience. Once again, Foucault is attempting to set up a picture that is at once familiar and unfamiliar, continuous and

[1] Bernauer, p. 182.

discontinuous.

The Care of the Self is devoted to the historical analysis of this new attitude towards the self which has the individual poised between concrete identification and universal appeal. For example, he shows how the greater value placed on the married couple demonstrates this new relation to self. Originally a strictly non-public event, that is, a direct transfer of 'goods' from father to husband, marriage becomes more and more a matter between husband and wife. The point is not that there is an increase in equality between husband and wife (the husband still calls the shots) but an increasingly institutionally recognized element of shared obligations and duties; however, what is even more significant is that "this sharing occurs not in the name of the respect due to the family, which each of the two marriage partners represents, as it were, in the state of marriage, but on behalf of the couple, its stability and its internal regulation." (CS, 76) What we have then in the marital union is no longer the purely private transaction between two families, nor is it the purely public (i.e. open to all) union between two independent, autonomous, and equal individuals. What we have instead is the formation of a unit - the couple - which is semi-private and semi-public in that it is poised between the privacy of familial relations and the public nature of economic and social relations. As Foucault writes, the overall effect is as follows: "marriage became more general as a practice, more public as an institution, more private as a mode

of existence - a stronger force for binding conjugal partners and hence a more effective one for isolating the couple in a field of other social relations." (CS, 76)

This dislocation from embedded practices into a semi-private, semi-public sphere (of action: relating one to oneself) is also evident in what Foucault calls 'the political game', that is, in political practices. He argues that the dismantling of the City-States and the growth of Empire is not best described in terms of a decline of civic life and political elites and a retreat or withdrawal into self. The important point is that the extension of the Empire required changes in "the conditions of the exercise of power" (CS, 83) in the sense that the administrative reach had to be adjusted to a widened Empire. Thus what we see is not the decline and decadence of a civic elite, but rather we are confronted with "the search for a new way of conceiving the relationship that one ought to have with one's status, one's functions, one's activities, and one's obligations." (CS, 84) In other words, the new political realities required a different understanding of oneself as a political actor. Given the wider circumstances (and unfamiliar ones) in which 'one' had to act politically, 'one' become more acutely aware of the outward signs of function and role (uniform, habits, gestures) and, concomitantly, one became increasingly aware and concerned with that which was <u>not</u> connected to these functions and roles. Or, to put it another way, one became increasingly aware of, and concerned with, the

nature of one's (as an individual) relation to these roles and functions. And once this step is taken, then the whole relation one has with oneself is rendered problematic. Indeed, the attitude one has towards one's own acts becomes problematic. That is, one's status and position no longer dictate what 'one' is to do. That status may be what brought 'one' to where 'one' is, but then the individual is responsible from the actions 'one' undertakes. Put in terms of political action, the individual exercising power "has to place himself in a field of complex relations where he occupies a transition point. His status may have placed him there; it is not his status, however, that determined the rules to follow and the limits to observe." (CS, 88)

Again, it is important to note that in describing this particular relation to self Foucault is not proposing an ideal to be adopted or at the very least emulated. This would be to miss the point of historical analysis. What he is doing is describing a historical possibility that does not find its raison d'etre in what came before nor in what followed. Again, it is the familiarity and the unfamiliarity of the period considered in itself that is of historical interest. This does not mean that earlier and later are irrelevant. This too would be 'unhistorical'. However, earlier and later periods are seen to contrast with the period in question and are not meant to subsume it into a uniform and linear process. The Care of the Self, like most of Foucault's work, is set up precisely to make the

contrast evident. He contrasts the 'culture de soi' of late Antiquity with the earlier model of self-mastery discussed in <u>The Use of Pleasure</u>. He also makes frequent references to the future relation to self characteristic of early Christianity (the subject-matter of the unpublished <u>Les Aveux de la chair</u>) in order to contrast it with the period in question. In his conclusion to <u>The Care of the Self</u>, he takes up the themes discussed in detail in the book and emphasizes the continuity and discontinuity of the period in question. He writes:

> A certain style of sexual conduct is thus suggested by this whole movement of moral, medical, and philosophical reflection. It is different from the style that had been delineated in the fourth century, but it is also different from the one that will be found in Christianity. Here sexual activity is linked to evil by its form and its effects, but in itself and substantially, it is not an evil. It finds its natural fulfillment in marriage, but - with certain exceptions - marriage is not an express, indispensable condition for it to cease being an evil. It has trouble finding its place in the love of boys, but the latter is not therefore condemned as being contrary to nature. (CS, 239)

This is a curious book in that its sense seems to depend on occasion on the description of what came before and on (the promise of) a description of what comes after. It describes a period that is poised between and aesthetics of self-mastery and an abstract moralism where the concrete bodily individual is nothing and the 'soul' everything. However, the interest of the period is not in its character as a <u>threshold</u>, a watershed between what came before and what comes after, in the continuing story of something called the 'self'. This character of being a threshold or a watershed is not specific to this particular per-

iod but is rather characteristic of any period inasmuch as it is considered as a present, situated between a past and a future. Any present, considered in itself, is a threshold between the past and the future.

The interest of The Care of the Self is in the particular relation to self it describes: the care and concern for a fragile self, one not grounded in unquestioned and unquestionable practices, and yet one still consituted in its relations to others. It is this historical possibility that is of interest.

But what, exactly, is meant by the phrase 'historical possibility'? (Especially if we recognize that the point is not to revive and relive the past in any practical sense.) We saw in the last chapter (and, in fact, throughout this thesis) that the notion of possibility is contrasted with that of necessity inasmuch as history teaches that current practices do not express ahistorical essences or necessary features of human 'being', but express rather contingent configurations of relations. This includes those relations in which individuals relate to their selves as selves. The purpose of the type of historical analysis Foucault proposes - the exploration of different historical 'possibilities' - also serves as the basis for a certain wariness vis-a-vis the constitutive relations that make up the relation between the individual and his or her self; a wariness, that is, based on the contingent character of those relations and directed to the appearance of necessity, and perhaps more importantly,

to the appeal to necessity.

However, the notion of possibility can also be contrasted with the notion of _actuality_ as well. That is, if one recognizes that the actual world is a contingent matter of fact, i.e. that it could have turned out differently than it actually has, then one is saying that the actual world is only one possibility amongst many possibilities (or one set or configuration of possibilities amongst many). Yet, actuality is not merely one set of possibilities amongst others in that it is not a mere possibility but an actual one. Actuality is, as it were, actualized or real possibility as opposed to possibility considered as such.[1] This gives actuality or the actual world or the real world a kind of distinctiveness and concreteness that merely possible worlds do not possess.

What does this have to do with Foucault's notion of 'historical possibility'? The actual world is distinct from merely possible ones because it is actualized possibility. This gives it a status different from other possibilities. It gives it the character of objectivity and reality. This distinctiveness raises the question of why this particular set of possibilities was actualized and not some other set. And this question is normally answered by looking to the antecedent conditions which 'led up' to this particular set of actualized possibiliti-

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[1]For the connections between actuality, possibility, and necessity, cf. Hegel, _Science of Logic_, trans. A.V. Miller, (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1969), section on 'Actuality', pp. 541-553.

es. This way of answering the question further distinguishes actuality from other possibilities because only actuality is tied in a more or less clear way to its antecedent conditions whereas mere possibilities remain 'open' and unconnected to anything real. What this does, in effect, is remove actuality from the realm of possibility altogether and place it within the realm of necessity. This is not to say that actuality or the actual world necessarily, that is, by means of a necessary process, came to be what it in fact is; but that because it is what it is, then it is reasonable to ask why this is so, and from there one goes back and ascertains the necessary conditions that permitted the actual set of possibilities to be the ones that were, in effect, actualized. Thus, history is the inquiry of what it is in the past that made the present possible, i.e. actual, an actualized possibility.

This is where Foucault comes in. I have noted repeatedly that Foucault rejects the view of history that sees the present as the culmination of the past. Now we can clearly see why: this approach has the effect of removing the present from the realm of possibility by giving the character (and illusion) of necessity. It is true that the present can be described as an actualized set of possibilities and it is also true that actualized possibilities differ from 'mere' possibilities by the simple fact of their actuality. However, it is not true that actual or present possibilities are the only <u>real</u> ones. Reality is not exhausted by actuality. At least not if the idea

of an 'historical reality' makes sense.

The problem is that the idea of 'actualized possibilities' is ambiguous. It could refer to possibilities that _have been_ actualized. Or it could refer to possibilities that currently _are being_ actualized. Stating things this way, however, clears up matters considerably. Possibilities that have been actualized obviously refer to the past; while possibilities that are being actualized clearly refer to the present. Here we see the problem with the view of history that sees the present as the culmination of the past: in doing so it in effect treats _the present as though it were past_, i.e. as something that _has been_ actualized. Thus, its point of departure is not the 'real' present - a set of possibilities currently being actualized - but an 'imaginary' present, one that is deemed complete. However, one can only find possibilities that have been actualized in the sense of 'completed' _in the past_. Possibilities that are currently being actualized are being actualized in the various practices that make up the present, including of course the practice of historical analysis.

Foucault's mode of historical analysis - the exploration of historical possibilities - is designed to respond to this ambiguous and complex situation. He analyzes historical possibilities that _have been_ actualized - for example, Greek and Roman practices of self - in a way that reveals the connections (and disconnections) those possibilities have with possibilities that are _currently being_ actualized, i.e. modern practices and

relations to the self, characterized in terms of relations of power and in terms of the 'repressive hypothesis'. However, because there are certain connections between the two 'sets' of possibilities (those that <u>have been</u> and those that <u>are being</u> actualized) and because the latter are still 'open' in the sense of being on-going, then, history does not only tell us about the past, but helps, indeed provides the tools for restructuring the present, not from scratch, nor from some point outside of it, but from within its on-going process. The actualized possibilities of the past, through historical analysis, offer perspectives on the possibilities being actualized in the present.

It is for this reason that the suspicion discussed earlier is not gratuitous nor destructive. It is, one might say, a functional characteristic of historical analysis, especially if one considers historical analysis as the play between the familiar and the unfamiliar. We can now also characterize this 'play' as expressing the two senses of 'actualized possibilities': present configurations are familiar while past configurations are unfamiliar on the one hand, and on the other, past possibilities can be made intelligible, thus familiar, and can then enable us to see present possibilities from a different perspective, thus rendering them unfamiliar.

<u>The Use of Pleasure</u> described a possibility of one's relation to oneself as characterized by the triad of freedom-self-mastery-truth that contrasts with the present triad of freedom-autonomy-truth. Thus while the present is familiar

with the idea of the self freely related to its own truth, it is not through the mode of self-mastery but through the mode of an autonomous relation to the universal. The point of contrasting the two is to reveal the possibility of creativity implicit in the mode of self-mastery; creativity, that is, vis-a-vis the codes and rules regulating conduct, and thus of introducing this notion of creativity into the open (because current) possibilities being actualized in the present.

The Care of the Self, for its part, described the possibility of a mode of caring and concern for the self - contrasting it with the present's 'technological' approach to the self[1] - and thereby introduced the notion of a fragile self, one in need of constant attention. Thus, according to Foucault, if one is to entertain or practice a freely creative or creatively free relation to one's self as truth, then one should also take care to account for the fragility of that self and its truth. At least, this is what Foucault's historical analysis appears to suggest. The exploration of historical possibilities that have been actualized are thus turned into possibilities that join those that are currently being actualized in the present.

Here we see the positive pole of the concept of self-wariness. The wariness it advocates is not only directed towards the imposition of particular selves such that complete identification is attained, but is also directed to the protection and sustenance - not of this or that particular self - but of the

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[1]Cf. E.H. Martin, et al. Technologies of the Self (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

possibility of freely and creatively relating to self. And the only guarantee of this possibility, at least within the possibilities currently being actualized in the present, is the continued exploration and analysis of historical possibilities, for it is by means of history that one can, through the contrast between the familiar and the unfamiliar it offers, dis-connect oneself from one's self, and consider oneself not as a self, but anonymously, as sheer possibility.

Thus, it is only if the present remains open to the past, both in its understanding of it and in its relation to it, that it can guarantee that it will remain open - not to the future, the future remains open by definition - but to itself, and to its current possibilities.

CONCLUSION - THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE PRESENT

I have argued in this thesis that Foucault's thought provides an important contribution to the understanding of history, both as practice and as process. The importance of the contribution lies in his full and explicit recognition of the inseparability of both the process and the practice. What the full recognition of this inseparability does is explicitly link the past to the present. That is, the way we conceive of the historical process is a function of the way we actually _do_ history, and the way we do history reflects the way we understand the present. This idea is by no means revolutionary; in fact, it is - although ambiguously - contained in the conventional idea that we study the past in order to throw light on the present. This conventional idea, however, is actually a misconception of historical practice based on a particular picture of the historical process. Historians do not, as a rule, study the past in order to throw light on the present; they study the past in order to throw light on the past. It may happen, as a consequence of their studies, that light is thrown on the present - indeed, I would even go so far as to say that light is inevitably thrown on the present - but it remains the case that such light is neither the goal nor the purpose of historical research. But it is the goal and purpose of the philosophy of history.

What the examination of Foucault's work has enabled us to do is make a distinction between a philosophy of history

intent on reflecting upon the implications of <u>actual</u> historical research and a philosophy of history under the spell of a particular picture of the process of history that sees the past as somehow <u>leading</u> to the present. What this distinction itself reveals is that the ultimate concern of the philosophy of history is not the past (the concern of historians) but the present. And this present can be treated either in its contingent actuality and thus as open - which is what Foucault's philosophy of history tries to do - or it can be treated as the culmination of a process, and thus in an important and effective sense closed. Another way of putting it is to say that Foucault's approach to history shows how the present need not be the way it in fact is; while those who see the present as the culmination of the historical process attempt to show <u>why</u> the present is in fact as it is. And while it may appear that these two approaches are on the surface trivially opposed, I would like to show, in this conclusion, how the opposition is at once more fundamental and more important than it at first appears.

First of all, most philosophers of history would readily agree that the present need not be the way it in fact is; that is, they do not think things <u>necessarily</u> had to turn out the way they did. History could have been different. However, the fact remains, things did turn out the way they did; and the task of the philosopher is to understand that fact, to <u>make sense</u> of the process. In that sense, most philosophers of history are Kantians. The historical process does not in and of itself have

meaning; it is their job as philosophers to <u>bring</u> sense to it. This is the task of the philosophy of history.

But, of course, even to do this means assuming that there <u>is</u> a process called history that is sufficiently unitary such that sense can be made of it. That is, in order to make sense of what would otherwise be, to use Kant's phrase, "the idiotic course of things human", is to assume that it makes sense to treat the past as a 'course', as some kind of linear (or circular or oscillating) development. It is, in brief, to treat history as a <u>whole</u>; an unfinished whole, to be sure, but whole nonetheless.

This is not a new assumption; indeed, it has been the assumption of both philosophers and of historians for the better part of the past two hundred years, with roots that go back much further than that.[1] It is the assumption that underlies what I have called the dominant <u>picture</u> of history. The picture still holds firmly even though the assumption is increasingly under fire.

Already over forty years ago Raymond Aron noted that the attempt to make sense of history was engaged in two divergent and even opposed directions. Either one attempts to treat a particular period in its own terms or one tries to place it within a wider whole, to subordinate it to a movement that goes beyond it. Aron goes on to write:

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[1]Cf. K. Lowith, <u>The Meaning of History</u> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

> These two tendencies in research no doubt correspond to two historical visions, to two different philosophical intentions. The former sees the past, its own and that of collectivities, dispersed in fragments; the latter sees it as unified by an evolution that leads to the present. The former discerns first and foremost singularities; the latter the identity of man and the continuity of traditions. The former finds in each instant and in every existence a justification in themselves; the latter believes in progress and thinks that the future constitutes the goal and the <u>raison d'etre</u> of the earlier phases. A conflict that is not only theoretical, but linked to different hierarchies of values, to the antithesis between life and thought, truth and beauty.[1]

I choose Aron here, first because of his exceptional clarity, and second because of how well he sets out the distinction between these two 'tendencies' in historical research <u>from the philosopher's perspective</u>. I must admit that, in this particular instance, I am using the term 'philosopher' in a quasi-pejorative sense, as that type of thinker who deals only with universal and eternal matters like Truth, Beauty, and the Good, and who disdains those mundane everyday matters of, to use Paul Veyne's phrase, the 'sublunar world' of the human past.[2] Unfortunately, what good is such a philosopher when it comes to the philosophy of <u>history</u>? Especially when one takes into consideration the fact that historians concern themselves increasingly, not to say exclusively, with those everyday, mundane matters. That is, <u>from the historian's perspective</u>, the distinction be-

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[1]Raymond Aron, <u>Introduction a la philosophie de l'histoire</u> (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 186. My translation.

[2]Cf. Paul Veyne, <u>Comment on ecrit l'histoire</u> (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p. 99ff.

tween the two 'tendencies' in historical research is not best described as between a past "dispersed in fragments" and one that is "unified by an evolution that leads to the present", but rather between a problem-oriented approach and a narratively-guided one.[1]

The interest of Michel Foucault's work is that his philosophy of history takes account of the historian's perspective and is developed accordingly. In other words, he does not make the traditional assumption about the whole of history being an "evolution leading to the present". This in itself would be reason enough to give his work considered treatment. However, what is more interesting is how Foucault's project in itself throws into relief the traditional assumption concerning the 'course' of history. How many philosophers are still willing to make that assumption? And are philosophers aware that they are making it?

Aron, at least, was clear. For him the alternative was: "Either history ends up in an incoherent plurality in which one situates oneself through comparison and choice, or it assigns to humanity a vocation that subordinates the diverse missions of men and groups to a final unity, the unity of an abstract imperative or of a collective task."[2] How many philosophers are still willing to adopt the second alternative? How many do so explicitly? And for those who do: how different is such a voca-

[1]Cf. Part I, Chapter Four of this thesis.

[2]Aron, p. 101. My translation.

tion from the grand speculative claims of a Marx or Hegel? How plausible, and even desirable, is such a project? And, finally, where does the philosopher get his mandate, and from what authority does he pronounce upon the 'vocation of humanity'? If such presumably noble and uplifting sentiments seem less attractive today, it is because, I would suggest, such claims no longer find support in history, considered either as a process (the 'course' of the twentieth century has done little to encourage one in the belief of 'final unities' and 'collective tasks'), or considered as a practice (contemporary historiography systematically avoids and criticizes attempts at 'grand narratives').

Therefore, it is not surprising that one no longer hears such grand pronouncements or any explicit wide-ranging claims about the historical process as a whole. We no longer hear them, and yet they are being assumed. This is apparent if we reconsider Aron's alternatives. Assuming that the disjunction was intended to be exclusive, if the second alternative is rejected, then the first should be considered. Foucault, I have been arguing, does in fact do this. And yet his work has systematically been criticized on the assumed strength of the second alternative which at the level of explicit reasoning is rejected. That is, critics of Foucault such as Taylor and Habermas accuse Foucault of producing a history that, in Aron's words, "ends up in an incoherent plurality in which one situates oneself through comparison and choice'. However, the charge of incoherence rests on the assumption of the plausibility of Aron's second al-

ternative, namely that history "assigns to humanity a vocation... to a final unity," a plausibility that is otherwise explicitly denied by those critics. Once this is recognized then the force of the charge of incoherence is substantially reduced, and a reconsideration of the plausibility of the first alternative is called for. This is what I have attempted to do in this thesis; for what Foucault has in fact done is to produce a history that does end up as an effective plurality in which one situates oneself through comparison and choice. And the reason his project is not incoherent is because he is not assuming anything about the historical process considered as a whole, but rather concerns himself with making sense of the implications of historical practice.

This is evident from the very beginning of his career. I argued in Part I of this thesis that the early works, Madness and Civilization and The Birth of the Clinic, were not so much attacks on the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology or on medical practice as they were on the history normally given of the rise and growth of those disciplines. However, Foucault's critique of these histories was not provided merely by producing an alternative reading of that 'history'. Already his critique was much more radical. He was attacking the picture of history that saw the past from the point of view of the present. That is, on this view, the past was scanned only in order to establish and justify particular configurations in the present. He sought to counter this by writing a 'history' of madness not

from the point of view of the present but from the point of view of that which was <u>excluded</u> from that process (called 'history') that cuts through time and leads to the present. In other words, Foucault went back, as it were, to show how history, if it is to be understood as a process, is one only to the extent that it is a process of exclusion. One should be careful not to read this process of exclusion substantively, however; Foucault here is not suggesting an alternative reading of history as a whole as a continuous process of exclusion. Again, Foucault's originality lies in the perspective he adopts. Instead of treating of this problem - as would for example an analytic philosopher of history - as a problem of selection, which assumes that the philosopher can stand outside or apart from the history she is examining and assessing, he places himself within that process to the extent that he views the historian's process of selection from the perspective of that which is effectively (i.e. at the same time) excluded by that selection. Rather than try to establish the criteria by which historical selection should, or ideally would, proceed, Foucault examines the conditions under which historical selection actually does operate.

This concern with the actual conditions - which Foucault calls <u>conditions of possibility</u> - is what drives and defines Foucault's archaeological approach to the history of knowledge, or more precisely, to the history of different formations of knowledge. Again, his approach is meant to counter

an approach to the past that provides a standard of assessment that is in some sense independent of the history it explores; for example, a conception of valid knowledge largely defined by standards now in operation is used as the yardstick against which what can now be called previous attempts are measured. In other words, the past is read as implicitly trying to accomplish that which the present has either accomplished or to that which the present currently aspires. But this, quite clearly, is simply to read the past in terms of the present. I say 'quite clearly' because, given the development of historiography in the twentieth century, both in terms of its methods and concomitantly of its objectives, it has become evident that reading the past in terms of the present is an elementary and, quite frankly, an unhistorical approach to the past. Put another way: from the historiographical perspective, it is simply epistemologically unacceptable to read the past in terms of the present. The past must be read on its own terms. This is what Foucault, in _The Order of Things_, tried to do: he showed how different periods were circumscribed by different _epistemes_, and he refused to paper over those differences by devising a criterion of selection whose purpose was precisely that: to link the past in a continuous manner to the present. _The Archaeology of Knowledge_ attempted to show how past formations of knowledge could be treated on their own terms.

However, Foucault was not merely trying to give philosophical credence to current historiographical developments. For

while historians are not primarily concerned with linking the past to the present, the link does of course exist. Historians are not time-travelers. They are firmly rooted in the present, both in terms of the evidence they use and the interests that guide their research. However, that link is, in effect, a practical one, and not, as people like Taylor would have us believe, a substantial one. Indeed, as Foucault (and historians like Georges Duby) shows, is that the link between the past and present is a practical link with political implications. This is where the distinction between history as process and history as practice becomes the major concern of thrust of Foucault's work. This is evident in the criticisms usually raised about the work in this period (mid-seventies). What is in effect his practice of history (an analysis of the problematization of punishment) is read as the introduction of an alternative understanding of the historical process as the discontinuous shift of power formations characterized as different truth-regimes. This misreading of Foucault is interesting, I have argued, for what it reveals about the critics' own commitments to a view of the historical process that is supposed, in effect, to sanction their own practice of reading the past in terms of the present. The problem is, these critics, like Foucault and like contemporary historiography in general, explicitly deny any substantive understanding of the historical process, even though their practice depends on it. One might describe the contrast between Foucault and his critics as between that of a practice resting

on an outmoded conception of the historical process (Foucault's critics) and that of a practice based on an updated conception of actual historical practice (Foucault).

But, of course, it is not merely a matter of pitting Foucault against his critics. This opposition actually covers up a more fundamental one. It comes down to the major task of the philosophy of history, that is, of making sense of history. For those who seek to justify their practices by appealing to the historical process may claim a merely hypothetical status to that process, one that is only meant to guide current practices. They thus leave the whole ontological question to the side as ultimately unanswerable. This, again, is the Kantian approach to the philosophy of history. However appropriate such an approach may have been with the status and character of historical research in Kant's own day, today it is completely unacceptable for the simple reason that it in no way takes into account current historiographical practices and results. In effect, the appeal to an 'hypothetical' conception of the historical process is simply the philosopher's attempt to rehabilitate what is otherwise called _speculative_ philosophy of history, that is, the attempt to account for and make sense of the historical process as a whole, despite the fact that the speculative approach to history is generally regarded by both historians and philosophers as bankrupt.

Is then the task of making sense of history hopeless? Is then history ultimately senseless? This question, in fact,

is absurd. It requires one to be completely blind to the results of historical research. Historians are capable of finding meaningful patterns almost everywhere they look. Philosophers would do well to try to make sense of this, to make sense of historical practice rather than pine after the ultimate pattern of meaning for history as a whole. One might say that philosophers of history should go the way of their colleagues in the philosophy of science and stop trying to be the cosmologists of processes they have neither the tools nor the patience to understand.

But what about this last point: might not there be a need, in this fragmented and pluralized world, for the cosmologist and the speculative philosopher of history? Might not there be a need for an attempt to get at 'the big picture' in order to achieve some sense of direction in an otherwise dizzying world of differences and incompatibilities?

Foucault's answer: a clear an unequivocal no; and not because he has a perverse yearning for chaos and anarchy. Nor does this clear and unequivocal no necessarily lead to chaos and anarchy. For to see the world as a whole - whether as a dizzying array of differences or any other way - is to take a highly abstract, highly elevated view of the world whose _effective_ function, because of the distance at which it posits itself, is to render us incapable of identifying the actual constraints and configurations of power that actually structure the world at the ground level, as it were. This is the sense in which any philosophy of history which tries to see or read history as a

whole process (whether it culminates in the present or at some point in the future) is effectively to take a closed view of history. As Foucault showed in the first volume of The History of Sexuality, the mere talk of future liberation and past repression actually serves to maintain present constraints and configurations of power. What is needed, in the present, is not a selective reading of history that promises a lifting of these constraints and the dismantling of these configurations at some point in the future, but a concrete historical account of their actual conditions of possibility. This, in itself, will not 'free' us from them, but it will bring them to light, which, in itself, does change our relation to them by 'opening' it up.

In fact, this ultimately is the contribution of a philosophy of history, one that no longer seeks to make sense of the historical process considered as a whole, but one that seeks to make sense of the various processes that are uncovered by historical research. It is not a question of regrouping them into a unitary scheme, but of drawing out the implications of their historical identification. Thus, as discussed in the last Part of this thesis, the philosophy of history does not promise a unifying and unified identity - this would be to undo or conceal the actual plurality continuously uncovered by historical research - but rather serves to identify those identities and relations that operate unconsciously and discursively. Thus, the philosophy of history attempts to keep history, i.e. historical research, historical investigation, open as opposed to closing it off into a

uni-directional story whose <u>effective</u> function is to conceal the contingent nature of the practices it wishes to endorse and the actual operation of practices it is incapable of recognizing.

The philosophy of history helps keep history 'open' by promoting a sense of self-wariness, as opposed to the self-awareness promised by what we now call speculative philosophy of history, an increased wariness that is of those discourses that effectively conceal those constitutive relations that traverse us. Again, it is not that some day we could be free from these discourses and that which they conceal, but rather that, thanks to a philosophical understanding and appropriation of historical practice, the particularity and contingency of those relations of power are kept 'open' to view.[1]

This, of course, is a limited goal. But can we ask more of history? Should we? Besides, this seemingly simple task appears to be difficult enough to sustain. For historical wariness requires not only vigilance and attention, it also requires concrete historical work; work, that is, that has no terminus, no goal other than a continual critical wariness of those practices that structure both selves and the world. At least, this is what, I am claiming, the present demands and to which a renewed philosophy of history can contribute.

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[1]As Charles E. Scott suggests, Foucault's discourse, "which is not a group of rules for self-formation, is governed by recoiling movements that prevent their instantiation in principles of conduct or in self-relation." 'The Question of Ethics in Foucault's Thought' <u>The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology</u>, Vol 21, No 1 (January, 1991), p. 36.

I say 'the present demands' because it seems to me pretty clear that, if we return to Aron's distinction, the present state of the world is best described by his first alternative, that is, it is in actual fact a 'plurality' in which one in effect does situate oneself - even if only at the discursive level - and that history can provide the comparisons which make possible a situatedness guided or constituted at least to some extent by choices; even if sometimes that choice is only one of resistance. And if we are to talk of a historical process at all, then it is in terms of a process that helps create such possibilities by locating them in the grid of practices that make up the world.

Ultimately, what this thesis attempted to do was to contribute to the effort of various philosophers and historians who, because they do take history seriously, seek to change the _picture_ most of us have of history as a process that has somehow brought about, has somehow created the shape of the present. No doubt the present is the way it is because of what has gone on before it; however, the difficulty arises when this fact, as it were, is reversed into a process. For, in essence, to do this is to select a particular reading of certain features of the present as the criteria for what, in the past, will be deemed historically significant; and then the story that is thus told is meant somehow to justify the initial selection, because it is assumed or imagined that the story in fact describes an actual process. However, as we saw in the last Part, the only actuality

in history is the present. Indeed, the actuality of history is the present, for, as a careful examination of the actual process of historical research shows, history is a function of the questions put to the past and the evidence collected and devised to answer those questions.

But if history is no longer to be pictured as a developmental process, then how is it to be pictured or imagined? For surely one cannot merely eliminate the sense of history as some kind of process, and view it exclusively as an activity undertaken by people interested in exploring the past. After all, the point of considering history as a process was, for someone like Kant, to give it some direction, a goal, a purpose of slowly but inexorably leading to a greater realization of human freedom. And, similarly, someone like Hegel tried to show that history did not promise an increase in freedom - for after all history concerns what has gone on in the past - but actually did bring about an ever greater consciousness of freedom.

In fact, an increase in freedom remains the goal of what I would like to call the renewal of the philosophy of history as exemplified in the work of Michel Foucault. However, it is not a freedom based or dependent on any particular reading of the historical process. Rather, freedom resides in the constantly renewed reading of the present in terms of the various histories it allows. For the only 'picture' of the process of history current historical research permits, it seems to me, is one that

I can only characterize as 'the eternal return of the present', that is, a picture of the process of time as a present constantly renewing itself as it faces its own particular challenges, its own particular questions, and the understanding of the various ways in which it appropriates the past. For whatever meaning can be given to history, it is a meaning that every present must confront either through acceptance, rejection, or modification, as relevant or informative or illuminating to the particular experience of the world of that particular present.

What this description does, I must confess, is show how difficult it is now to describe history as a process. For current historical research has simply 'opened' it up too much for it to be characterized in that way. Fortunately, Foucault can still be of help here. In an essay called "What is Enlightenment?"[1] Foucault discusses the notion of the present. He begins by discussing Kant's text of the same title, and claims that Kant is addressing a new problem in his attempt to reflect on his own present. The problem for Kant, according to Foucault, is not posed in terms of a present "distinct from the others through some inherent characteristics", nor in terms of "an attempt to decipher in it the heralding signs of a forthcoming event."[2] Nor is the present "analyzed as a point of transition toward the dawning of a new world"; rather, Kant "is looking for a difference: What difference does today introduce

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[1]Cf. The Foucault Reader, op. cit., pp. 32-50.

[2]Ibid., p. 33.

with respect to yesterday?"[1] This, I would like to say, is the question that lies behind the picture of history as 'the eternal return of the present'. That is, every present, on this view, is faced with the question of how today differs from yesterday. And that it is only by identifying those differences that we will be able to obtain a full and realistic picture of the present. That is, one does not understand the present by hypothetically placing it within a wider framework of development. History can tell us nothing about the future. Rather, one understands the present by contrasting it with what we do know, or at least are capable of investigating, i.e. what has gone on in the past. If we do this, then we can salvage the sense we have of 'belonging' to history and yet at the same time acknowledge that we are in some way responsible for the direction it takes. And we can do this by consistently renewing a critical appreciation of current practices, and the self-understanding they propose and instantiate. Or, in other words, we recognize that we are limited, constrained, indeed determined by historical conditions; and yet, because we are able to trace the conditions of possibility of our current historical situation, we put ourselves into a critical position that no longer seeks merely to recognize our limits, as in Kant, but actually produces "a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression."[2] Accordingly, Foucault suggests:

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[1]Ibid., p. 34.

[2]Ibid, p. 45.

> ...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, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method. Archaeological - and not transcendantal - in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action, but 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 what it is impossible for us to do and know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give a new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.[1]

This, in a nutshell, is Foucault's contribution to the understanding of history. I have sought to explore it in some detail in this thesis, for I think it provides a much needed reconceptualization of the philosophical appropriation of history in the light of the changing configuration of contemporary historiography that itself reflects the changing configuration of the present. Philosophers of history have for a long time now abandoned any claim to tell us what the meaning of history is; and yet they continue to arrogate themselves the right to pronounce upon its relevant significance. Foucault's work shows how that significance is at once more complex and more open than traditional philosophers of history suspect.

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[1] Ibid., p. 46.

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