

**Rationalising the Management of Individuals:  
Theory, Power and Subjects in the Thought of Michel Foucault**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the implications of the work of Michel Foucault for the Enlightenment project. Specifically, it asks whether and how the modern drive to explain the world so as to guide political action and promote progressive change, can be defended in the light of Foucault's critique of Western philosophy, his reconceptualisation of power relations and his account of the subject. Firstly, it is shown how Foucault's genealogy, a hybrid and polemical approach, aims to call into question the theories and practices which underpin the present. Genealogy problematizes what we have come to take for granted, and in so doing it requires that we rethink not only the nature and history of Western philosophical thought but also the role of intellectuals. To attempt to write a history of truth is to ask what one can know of a concept which structures the very limits of our knowledge. It is to become aware of the forces and constraints involved in our production of truth, and thus to bring to light the complex relationship between knowledge and power.

Secondly, Foucault argued that, since ancient times, forms of knowledge and relations of power, characterised by individualising and totalising tendencies, have steadily but discontinuously integrated into disciplinary technologies which have been instrumental in constituting the sovereign human individuals which philosophy assumes as given. Following Foucault's lead in focusing not on what power is, but on how it operates historically and in concrete ways, it is shown how Foucault reconceptualised relations of power as strategies of governance which depend on the existence of free subjects capable of resistance. Thirdly, the spotlight falls on the role of relations of power and knowledge, especially the human sciences, in manufacturing subjectivity (from souls and bodies to individual actors), which is in turn related to Foucault's call to irreverently question the limits of philosophy and to engage in aesthetic stylistic experimentation upon ourselves within and against the bounds imposed on us by our present. The thesis concludes by arguing that Foucault's iconoclastic genealogy of our limits and our possibilities leaves us with a rich set of analyses and strategies with which we might render modernity unfamiliar and available for refabrication.

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this entire thesis, except where specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

***Roger Alan Deacon***

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## ABBREVIATIONS

References to the following texts by Foucault, referred to repeatedly throughout the thesis, have been abbreviated as listed below. Normal ordering (eg. 1974a; 1974b; etc.) has been retained below and in the Bibliography.

OT *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London, Tavistock, 1970)

AK *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, Tavistock, 1974a)

HS *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1981a)

SP "The Subject and Power", Afterword to H.L.Dreyfus & P.Rabinow *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Brighton, Harvester, 1982b) 208-226

DP *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth, Peregrine, 1986a)

DPS "Disciplinary Power and Subjection" in S.Lukes (ed) *Power* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1986b) 229-242

## NOTE ON LANGUAGE USAGE

Oxford English has been used throughout this thesis. Hence '-s-' has been used instead of '-z-'. (When quoting directly, the original spelling has been used.) The only exception to this rule is the key Foucauldian term, 'problematization' (and derivatives: 'problemize' and 'problematize'), where the original '-z-' has been retained throughout.

In quotations, all emphases are in the original, except where indicated otherwise.

## INTRODUCTION

What might be called the Enlightenment project of modern social theory, the urge to explain the world so as to facilitate control, guide action and promote progressive change, has over the last few decades of the twentieth century been fundamentally called into question by what may be broadly labelled postmodernism. The grand 'totalising' explanatory narratives of the human sciences have been accused of 'violently appropriating' reality; the comfortable divisions of politics and power between those who have and those who don't, and between those with good or God on their side and their reactionary Others, have been declared to be simplistic and naive; and the yearning for the social construction of a better society has faltered in the face of a redeemed and rehabilitated nihilism which has declared the death of the subject. Critics of postmodernism accuse it of superficiality, extreme abstraction, relativism, political conservatism, passivity and fatalism, and decry its implications for the central Enlightenment practices of scientific analysis, transformative political action and intentional human agency. The current functioning of modern societies is integrally bound up with the Enlightenment project; if the latter falters or changes, so must the world as we know it. Social theory thus cannot declare itself immune from the challenge of postmodernism, and is driven to defend itself or perish in the attempt.

One of the most important theorists to be labelled a postmodernist was Michel Foucault (1926-1984). It is not important here whether or not Foucault was a postmodernist - he claimed to be "not up to date" with the term (Raulet 1983: 204) - or even whether it is possible to talk in this way of some kind of unified postmodern theory. What is important are the implications of Foucault's *oeuvre* for our Enlightenment derived understandings of theory, politics and human subjects, given the extent to which this *oeuvre* is said to call into question some, if not all, of our most cherished assumptions. Foucault's argument that the Western 'will to truth' is an effect of successive but discontinuous epistemes

premised upon complex relations of power, stands alongside other arguments that truth is an illusion fostered by Western logocentrism or the metaphysics of presence (Derrida), or premised upon desire and the libido (Lacan; Deleuze and Guattari), and as such has tremendous implications for how we analyse, strategise and relate to ourselves and others.

The central problem under investigation in this thesis is straightforward and yet far-reaching: *in the light of Foucault's work, and related contemporary debates around the salvageability or otherwise of the Enlightenment project, what kind of future exists for social theory and practice?* Three specific questions flow from this. First, is theory, analysis and explanation possible after Foucault? Second, what are the implications of Foucault's work for our understanding of power relations and political action? Third, and related, what are the implications of his work for our understanding of the self-conceptions, ethical relationships and social practices of human subjects? These three questions directed at Foucault's work are themselves products of the Enlightenment; it may be said that what is being raised here is the question of whether and how modernity can be defended, and if not, whether any alternatives exist.

Foucault's work was a series of attempts to understand why it is that we in the West, in our arduous and incessant search for truth, have also built into and around ourselves intricate and powerful systems intended to manage all that we know and do. Central to his critical, historical ontology of Western, and especially Enlightenment, reason is an investigation of the constitutive relations between the operation of power relations, the production of knowledge, and ways of relating ethically to oneself and others. This investigation can be summed up in the following questions:

how is it that the human subject took itself as the object of possible knowledge? Through what forms of rationality and historical conditions? And finally at what price? (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 202).

This thesis is an attempt to answer these questions. To answer the first question entails an analysis of the origins of modern social theory in the Enlightenment (Chapters One and

Two). To answer the second requires an historical account of the development of Western political rationalities (Chapter Three). To answer the third demands an examination of the relations of power which underpin contemporary thought and which regulate and subject modern individuals (Chapters Four and Five).

The consistency over time of these three central foci of knowledge, power relations and subjects in Foucault's work, and the amount of time he spent repeating and reworking them, especially in interviews, belies the common charge (though there are exceptions, for example, Smart 1983: 63) that his was a contradictory or incoherent project (Taylor 1985: 167), or that he led multiple and not necessarily complementary lives (Macey 1993; Eribon 1993). On the contrary, it will be argued here that Foucault's life and work were entirely coherent, with each aspect thereof - his intellectual work, his political activities, his personal life - dovetailing closely. Indeed, it will be shown how his various political engagements (for example, on behalf of the GIP) flowed out of his theoretical investigations (into the interconnections between relations of power, forms of knowledge and practices of subjection) which in turn corresponded to his personal ethics (to create oneself as a work of art). Foucault's search for the foundations of modern mechanisms of knowledge and power relations and their intersection in the human subject was thus more than just an academic exercise. He made explicit the fact that a search such as this cannot but have ramifications for all areas of social life, from the ways in which we conceive of the world in which we live to our relationships with others and with ourselves. His search was as much political as it was personal, as much of contemporary relevance as it was historical, and as much about transforming the world as it was about self-transformation.

In the process of developing an holistic conception of Foucault's work, this thesis also seeks to challenge and question several widespread but mistaken interpretations, and take up and further other more accurate and useful appropriations. In this regard, reference will be made to Foucault's major critics and sympathisers, including but not only Jean Baudrillard, Zygmunt Bauman, Richard Bernstein, Judith Butler, William Connolly, Jacques Derrida, Peter Dews, Nancy Fraser, Jürgen Habermas, Ian Hacking, Ernesto

Laclau, John Rajchman, Richard Rorty, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Charles Taylor. In the realm of theory, Foucault's approach is said not only to deny us the use of traditional analytical tools but to render superfluous the practices that Western theorists in particular have engaged in for the past two hundred if not two thousand years. On the contrary, it will be argued that many of the tools of analysis and theoretical practices bequeathed to us by Western philosophy are necessary for problematizing our history and rethinking the nature of our present and ourselves. Genealogy itself is an eclectic, hybrid and polemical approach which, combining philosophy, history and literature, and emphasising conditions of possibility rather than causes, is intended to produce specific effects; and while the games which intellectuals play may be changing, they are no less significant nor less serious.

Secondly, Foucault's conception of power is said to be dogmatic and all-encompassing, leaving no room for progressive resistance or change and flowing over into the realm of theory such that truth itself becomes questionable. Yet Foucault offers us an analysis of relations of power as strategies of governance which depend for their operation on the existence of free subjects capable not only of resistance but of positively producing effects of truth in reality. Thirdly, in relation to concerns about the human subject and its analytical, political and ethical dimensions, Foucault is said merely to repeat the poststructuralist dictum that 'man is dead' and to offer us little comfort or direction as we near the *fin de millénium*. But it will be argued that the subject is alive and well in Foucault's universe, an indispensable element in the functioning of power relations and the production of knowledge as well as in everyday ethical practices of liberty which integrate genealogy as a critical philosophical enterprise with a personal aesthetics of existence.

As integrated, coherent and defensible as Foucault's work will be argued to be, it must also be distinguished from accounts which approach Foucault from specific angles, in terms of his archaeological methodology (Major-Poetzl 1983; Gutting 1989), his relation to Marxism (Poster 1984), his sexual proclivities (Miller 1993), or as an icon for gay politics (Halperin 1995). This thesis does not purport to be a faithful 'commentary' on the

work of Foucault, nor simply a defence of Foucault against his critics. It is not some sort of critical hagiography which will claim not only to have rescued Foucault but also to have discovered the truth of his work, by "reestablish[ing] historical facts as against the sedimented layers of legend" (Eribon 1993: xi).

On the contrary, against the grain of much postmodern theorising but in the full awareness that to attempt to 'tame' Foucault in his elusivity, by assuming the unity of his *oeuvre* in order to demonstrate its consistency over time, is in fact to interpretively construct this unity and to do violence to his thought, this thesis intends to apply Foucault's own methods to this task. Thus it seeks to explore alternative conceptions of theory, politics and the subject, intimated but not always developed in Foucault's work, by approaching Foucault in the same manner as Foucault approached Nietzsche:

The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest (Foucault 1980a: 53-4).

The outcome of thus making Foucault's thought 'groan and protest' and in the process transform itself, will, no doubt, be an invented Foucault, a fabricated Foucault, a fictional Foucault. But it will also be a consistent Foucault, a useful Foucault, an applied Foucault. It will be a Foucault who in being brought to reflect upon his own *oeuvre* finds himself reflected in the manner in which his *oeuvre* has been organised here.

To follow Foucault in this way is no more and no less than to attempt to coherently, logically and effectively reconstruct his work. To follow is to come after and to supersede, but also to adhere to and to comprehend; a follower is a disciple but could as well be a pursuer or forensic detective; and the practice of following requires discipline, perseverance and endurance but also playful imitation and intuition. In this light, this thesis asks two sets of questions. On the one hand, what follows or comes after Foucault? What are the implications of his work for how we conceive of theory, politics and ourselves? On the other hand, how might we follow, be guided by or conform to

Foucault's thought? It is the argument of this thesis that the second set of questions depends on the first set: one can only follow (or be faithful to) Foucault if one follows (or recognises the disruptive implications of) Foucault. As Baudrillard (quoted in Macey 1993: 360) coolly remarked: "To forget him [Foucault] was to do him a service; to adulate him was to do him a disservice". In the context of this thesis, then, to use Foucault is necessarily to abuse him; conversely, one can only abuse him by using his work.

Methodologically, this thesis falls only partly within the history of ideas: it focuses on explicating the substance of Foucault's *oeuvre*, but situates this *oeuvre* only indirectly in relation to its theoretical milieu or socio-economic context (chiefly, the way in which the extension of disciplinary mechanisms, disillusionment with the politics of revolution, and globalisation have de-familiarised our present). Primarily, the thesis is a political, philosophical and historical examination of the consistency and coherence of Foucault's thought taken on its own terms, aiming to push it as far as it can go - if necessary beyond its own limits, so as to reflect on its implications for what and where we are at present and where we might go from here. While it is not specifically concerned with the truth or otherwise of Foucault's propositions, it deals extensively with the debate around issues of truth. While it does not seek to verify the the accuracy of Foucault's historical pronouncements, it is particularly interested in the effects that a genealogical approach, or a history of the present, can have on how we think about theory, power and subjects.

While I have attempted to reduce to a minimum those moments where, as a result of my intention to use him in order to abuse him, my voice and the voice of Foucault seem imperceptibly to merge, such lapses in critical distance are both partly unavoidable and to some extent desirable since in this thesis Foucault is pitted against himself. It is also fitting that a thesis of this nature, dealing with a theorist of this kind, attempts to embody the precepts that it seeks to elucidate. When I began this work some five years ago, all I knew of Foucault was what I had read in the writings of others. Having completed my MA on the topic of South African Marxist historiography, I knew that Foucault was



critical of Marxism, and I too had begun to move in a 'post-Marxist' direction under the impact of Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985). My interest was piqued, and this is the outcome: a thesis written as much for myself, for reasons of personal transformation and curiosity, as it is written to fulfill the requirements (to pay the theoretical, economic and institutional price, as Foucault would have said) of academia. Thus, this thesis is not just an examination of the implications of Foucault's work for theory, politics and human subjects; it is in itself a theoretical reflection, a political experiment and a personal meditation.

While notoriously difficult to pin down and categorise, Foucault nevertheless was extraordinarily clear about his own self-conception and the general location of his work in relation to modern and contemporary theories, ranging from the Kantian tradition and Nietzsche to the Frankfurt School and structuralism. Indeed, the Kant who framed the theme which has preoccupied modernity - what can we know, when we are what we seek to know? - is also the Kant to whom Foucault was wont to return and pay critical homage. For Foucault, the attitude or ethos appropriate to modernity ought to consist of a permanent critique of ourselves as critical bearers and subjects of Enlightenment:

[I]t is a question of searching for another kind of critical philosophy. Not a critical philosophy that seeks to determine the conditions and the limits of our possible knowledge of the object, but a critical philosophy that seeks the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves (Foucault 1993a: 224 n.4).

Thus it requires that we transform Kant's question of the limits of knowledge into a practical and potentially 'transgressive' genealogical critique which is simultaneously critical, analytical and experimental. The present needs to be examined systematically and historically along three axes corresponding to the different modes by which human beings are made subjects: our knowledge of and control over things, our power over and actions upon others, and our relations with ourselves as ethical beings. It thus seems appropriate that a thesis which seeks to offer an holistic and integrated understanding of the relevance

and implications of Foucault's *oeuvre* for contemporary debates around theory, politics and human subjects, should be organised along the axes identified above by Foucault himself.

Accordingly, the central chapters of this thesis will focus on Foucault's examination of the history of truth which culminated in the Enlightenment, and his critique of Western rationalities (Chapter One); his problematizing genealogical approach and how it might be applied to the Enlightenment, as well as its ramifications for the work of intellectuals (Chapter Two); the history of the emergence of Western political rationalities in the form of sovereignty and discipline (Chapter Three); the analysis of the relations between power, states of domination, freedom and resistance, allowing for a reconceptualisation of power relations as strategies of governance (Chapter Four); and the role of relations of power in the production of knowledge and subjectivity (Chapter Five).

In Chapter One it will be shown how Foucault, in the great Socratic tradition, sought the grounds for grounds, the 'invisible' assumptions and practices that make possible who we are and what we do. He was thus grappling with questions which lie so close to the heart of Western philosophy and its attendant institutions, rituals and practices that they are often deemed to be at best unanswerable and at worst dangerously subversive. To attempt to write a history of truth and how truth was produced, has functioned and has been transformed, is to ask what one can know of a concept on which our very knowledge depends. It is to pose anew the question of the Kantian construction of the limits to our knowledge of our Enlightened present. It is simultaneously to become aware of the forces and constraints involved in our production of truth, and thus to bring to light the complex relationship between knowledge and power.

Foucault deplored what he considered to be the inadequacy of most of our existing tools for analysing the forces that shape and drive our present, and consequently much of his work was devoted, albeit indirectly, to developing mechanisms and methods which would be more appropriate. Foremost amongst the cultural inventions at our disposal is the

permanently critical and reflexive attitude of an enlightened modernity itself. Foucault aimed to show how our supposedly self-evident present can be exposed as a fragile, complex interconnection of multiple and often recent historical processes, and how this self-evidence can be breached by making visible those singular, fragmented, heterogeneous events which are both internal to and yet exteriorise the present and as such cannot easily be subsumed into conventional theological, anthropological, historical or philosophical generalities. Consequently, he directed his attention to rethinking the conditions of possibility of, and the relations of interdependence between, various experiences, discourses, practices and institutions.

This paradoxical, immanent critique of the Enlightenment is what Foucault called genealogy, the focus of Chapter Two. Within this 'history of the present', the concept of 'problematization' plays a major role. Problematization refers both to the way in which specific historical practices give rise to or condition the emergence of objects of analysis, which themselves will be an amalgam of experiences (such as madness or sexuality), discourses (such as psychiatry or sexology), practices (such as confinement or surveillance) and institutions (such as asylums or confessionals), as well as to the ways in which genealogy and genealogists are able to transform a 'given' into a question and in so doing require the rethinking of politics, philosophy and ethics. The concept of problematization will be illustrated with reference to the phenomenon of madness, showing how the science which concerns itself with mental illness - psychiatry - is in fact the analytical corollary of historical forms of constraint directed at producing the experience we call madness. The need to rethink the role of intellectuals in terms of both their collusion with and problematization of modern political rationalities follows from this.

In Chapter Three, genealogy is enlisted in the service of historically rethinking how we might understand power. Modern theories of power understood as sovereignty form an initial comparative backdrop to a rough periodisation, distilled from several of Foucault's texts, of the steady but discontinuous integration of Western relations of power and

technologies of the self from ancient times to the present. Characterised by, firstly, individualising and totalising tendencies operating in tandem, and secondly, an intimate relationship between power and knowledge, Western technologies of power began by likening kings and leaders to shepherds leading their flocks, with enormous implications for the relationship between leaders and led. Consequent upon the disintegration of feudalism, new forms of political rationality began to take shape, as increasing importance was given to pedagogical and ethical technologies of self-formation aimed at individualising subjects, such as the confession, and policing mechanisms directed at entire populations. The disciplines once confined to monasteries and barracks became general formulas of domination, spreading throughout the social body to form the 'disciplinary society'. With this, we enter the age of the effectivity of knowledge, the productivity of networks of power and above all the fabrication of individuals via the procedures of hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and examination. The Enlightenment thus gave birth not only to various civil liberties, critical humanistic philosophies and scientific and technological advances, but also to disciplinary mechanisms (represented in ideal form by the Panopticon) without which modern societies could not exist.

In Chapter Four, the history of disciplinary relations of power gives way to an in-depth and critical analysis of Foucault's extensive discussions of power relations. For Foucault, in order to free ourselves from this juridico-discursive conception of power, we need to develop an 'analytics', as opposed to a 'theory', of power relations, focusing not on *what power is*, but on *how it operates*. Multiple, local and unstable relations of power are seen as inherent in all human interactions, and constitute the foundations for global states of domination such as capitalism, patriarchy and racism. Since power relations are taken to assume freedom and to perpetually encounter resistance as they act upon the actions of others, they can be described less as a confrontation between two adversaries (coercion) or as the linking of one to the other (consent) than as government. One of the most salient characteristics of Foucault's understanding of modern disciplinary networks of power is that they constitute individuals as subjects (and subjects as individuals); but far from denying subjects' capacity to think and act freely and to resist, relations of power make

critique, agency and resistance possible. Resistance is not seen as external to but as immanent within relations of power: transgression and its limit, the transgressor and that which is denied, rejected or opposed, are premised upon, and even owe their very existence to, each other, affirming and negating each other in a perpetual but productive paradox. In turn this makes necessary an analysis of the effects, rather than assuming the efficacy, of power relations in any given society; and Foucault arrives at a reconceptualisation of power relations as war-like 'strategies of governance' which also produce knowledge and subjectivity.

Chapter Five examines in more detail the manner in which power relations, while fabricating knowledge and producing subjects, themselves are said to be extended by these forms of knowledge being generated by subjects, and at the same time are exercised by subjects over objects of knowledge, not least themselves and others. The role and functions of ideology and science, particularly the human sciences as vehicles and effects of modern disciplinary society, are considered especially in relation to the manufacture of subjectivity, from souls and bodies through to individual actors. The humanism so prevalent in theoretical analysis since the Enlightenment (perhaps even as early as the Renaissance), is claimed to be a product of the logic of bio-power aimed at managing the lives of rational subjects. The Chapter concludes by considering the place of Foucault himself in relation to his thought, his politics and his ethics: while resisting attempts to categorise him, he nevertheless called for experimentation with and upon ourselves within and against the bounds imposed on or proposed to us by the relations of power and forms of knowledge which structure the present. In order to think our own history, we are encouraged to undertake an aesthetic ethical stylisation of our selves, creating ourselves as works of art, and irreverently going beyond the limits of modern philosophy so as to freely determine alternative futures.

The thesis concludes by assessing the implications of Foucault's work for current understandings of theory, politics and human subjects, suggesting that relativism, pessimism and nihilism are possible but certainly not the only nor the primary lessons that

can be drawn. Foucault's iconoclastic genealogy of both the limits and the possibilities entailed by modern humanist philosophies, theories of sovereignty and enlightened, empowered and emancipated individual subjects is as much a part of modernity as an attempt to render it unfamiliar and available for refabrication. Without offering us false hope, he has left us with a rich, nuanced and personalised set of historical analyses, criticisms, methodologies and strategies, on the basis of which we can essay (or think) how to assay (or test) the limits of what we have become.

## CHAPTER ONE: ENLIGHTENMENT, TRUTH AND THE CRITIQUE OF REASON

The dominant tradition of Western philosophy, at least since Plato, has been logocentric (Derrida 1978; Habermas 1987: 311) or orientated toward "an order of meaning - thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word - conceived as existing in itself, as foundation" (Culler 1983: 92). Specifically, logocentrism consists in positing a central reference point around which all else revolves, a fixed origin or ultimate meaning which ranges between abstractions such as God, reason, the unconscious or the mode of production, and a concrete Subject, either an individual *ego percipi* or a collective entity such as women or workers. From this central starting-point all other entities and events can be identified, explained, and evaluated, usually in terms of the myriad of hierarchical binary oppositions that imbue Western thought.

The main Enlightenment tradition of rationalist, humanist, individualist and materialist thought gave a particular gloss to this logocentrism, within the context of other conceptual, practical and institutional developments: the formal separation of the 'private' and the 'public'; the emergence of a world system of nation-states; an expansionist capitalist economic order based on private property; industrialism; and, not least, the growth of large-scale administrative and bureaucratic systems of social organisation and regulation (Hall, Held & McLennan 1992: 3). Conceiving of the world as "an essentially ordered totality" (Bauman 1987: 3-4), conducive to explanation and control, Enlightenment thought bequeathed to modernity a faith in the capacity of human reason to objectively and scientifically describe and explain the nature of reality, both natural and social, thus providing humanity with the knowledge required to transform the world and construct a better society.

While the findings of science reduced men's ignorance, it was the method of science which freed their minds from error and superstition, thereby freeing them ... of prejudice, dogmatism and intolerance (Marsak 1972: 6).



In obedience to this faith in reason, the modern epoch has centred itself around the sovereign subject of Western humanism, 'Man', "atomistic and autonomous, disengaged and disembodied, potentially and ideally self-transparent" (McCarthy 1987: ix). Rational, speaking subjects, are taken to be constantly involved in a process of searching for truth, representing and intervening in the world, and lacking or possessing power in relation to a fixed and essential reality.

This philosophical turning-in-upon-itself took place in the period between Descartes, whose *cogito ergo sum* had grasped the subject-object of philosophy as abstract subjectivity, and Kant, who saw it as absolute self-consciousness. Modern philosophy thus took shape as "the structure of a self-relating, knowing subject, which bends back upon itself as object, in order to grasp itself as in a mirror image - literally in a 'speculative' way" (Habermas 1987: 18; Dews 1987: 21). Arrogant and self-confident, *les philosophes* of the Enlightenment emphasised the necessity, universality, unity, certainty, homogeneity, self-presence and unconditioned status of human reason, while delimiting their own era from what they saw as the gloomy myths of the immediate Christian past and the rhetoric and metaphor of distant Antiquity. Universal human rationality coupled with empirical scientific analysis promised to banish the darkness of civil war, lawlessness, religious intolerance, dogmatism, superstition, ignorance, immaturity, disease and perversion.

Ironically, then, a superstitious and unenlightened fear of darkness filled the space occupied by plague and war during the Middle Ages and madness during the Renaissance (Macey 1993: 97), making visible and pressing the limitations, doubts and deficiencies of the new modern order at the very moment of its consolidation.

A fear haunted the latter half of the eighteenth century: the fear of darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men and truths. It sought to break up the patches of darkness that blocked the light, eliminate the shadowy areas of society, demolish the unlit chambers where arbitrary political acts,



monarchical caprice, religious superstitions, tyrannical and priestly plots, epidemics and the illusions of ignorance were fomented (Foucault 1980a: 153).

Hence the Gothic novels of dark dungeons and evil monsters, ruined chateaux, forbidding bastilles and nefarious kingdoms. Hence, too, the overwhelmingly educative desire of the Enlightenment, and the strenuous efforts aimed at demarcating and managing large populations, not least via the panoptic technologies which percolated through and reworked the realms of medicine, justice, industry, welfare, mental illness, town planning, warfare, education and sexuality.

Foucault laid much of the responsibility for the philosophical formalisation and justification of these disciplinary practices at the door of Kant, whose critique of reason, which "marks the threshold of our modernity", awakened us from dogmatism only to plunge us into an anthropological sleep (OT: 242; 341). However, he recognised that it was also Kant who made it possible for us to criticise these legacies of the major Enlightenment tradition. At the end of the twentieth century, modern Western philosophy is once again bending back upon itself, critically re-examining what are said to be the now increasingly shaky foundations of our faith in the power of knowledge, in the capacity of scientific reason to illuminate, transform and improve nature and society. Within and against the tradition of Kant, Foucault's work reopens the question of the nature of Enlightenment: in what ways did the Enlightenment take Western thought in new directions, and in what ways did it repeat or renew that which was already present? What were and are the implications for contemporary understandings of theory, politics and human beings, of the grounding of our thought on, paradoxically, ourselves? How and why have recent theoretical and socio-economic developments rendered the main Enlightenment tradition an object of contemporary preoccupations? Finally, to what extent are all critics of modernity, regardless of their position in the politico-philosophical spectrum, "united in their goal of enlightening the Enlightenment about its narrow-mindedness" (Habermas 1987: 57)? Or could it be that the Enlightenment is not authoritarian, but disciplinarian, and not narrow-minded, but simply perverse?

### ***I Kant and Enlightenment: philosophy as the problematization of a present***

Foucault argued that the Enlightenment was "the moment when the West for the first time affirmed the autonomy and sovereignty of its own rationality" (Foucault 1980c: 53). At the end of the eighteenth century, "theoretical and experimental physics dislodged philosophy from its ancient right to speak of the world, the cosmos, finite or infinite space" and "reduced philosophy to the field of a problematic of time" (Foucault 1980a: 149).

[A] profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, [and] imposes upon them the forms of order implied by the continuity of time (OT: xxiii).

A condition and consequence of this was Kant's (and, later, Hegel's and then Heidegger's) ruminations upon the nature of the present, modernity, conceived of as a perpetual transition to the future or - what is much the same thing - a continuous renewal of the past (see Habermas 1987: 6; Calhoun 1995: 14). With Kant's text, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?", "we see philosophy - and I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that it is for the first time - problematizing its own discursive contemporaneity" (Foucault 1988a: 88) or "its own discursive present-ness" (Foucault 1993b: 11). Most importantly, this problematic of the present time, "that finitude which ... discover[ed] that it was its own foundation", "caused the figure of man to appear" (OT: 372).

*Aufklärung* for Kant "is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity" (Kant 1996: 51), that is, the point at which human beings attain maturity by shrugging off the authority of others which they had imposed upon themselves, this achieving self-determination, or better, *self-discipline* (Foucault 1984a: 34-38). Since "modern philosophy ... derives in great part from the Kantian question, 'Was ist Aufklärung?'" (Foucault, in Raulet 1983:

199), one can argue that "one of the main functions of modern philosophy has been an enquiry into the historical point at which reason could appear in its 'adult' form, 'unchaperoned'" (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 200). Foucault thus clearly located his own *corpus* "within the *critical* tradition of Kant" (Foucault 1994: 314, emphasis in the original; also cited in Macey 1993: xx); in addition, much of his empirical documentation was drawn from that period between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries which is commonly understood to have given birth to what we in the West sanguinely label 'modern philosophy'.

This historical point of maturity, this moment of Enlightenment, is also - is still - our present, in perpetual self-reflective transition. It is no coincidence that

the *Aufklärung* calls itself *Aufklärung*. It is certainly a very singular cultural process that became aware of itself by naming itself, by situating itself in relation to its past and future, and by designating the operations that it must carry out within its own present (Foucault 1988a: 89; 1993b: 12).

Kant's text on the Enlightenment posed the issue of how we can and do philosophise about a world of which we are a part: what can we know, when we are what we seek to know? In various forms, this paradoxical theme runs throughout modernity and is not yet exhausted; indeed, we find it in Kant's mentor, Rousseau, who feared that, given the enslavement of man in society, "[i]t would take gods to give men laws" (Rousseau 1973: 194). Marx, who was also strongly influenced by Rousseau, dealt with the problem by dialectically linking human agency to material circumstances such that it becomes possible, indeed essential, "to educate the educator himself" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 156).

In the twentieth century, Husserl grappled with the Kantian problem of the limits of knowledge in the form of the question: "Can reason and that-which-is be separated, where reason, as knowing, determines what is?" (Husserl 1996: 230). Heidegger referred to it as the hermeneutic circle: "Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding,

must already have understood what is to be interpreted" (Heidegger, in Mueller-Vollmer 1986: 225); and Giddens famously took this further in his 'double hermeneutic':

sociology deals with a universe which is already constituted within frames of meaning by social actors themselves, and reinterprets these within its own theoretical schemas (Giddens 1976: 162).

For Habermas, this paradox, which he also refers to as the problem of self-referentiality, features not only in the Enlightenment philosophy of the subject but in the work of its postmodern critics as well (Habermas 1987: 127). Yet while there can be no doubt that this problem lies at the heart of Foucault's enterprise - which is hardly surprising given that Foucault is a "remarkably able Kantian" (Hacking 1986b: 238) - it will be argued that this is no cause for a wholesale retreat, via "the alternative that Hegel left in the lurch back in Jena", to a concept of communicative reason (Habermas 1987: 74). On the contrary, this paradox is the nettle that must be grasped, not in order to overcome or resolve it, so as to smooth the way for the Enlightenment project, but in order to expose and address it, so as to begin the apparently impossible and yet necessary task of reconceptualising our 'Enlightened' modernity, "the difference of our present" (AK: 204).

Charles Taylor has shown that this paradox at the heart of modern thought was in large measure the result of the influence of Locke's empiricist approach, though it was a consequence, too, of the radical certainty experienced by Descartes's *cogito* within the frame provided by St. Augustine's inward-looking theology. The modern self is able to objectively disengage itself from the world (and in this way constitute itself as a free agent) only by first radically reflecting upon itself as a self: "Radical objectivity is only intelligible and accessible through radical subjectivity" (Taylor 1992: 176). This Western philosophical theme of self-reflection, which has led us to seek to discover the truths we believe to lie within us, has, Taylor assures us, taken several turns over the past two and a half millennia. From Plato to Descartes, an increasing emphasis was placed on the 'interior dimension' of the self. With Kant, this dimension appears to absorb philosophy itself, in the sense that we are exhorted to reflect upon philosophy as itself a reflection upon

modernity, and upon ourselves as beings awakened to the fact of our presence at the heart of this self-reflective present. Despite the continuities in the philosophy of the subject from Descartes to Kant, there is also a great distance between Kant's '*Was heisst Aufklärung?*', in its concern with the present and with historical subjects, and the universal, unhistorical subject of the Cartesian question: 'Who am I?' (SP: 216).

Thus,

what we see appearing in Kant's text is the question of the present as the philosophical event to which the philosopher who speaks of it belongs .... All this - philosophy as the problematization of a present, and as the questioning by the philosopher of this present to which he belongs and in relation to which he has to situate himself - might well be said to characterize philosophy as the discourse of modernity on modernity (Foucault 1988a: 88; 1993b: 11).

Whereas Renaissance and Classical thought could not represent the representer - man could be listed as a being, but man as the being who lists was not represented - Kant defined human beings as simultaneously knowing subjects and objects of their own knowledge (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: xv) - man becomes both an active, meaning-giving subject and an object within nature, society and language.

Since Kant, the I assumes simultaneously the status of an empirical subject in the world, where it is available as one object among others, and the status of a transcendental subject over against the world as a whole, which it constitutes as the totality of the objects of possible experience (Habermas 1987: 262).

From this paradoxical position emerged what Foucault referred to as the transcendental/empirical double of 'Man', limited by, and enmeshed in, a language which was once transparent but had become opaque. Instead of lamenting man's finitude and limitations, Kant made them the basis of all positive knowledge: since language no longer represented, what needed to be shown was how representation and knowledge were nevertheless possible.

[T]he threshold of our modernity is situated not by the attempt to apply objective methods to the study of man, but rather by the constitution of an empirico-transcendental doublet which was called *man* (OT: 319; emphasis in the original).

As Dreyfus and Rabinow put it, "[m]odernity begins with the incredible and ultimately unworkable idea of a being who is sovereign precisely by virtue of being enslaved, a being whose very finitude allows him to take the place of God" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 30).

By thus identifying man's factual limitations with and differentiating them from the conditions that make knowledge possible, the figure of man as conceived of by Kant appeared

(1) as a fact among other facts to be studied empirically, and yet as the transcendental condition of the possibility of all knowledge; (2) as surrounded by what he cannot get clear about (the unthought), and yet as a potentially lucid cogito, source of all intelligibility; and (3) as the product of a long history whose beginning he can never reach and yet, paradoxically, as the source of that very history (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 31).

This paradox upon which Kant founded modern philosophy offered up a series of tempting but, arguably, ultimately fruitless dichotomies in which his successors immersed and largely lost themselves: what Foucault referred to as the transcendental and the empirical, the cogito and the unthought, and the retreat and return of the origin. Some, like Comte and positivism, followed Kant's transcendental aesthetic, attempting to provide an empirical basis for all knowledge on the grounds that our senses supply the conditions of possibility of knowledge, thus founding knowledge in a theory of perception (a theory of man based on human nature). Others, like Hegel and Marx, followed Kant's transcendental dialectic, giving an historical basis to knowledge (a theory in which man's essence, if not itself historical, emerges historically). What is common to both these positions is the assumption that "there is some truth in itself, accessible either through perception or through history, and that some discipline is in possession of a neutral discourse capable of revealing this truth" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 33). It is this

rationalist, subject-centred and self-reflective form of the Western philosophical search for truth, this necessity that our culture has imposed upon itself, that is now being problematized by recent socio-political developments, particularly new scientific and technical rationalities, disillusionment with progress and revolutionary change, and the effects of the West's global cultural and economic hegemony.

## ***II The Enlightenment as a contemporary preoccupation***

Within the frame of the problem bequeathed to us by Kant, that our knowledge of ourselves and our present is grounded upon paradox, Foucault suggested that the Enlightenment has become central to contemporary preoccupations as a result of three specific developments:

the importance of scientific and technical rationality in the development of the productive forces and the play of political decisions ... [,] the history of a 'Revolution' the hope of which had been, since the end of the eighteenth century, borne by a rationalism of which one is entitled to ask what part it may have played in the effects of despotism in which this hope lost itself ... [, and] the movement which, at the close of the colonial era, led it to be asked of the West what entitles its culture, its science, its social organisation, and finally its rationality itself, to be able to claim universal validity: was this not a mirage associated with economic domination and political hegemony? (Foucault 1980c: 54)

Arising both during and as a result of the Enlightenment, these developments have made our present both possible and problematic: first, the relationship between powerful scientific and technical rationalities and equally powerful political and economic forces - in short, the intimate embrace of power and knowledge; second, the 'Revolution' and associated progressive social transformation, which, manifested concretely in France and more abstractly in the work of Kant, Hegel and Marx, runs like a thread throughout modernity; and third, the ever-deepening and -widening global hegemony of the now post-colonial West.

The first problematizing process referred to above in fact constitutes what is in large part the subject-matter of this thesis; the second and third processes can be dealt with more readily and immediately. The question of the Revolution is central to the present in that the French and Russian revolutions have dominated modern theory and practice, treating history as a progressive teleology, placing scientific rationalities and their liberal and Marxist surrogates on pedestals, and directing the energies of millions against relations of power conceived of in terms of sovereignty. Marx associated the rise of a globalising modernity, which he tended to equate with capitalism, with this impulse towards revolutionary political change:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. ... All fixed, fast-frozen relations ... are swept away .... All that is solid melts into air ... (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 224).

Foucault, while echoing these sentiments, nevertheless insisted that equal salience be granted to the non-political aspects of the revolution:

The power of the bourgeoisie is self-amplifying, in a mode not of conservation but of successive transformations. ... Hence both its precariousness and its supple inventiveness. Hence the fact, the possibility, of its fall and of the revolution has been integral to its history almost from the beginning (Foucault 1980a: 160-61).

This question of the revolution, which "has dominated all modern thought, like all politics" (Foucault 1977b: 160), can, like the question of the Enlightenment of which it forms a part, be traced back to Kant, who defined the 'will to revolution'

as at once event, rupture and historic upheaval, as failure, but also as value, as the sign of a disposition which operates in history and the progress of mankind ... [; as] a permanent virtuality which cannot be ignored: it is the guarantee for future history of the continuity of progress (Foucault 1993b: 17).



Here at the end of the twentieth century, Kant's idea of revolution as progress has almost disintegrated, and the questions we might be asking now are twofold: "What are we, are we superfluous in this age when what should be happening is not happening?", and 'Is the revolution desirable?' (Foucault 1977b: 159-160). The question to be asked of the revolution is no longer 'when' or 'how', but 'what does it tell us about how we think of our history?' (see Rajchman 1991: ix).

As a result, our very identities as modern beings are being called into question by the failure of revolutionary change to materialise or, when a revolution does indeed take place, by its failure to live up to expectations. Given this,

we are perhaps experiencing the end of politics. For politics is a field that has been opened by the existence of the revolution, and if the question of the revolution can no longer be posed in these terms, then politics is in danger of disappearing (Foucault 1977b: 160).

One might safely discount Foucault's rather exaggerated suggestion that politics is in danger of disappearing; rather than the end of politics, the mounting tide of criticisms of modernity suggests only that we are experiencing the end of politics as we have known it - a politics organised around self-reflective sovereign identities practically engaged in progressive social transformation - with the additional and problematic dimension that no alternative form of politics has as yet been discerned.

However, as the third of Foucault's problematizing processes makes clear, since at least the end of the Second World War we have witnessed an intensifying political contestation of the nevertheless consolidating planetary hegemony of the West. The lights which were kindled in parochial Königsberg and clannish Edinburgh, as specific groups in specific countries of eighteenth century Europe began to grapple, at the moment of their self-reflective awakening, with the realisation of their finitude, have since come to illuminate and transform the globe. Colonialism, imperialism and industrialisation, not to mention our modern obsession with truth and discipline, have set in motion an irreversible and

relentlessly accelerating process - the Westernisation of the world (Latouche 1993: 160) - which, moreover, is already beyond the control of any one group or country. This rise to global dominance of the Western regime of truth is no doubt unique in human history, evidence of a "singular historical destiny" despite the fact that it is now "almost universal" (Foucault 1988a: 223; 1984a: 47). Historically, Western societies have been amongst the most aggressive and the most conquering; "they alone evolved a strange technology of power treating the vast majority of men as a flock with a few as shepherds" (Foucault 1981e: 231); never before has there been "such a tricky combination in the same political structures of individualization techniques, and of totalization procedures" (SP: 213); and "a very singular cultural process" was required in order for the West to become aware of and name itself as 'enlightened' (Foucault 1988a: 89; 1993b: 12).

Yet, notwithstanding the complexity and sophistication of Western structures of knowledge and power (Foucault 1981e: 239-40), or the fact that the multiplicity, variability and malleability of its games of truth has no doubt "given the West, in relationship to other societies, possibilities of development that we find nowhere else" (Foucault 1987b: 128), the light which came to illuminate the world now finds itself, at the moment of what ought to have been its greatest brilliance, flickering feebly in the grip of the fierce storm of international political realignments, the impact of informational technologies on culture and economics, philosophical disillusionment and environmental crisis. As Giddens puts it: "The declining grip of the West over the rest of the world is not a result of the diminishing impact of the institutions which first arose there but, on the contrary, a result of their global spread" (Giddens 1991: 52). For Foucault, the Iranian revolution was "perhaps the first great insurrection against a planetary system" (Foucault, quoted in Eribon 1993: 287) ironically dependent on a commodity which it itself lacks, namely oil; but particularly since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the breakup of the Soviet Union, waves of transformation have swept across the world and are now lapping at the doorstep of a supposedly victorious Western capitalism. The extraordinary phenomenon of Western hegemony is in fact unthinkable outside of complex relations of interdependence with all that the West deemed external or marginal to its own

concerns, from internal others (Jews, women, Eastern Europeans) (Hall 1992a: 280) to Asian, African and Latin American cultures. What has come to be called 'the West' "did not simply reflect an already-established western society: rather, it was essential to the very formation of that society" (Hall 1992a: 278). Only by conceiving of the rest of the world as the childhood of civilisation and of history as a series of developmental stages related to modes of subsistence (hunting, pasturage, agriculture and commerce) could the theorists of the Western Enlightenment represent their own context as the pinnacle of civilisation. The 'Rest' was represented as 'other' in terms of a Golden Age or state of nature, populated by innocent, sensual 'noble savages' whose only vice was that they were not Enlightened and hence remained potentially dangerous, childish and lacking in reason (Hall 1992a: 300; Bauman 1987: 111; 1988: 220).

Indeed, seeing in the Rest its own distorted image, aspirations and fears (Hall 1992a: 307), the very existence of the West *as* 'West' and as unique depended and continues to depend on its "contact and self-comparison with other, non-western, societies (the Rest)" (Hall 1992a: 278):

Without the Rest (or its own internal others), the West would not have been able to recognise and represent itself as the summit of human history. The figure of 'the Other', banished to the edge of the conceptual world and constructed as the absolute opposite, the negation, of everything which the West stood for, reappeared at the very centre of the discourse of civilization, refinement, modernity and development in the West (Hall 1992a: 314).

The margins are at the centre: Western scientific rationalities are assailed from within by postmodern and postcolonial theories and from without by traditional, ethnic, mystical and religious forms of knowledge; Western political and military might, despite the collapse of the 'evil empire' of communism and the success of the Gulf War, continues to be regarded with suspicion and fear in the United Nations and the developing countries at large; and Western economic power remains tied, at least in the short term, to the uncertain fortunes of a budget-deficient American empire faced with strong East Asian competition.

The West, along with its Enlightened rationalities and powers, has begun to reach its limits; this does not mean, however, that its present planetary dominance can be discounted or that it has exhausted all of its effects:

the Orient is for the West all that the West is not, even though it is there that it must seek its primitive truth. A history of this division throughout its long western evolution should be written, followed in its continuity and its exchanges, but it must also be allowed to appear in its tragic hieratism (Foucault, Preface to *Histoire de la Folie*: iv, in Macey 1993: 146).

Thus the twentieth century crisis of the Western Enlightenment is the product of several processes which, though rendering problematic, and even threatening, how we presently think and act, are only likely to transform what we are and do to a degree consonant with their location and implication within that which they problematize. Indeed, recognising this situatedness is an essential prerequisite for problematization itself (Calhoun 1995: 77). It is no longer possible, if it ever were an option, for our present to recover or re-invent some (mythical) past age or state of affairs in which relations between West and East, or North and South (or, for that matter, between groups or individuals within the West itself), were less skewed and muted; there is no reason, however, why this ought to preclude us from describing "the itinerary of the silencing" (Macherey, quoted in Spivak 1990a: 31).

To sum up, what is presently at stake and in question is the unique, Enlightenment-sculpted rationalism of the West,

which claims universality whilst developing itself in the contingent, which affirms its unity yet proceeds only by piecemeal modifications and general reorganisations, which validates itself by its own sovereignty but which cannot be dissociated in its history from the inertias, sluggishness, and coercions to which it is subject (Foucault 1980c: 54),

and which, simultaneously armed and enslaved by cold science and impassioned by dreams of paradise, is now coming up against its own boundaries. That which was bequeathed to



us by *les philosophes* and authoritatively systematised by Kant has come full circle, the return of the same as other:

Two centuries later, the Enlightenment returns: but not at all as a way for the West to take cognizance of its present possibilities and of the liberties to which it can have access, but as a way of interrogating it on its limits and on the powers which it has abused. Reason as despotic enlightenment (Foucault 1980c: 54).

Indeed, it is the very success of the imperious rationalisation of modern society, once sustained by a Utopian imagination which was both a condition for and an effect of the rapid advancement of technology, that has laid the foundations for an 'Information Age' which is itself responsible for modernity's *fin de millénium* disillusionment with itself. From its beginnings, the Enlightenment project, or at least elements thereof, have been suspiciously and critically examined in the work of Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, and it is both the accumulation of such critiques coupled with the manifest failure of their proposed alternatives which, coinciding with world wars, genocide, famine, underdevelopment, moral relativism and a generalised theoretical impasse, has produced disillusionment - and made both possible and necessary the reassessment of modernity.

### **III The history of truth**

While the Enlightenment is clearly central to modernity, the history of Western rationalities cannot be collapsed into that which is in fact only our most recent past.

Even if the Enlightenment has been a very important phase in our history, and in the development of political technology, I think we have to refer to much more remote processes if we want to understand how we have been trapped in our own history (Foucault 1981e: 226; SP: 210).

The history of the West, both pre- and post-Enlightenment, has been characterised by that "most general of political problems ... the problem of truth", or, more specifically, "the production and transformation of the true/false division" (Foucault 1981f: 11); and

Foucault's formulation of the issue clearly captures the precarious and problematic nature of what must be undertaken. If we are indeed 'trapped' in a history which is ours and which has made us what we are, how is it that we can be aware of, let alone come to understand, this fact? We find ourselves "at the centre of a labour by whose principles [we are] governed" (OT: 318); neither autonomous makers of history nor powerless puppets of circumstance, we are instrumental in determining a history which has determined that we are instruments.

We are doomed historically to history, to the patient construction of discourses about discourses, and to the task of hearing what has already been said (Foucault 1976a: xvi).

It is this productively constraining predicament - constraining, in that our thought can never be universal, but productive, in that "a certain apprehension" is nevertheless made possible (OT: 372) - which can and must be explained if we are to reproduce or renew how we distinguish what we take to be true from what we take to be false.

Generally speaking, then, "[t]he question of the Western world" as a whole is "why truth? And why are we concerned with truth, and more so than with the self? And why do we care for ourselves, only through the care for truth?" (Foucault 1987b: 126). Why, indeed, for the dichotomy between true and false which for thousands of years we have taken for granted is not, Foucault believed, inherent in the very nature of things, but instead was produced at a specific point in history, "between Hesiod and Plato" (Foucault 1984b: 112). In the sixth century B.C., truth had resided in "what discourse was or did, ... the ritualized ... act of enunciation"; only one hundred years later, truth had been displaced to what discourse said, "the utterance itself, its meaning, its form, its object, its relation to its reference" (Foucault 1984b: 112). While Foucault does not explicitly say so, there are parallels with Heidegger here, who argued that Plato distorted the pre-Socratic conception of truth as something unhidden or unconcealed and internal by associating it with the visible but external light of the Ideas:

In this shift in the notion of truth, the essence of truth is no longer the unfolding of unhiddenness, but rather resides in the essence of the idea, relinquishing unhiddenness. Truth is correctness of the gaze, not a feature of beings themselves (duBois 1991: 133).

Truth as being and conduct becomes truth as object and representation, giving rise to a conception of philosophy as "the gazing up at the 'ideas'" (Heidegger, quoted in duBois 1991: 133). And ever since Plato, this reformulation of the division between true and false has "never stopped *shifting*" and modifying itself, varying over time according to "the range of objects to be known; ... the functions and positions of the knowing subject, [and] ... the material, technical, and instrumental investments of knowledge" (Foucault 1984b: 113; emphasis in the original).

Institutionally supported, "reinforced and renewed" by pedagogy, systems of books, publishing, libraries, learned societies and laboratories, and "more profoundly ... by the way in which knowledge is put to work, valorized, distributed, and in a sense attributed, in a society", the will to truth also exerts "a power of constraint ... on other discourses" in the manner in which Western literature has attempted to ground itself on the revealed truths of 'nature' or 'science', the way in which economic practices since the sixteenth century have sought to ground themselves in theories of wealth and production, and the mode in which the penal system justifies itself in socio-psychological knowledge (Foucault 1984b: 113; OT: 352). Today, the will to truth grows ever more implacable, to the extent that it is even attempting to assimilate, modify and ground the two other great, arbitrary, historically modifiable, institutionalised and violent systems of exclusion and constraint which, according to Foucault, forge our knowledge: social and political prohibitions on the right to speak, and the division between reason and irrationality or madness (Foucault 1984b: 113).

For Foucault, the common denominator in all the often widely varying "games of truth" that have been played in Western history is not the existence of true statements but the functioning of mechanisms that make such statements possible and persuasive,

not the production of true utterances but the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent (Foucault 1981f: 8-9).

The rules which order truth are a function of the will to power which Foucault, like Nietzsche, finds at the base of the will to truth:

The locus of emergence for metaphysics was surely Athenian demagogy, the vulgar spite of Socrates and his belief in immortality, and Plato could have seized this Socratic philosophy to turn it against itself. Undoubtedly, he was often tempted to do so, but his defeat lies in its consecration (Foucault 1977a: 160).

Not only does "the great Circe, Cruelty" (Nietzsche, quoted in Stern 1979: 80) preside over the birth of all human knowledge, but her malice infests the very procedures designed to discover the truth. Plato's allegory of the cave is a case in point: coercion marks the entire process whereby the prisoners are set free, "forced to stand up" and dragged "forcibly up the steep and rugged ascent" into the painfully dazzling light of the sun (Solomon 1982: 95).

Ever since then, Western philosophy has progressively referred "all thought and all truth to consciousness, to the Self, to the Subject"; much more than a mere footnote to Plato, philosophy has certified the subjugation of Western civilisation (Foucault 1989: 61; OT: 330). Chapters Three and Five will take up, in more detail, this theme of the disciplined production of knowledge and transformation of the self under the auspices of authoritative others, which runs throughout Foucault's work:

Only relations of force and labor, the coercion through questioning to arrive at truth, ... the power of the master, can enable the achievement of truth, of the philosophical life (duBois 1991: 122).



Given these rather servile and ignoble origins, it seems rather perverse that Western philosophy has spent millennia elaborating upon the universality and necessity of what effectively was no more than a particular, contingent and culturally specific Hellenism. Yet it is this very perversity that makes it possible for Foucault to attempt, apparently irrationally, to write the chequered history of truth or, better, the history of shifting "ensemble[s] of rules for the production of the truth" (Foucault 1987b: 127). Only by reflecting upon ancient Greek thought as an arbitrary yet centrally determining experience in our past, might we be able to free ourselves from our own history (Foucault 1989: 325; see also Rajchman 1991: viii).

The universalising impulse of the Western rationalities to which we are so inured have not only produced (as opposed to discovered) irrationalities (in the sense that all we know of madness is what reason tells us of it) but in their blind conviction of their own universality have committed acts of violence against particular forms of knowledge and moralities whose fate it was to be unable to match Western power.

The idea has been that if we live in a world of reason, we can get rid of violence. This is quite wrong. Between violence and rationality there is no incompatibility (Foucault 1980e: 4).

Against these depredations committed in the name of reason, truth and science, we must try to discover "what is this rationality so compatible with violence" (Foucault 1980e: 4). Instead of trying to define violence out of an ideal rationality, we must examine how rationalised violence works;

[i]nstead of trying to find out what truth, as opposed to error, is, it might be more interesting to take up the problem posed by Nietzsche: how is it that, in our societies, 'the truth' has been given this value, thus placing us absolutely under its thrall? (Foucault 1988a: 107).

Nietzsche's formulation of the problem is worth repeating:

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymics, anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations which, poetically and rhetorically intensified, became transposed and adorned, and which after long usage by a people seem fixed, canonical and binding on them. Truths are illusions which one has forgotten *are* illusions, worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses, coins which have their obverse effaced and are now no longer of account as coins, but merely as metal (Nietzsche, quoted in Stern 1979: 185-6; emphasis in the original).

The very real, very powerful illusion that is truth has a history that demands to be told: as much because, in our confessional culture, it is always truth which is doing the telling, as because it is a task from which we in the present, "bound to the back of a tiger" (OT: 322), shrink only at our own peril.

#### ***IV Riveting rules and tainted tools***

To write a history of the rules that have governed the production of truth is to reemphasise the importance of the Enlightenment for our present concerns. As children of the Enlightenment, the analytical tools that we have at our disposal are often responsible for, or are at least implicated in, the problems which confront modernity *au fin de millénium*, from Northern cultural imperialism to Southern genocide, from Christian conservatism to Islamic fundamentalism, or from the AIDS pandemic to impending ecological disaster. Tools such as

‘anthropological’ or psychological notions like those of curiosity, the need for mastery or appropriation through knowledge, distress before the unknown, reactions to the threat of the undifferentiated; historical generalities such as the spirit of a period, its sensibility, its types of interests, its conception of the world, its system of values, its essential needs; [and] philosophical themes such as a horizon of rationality that makes itself known through time (Foucault 1977a: 201),

have not only justified or contributed to these problems of planetary significance, but are also deplorably inadequate and "imprecise", particularly when it comes to tracing and reflecting upon the trajectory of the will to truth out of which they emerged: "‘True’

discourse ... cannot recognize the will to truth which pervades it" (Foucault 1984b: 114). In other words, if we wish to understand how we in the West have been 'trapped' in our own, Enlightened history, if we wish to undertake a "permanent criticism" (Foucault 1982c: 34) or "persistent critique of what one must inhabit" (Spivak 1990b: 276; 1990a: 103), we must necessarily adopt a critical attitude to contemporary methods of analysis and critique.

It follows that the commonplace concepts of consciousness and continuity, freedom and causality, and sign and structure need to be supplemented if not replaced by an emphasis on "the event and the series, along with the play of the notions which are linked to them: regularity, dimension of chance (*alea*), discontinuity, dependence, transformation" (Foucault 1984b: 128; see also AK: 21). Like the soliloquy in Shakespearian drama, the event breaks and provokes reflection upon (as if from the outside), the continuity of our historical metanarratives. The causality we discern at the heart of our history is an 'illusion which we have forgotten *is* an illusion'; it can only be countered by another illusion, that of a complex web of conditions of possibility or relational 'dependencies': "I would like to substitute this whole play of dependencies for the uniform, simple notion of assigning a causality" (Foucault 1978b: 13; 1988a: 265; 1984b: 127). The noble cause or the great man of history must make way for the humble event, that which

is disguise of repetition, the always singular mask that conceals nothing, simulacra without dissimulation, incongruous finery covering a nonexistent nudity, pure difference (Foucault 1977a: 177),

and which stands in relations of dependence upon discernible practices, including "power structures, fairly closely related institutional forms ... [and] ... different forms of knowledge" (Foucault 1988a: 265). "To study the conditions of existence of a given social identity, then, is to study the power mechanisms making it possible" (Laclau 1990: 32). Dionysian rather than Apollonian, this history of rule-governed and rationalised yet arbitrary and fabricated events contains no greater meanings or deeper truths than conventional histories of progressively interlaced causes and effects: history in this sense

"is not a subject who wears a series of masks; it is, as Dionysus was, no more than the process of the appearance of a series of masks" (Flynn 1981: 333).

Thus, to focus, conventionally but narrowly, on the causal factors which supposedly determined the situation in which we presently find ourselves, would be to reduce the multiplicities, contingencies, discontinuities and contradictions of history - a kaleidoscopic *melee* of chaotic and bizarrely metamorphosing events whose accidental provenance can be explained only from "the hollow forms of bordering formations" (Habermas 1987: 253) - to a singular, necessary, continuous and coherent process, a "total description" no doubt centred upon a transcendental subject (AK: 10). To explain, instead, how we have come to understand ourselves and our history in such terms, requires that one examine, in Nietzschean fashion, the complex and turbulent power-play of conditions of possibility and effects (Foucault 1984b: 127); it requires a recognition of "the singular randomness of events" under circumstances "where there is only 'the iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance'" (Foucault, quoting Nietzsche [*The Dawn* 130], 1977a: 155; see also 1979e: 81). What is important about this formulation of Nietzsche's is that it does not take the form of either/or but instead of both/and: both chance and necessity are inherent in history, and while Western thought has attempted to reduce if not eliminate the role of the former, to reverse this emphasis and to attempt to purge history of the latter is no less problematic. What Benveniste had to say about language is also applicable to history: "If language is something other than a fortuitous conglomeration of erratic notions and sounds uttered at random, it is because necessity is inherent in its structure as in all structure" (Benveniste, quoted in Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 106).

The dichotomies so dear to Western logocentric thought - such as necessity and contingency, identity and difference, determinism and freedom, and structure and agency - thus need to be rethought in unconventional ways, but not by reversing them or substituting one pole for the other. As Rorty notes,

[w]e do not escape from Platonism by saying that 'our essence is to have no essence' if we then try to use this insight as the basis for a constructive and systematic attempt to find out further truths about human beings (Rorty 1980: 378);

and Derrida adds:

an irrationalism, like nihilism, is a posture that is completely symmetrical to, thus dependent upon, the principle of reason) (Derrida 1983: 14-15).

Instead, as Adorno put it,

it is not the purpose of critical thought to place the object on the orphaned royal throne once occupied by the subject. On that throne the object would be nothing but an idol. The purpose of critical thought is to abolish the hierarchy (Adorno 1973: 181).

Alternatively, one might attempt to substitute for both poles of a dichotomy a term which already encapsulates them, along the lines of Derrida's *differance* or *arche-writing* or Heidegger's *Being*. The difficulty with such substitutions, however, is that they can become absolutised as foundations, manifesting what Habermas characterised as "the Dionysian motif of the god making his promised presence all the more palpable to the sons and daughters of the West by means of his poignant absence" (Habermas 1987: 181).

Nevertheless, Foucault made use of this device on several occasions: in his introduction to Binswanger's *Dream and Existence*, for example, he suggested that the dream is like a knot that ties human freedom to the necessity of the world (Foucault 1984/5: 47):

Does it [the dream] not designate at one and the same time the content of a transcendent world and the original movement of a freedom? The dream is deployed ... in a world which secretes its opaque contents and the forms of a necessity which cannot be deciphered. Yet at the same time it is free genesis, self-accomplishment, emergence of what is most individual in the individual (Foucault 1984/5: 54).



However, in *The Order of Things*, he remarked that the pursuit of "that third and intermediate term in which both the experience of the body [or freedom] and that of culture [or necessity] would be rooted" was a specifically modern version of the quest for the Holy Grail and, as such, counter-productive and futile; instead of trying to explain both agents and structures through recourse to something like "actual experience", it would be more fruitful to ask if that being ('Man'), which is being burdened with experience, actually exists (OT: 321-22). That is to say, such intermediate terms ought not to be taken to be new foundations but merely temporary tools designed to undermine both poles of a dichotomy which itself is only a forgotten construct:

One must pass to the other side - the good side - but by trying to turn off these mechanisms which cause the appearance of two separate sides, by dissolving the false unity, the illusory 'nature' of this other side with which we have taken sides (Foucault 1977b: 159).

In this way one "designates the erosion to which both [sides] are subjected, the dispersion that creates a hiatus between them, wrenching them loose from a calm, rooted, and definitive positivity" (OT: 372). While Foucault persisted, in later work, in attempting to erode dichotomies and dissolve unities by introducing a third term or intermediate layer of analysis, he removed from the latter all hint of foundationalism, whether positive or negative: as we shall see in Chapters Three and Four, in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* the question of power is approached simultaneously from two sides not in order to arrive at a new theory of power (for power as such does not exist) but only what Foucault called an 'analytics' or 'micro-physics' of power relations (HS: 90-91; DP: 26).

It follows that causality and continuity - which dominate modern historical analysis - are neither denied by Foucault, nor simplistically replaced with their opposites, but instead decentred when one writes a history of that which they exclude: discontinuous events conditioned by relations of power and forms of knowledge. While Western history, especially the recent history of modernity, can be said to be coherent, this coherence "does

not derive from the revelation of a project but from a logic of opposing strategies" (Foucault 1980a: 61). It is a coherence premised, paradoxically, on a fundamental incoherence: as Adorno put it,

not to be denied ... is the unity that cements the discontinuous, chaotically splintered moments and phases of history - the unity of the control of nature, progressing to rule over men, and finally to that over men's inner nature. No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb (Adorno 1973: 320).

By reformulating our understanding of history such that its unity and order is neither assumed nor denied, it becomes possible to breach the spurious self-evidence which dissolves events into some conventional theological, anthropological or philosophical "ideal continuity" leading to one or other consoling Utopia (Foucault 1977a: 154; 1981f: 6; OT: xviii). Instead, deep within (rather than on the other side of or beyond) this historical fissure glitters the perilous and disturbing promise of multiple Heterotopias, dessicating our thought, contesting our origins, dissolving our myths and making strange the familiarity of our historical present.

It would be to miss the point entirely, however, on the basis of Foucault's stress on the role of chance, dependency and discontinuity, to label him 'an historian of discontinuity'. When historical analyses were dominated by continuist readings, Foucault subjected them to a merciless critique; a correspondingly one-sided emphasis upon discontinuity would have received an equally savage response. Resisting such labelling from interlocutors, he argued that "no one is more of a continuist than I am: to recognise a discontinuity is never anything more than to register a problem that needs to be solved" (Foucault 1981f: 5). Certainly, Foucault was deeply mistrustful of a continuist reading of history that presupposes "the repetition and extension of the same mechanisms through the history of our societies ... as if a sort of cancer will envelope the whole social body" (since, in fact, confinement in the seventeenth, hospitalisation in the nineteenth, and social security in the twentieth century were very different phenomena) (Foucault 1988a: 163-4); and his

article, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", is perhaps his most sustained critique of historical continuity (Foucault 1977a: 146, 148, 153, 162). Nevertheless, while acknowledging in an interview that *The Order of Things* identified a "self-evident discontinuity" (between a 'hilarious and folkloric' book of medicine from 1750, and a book of 1820 which is much closer to the self-understanding of current medical science), Foucault went on to argue:

is this discontinuity really a discontinuity? Or, to be precise, what was the transformation needed to pass from one type of knowledge to another type of knowledge? For me, this is not at all a way of declaring the discontinuity of History [as the book had been interpreted]; on the contrary, it is a way of posing discontinuity as a problem and above all as a problem to be resolved. ... [Readers] failed to see that the whole work of the book consisted precisely in setting out from this apparent discontinuity ... and trying, in a way, to dissolve it (Foucault 1988a: 100; see also AK: 174).

Elsewhere he noted in similar vein: "What I have wanted to establish is the very contrary of a discontinuity, since I have made manifest the very form of passage from one state to another [that is, from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries]" (Foucault 1989: 16).

Davidson (1986: 223) has argued that the unearthing of discontinuities is not an assumption but a consequence of Foucault's genealogical approach to contemporary continuist readings of history. Genealogy, which will be examined in detail in Chapter Two, does not seek to substitute some new set of truths for supposedly discredited older ones, but to rethink the will to truth itself. To this end discontinuity is no more than a precarious, indeed perilous, means itself in need of rethinking, which is why Foucault preferred to conceive of the discontinuities that he inevitably unearthed as taking the form of underdetermined or self-mutating "discontinuous systematicities" (Foucault 1984b: 129). This last is a telling if paradoxical phrase, suggesting that patterns are to be discerned even amidst chaos. It also correlates with the way in which Foucault argued in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that a 'discursive formation' coheres: "*systems of*



*dispersion*" (AK: 37; emphasis in the original). Thus, Foucault consistently followed his own advice not to seek the truth of past or present but to question everything that masquerades as truth: "The history of discontinuities is not given once and for all, it is itself 'impermanent' and discontinuous" (Foucault 1980c: 56). Even when presented with an example of what many contemporary historians would not have hesitated to label 'a discontinuity', namely, the transition from ancient Greece and Rome to early Christianity, Foucault demurred: "the coming of Christianity, considered as a massive rupture with earlier moralities and the dominant introduction of a quite different one, is barely noticeable" (Foucault 1988a: 241).

It is vitally important to emphasise that to historicise reason and truth in this way, by rethinking the conditions of possibility of events understood to be contingent and discontinuous, is exactly the opposite of attempting to step outside of ourselves and our history. As heirs to a tradition of thought which for the last two hundred years has consisted of "a critical analysis of our world", of "the problem of the present time, and of what we are, in this very moment" (SP: 216), we often appear to assume that many of our supposedly 'critical', even 'postmodern', philosophical tools and linguistic categories are by that fact free from any assumptions which we might set out to examine, that they somehow escape what is no less than a tradition, albeit a critical one. Instead, we must recognise that, paradoxically, the tradition of modern thought can only be criticised from within, with irredeemably tainted concepts; the rationality of critique assumes the values of Enlightenment, and thus "[w]hoever wants to change things can apparently do so only by making this impotence itself and his own impotence as well into a factor of what he does" (Adorno, in Adorno & Becker 1983: 107).

The critique of every self-absolutizing particular is a critique of the shadow which absoluteness casts upon the critique; it is a critique of the fact that critique itself, contrary to its own tendency, must remain within the medium of the concept (Adorno 1973: 406).

Moreover, the future is forever rewriting its history, in that one's perspective on the past inevitably modifies what is taken to be 'the point of origin' (Foucault, in Elders 1974: 150): modern scientific discourses, in particular, ceaselessly remake their own histories as they search for what is true and discard what is not (Foucault 1980c: 56). Since our "reason is self-created" (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 202), we have critical recourse only to it.

This state of affairs is paradoxically as enabling as it is disabling, as radical as it is conservative: the master's tools may never dismantle the master's house, but they contain fuzzy blueprints of how the house was constructed and might be reconstructed. It is true that we can never achieve that neutral, external and objective standpoint so lusted after by science; and thus the postmodern incredulity towards meta-narratives is undeniably disabling for those who find themselves unable to dispense with the modern search for certainty and order. It is, however, just as true that our location within our own history - our exact and faithful alignment with an historically mutating reason - makes it possible for us to measure and analyse, not the origin or nature of truth or power or subjects, but their contemporaneous functioning, strategies and effects. We may not be able to describe our own archive, but we can "illuminate, if only in an oblique way", the field of which it is a part (AK: 130). While all theory and interpretation may be internal to particular traditions, traditions are never singular or unitary but, being marked by differences which help sensitise the theorist, can be internally compared, examined and criticised (Calhoun 1995: 64, 84). As E.H.Carr once put it, "Man's capacity to rise above his social and historical situation seems to be conditioned by the sensitivity with which he recognises the extent of his involvement in it" (Carr 1964: 44).

It follows that, like patterns in chaos or continuity amidst discontinuity, the analytical tools at our disposal, in spite of their inadequacies, offer at varying times and given various conditions certain use-values or at least clues as to their own function within the modern order:

[a]mong the cultural inventions of mankind there is a treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures, and so on, that cannot exactly be reactivated, but at least constitute, or help to constitute, a certain point of view which can be very useful as a tool for analyzing what's going on now - and to change it (Foucault 1984a: 350).

Human history and inventiveness has thus made available to us a wealth of instruments and approaches which, though undeniably context-specific, are potentially capable of helping to constitute "a certain point of view" which can assist both analysis and change. For example, it is no doubt much more and much less than a curious coincidence that Foucault's call for 'permanent criticism' was prefigured in the early writings of that unabashed nineteenth century modernist who demanded "the reckless critique of all that exists" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 36).

In these terms, answers become possible to the impossible question which asks, given that the politics of truth in the present, consisting of a perpetually changing but supposedly universal scientific knowledge, is both the condition for and the effect of Western historicity, "what historical knowledge is possible of a history which itself produces the true/false distinction on which such knowledge depends?" (Foucault 1981f: 11). Can it be argued that the Western will to truth is *truly* arbitrary, historically specific, exclusive and violent? As Peter Dews has argued, the issue centres upon

the sense in which a philosophical position which assumes the foundations of the classical forms of critique to be necessarily and oppressively identitarian can itself continue to perform a critical function (Dews 1987: xvi).

Leaving aside for the moment that Foucault did not see critique as *necessarily* identitarian, and that he emphasised its productivity rather than its oppressiveness, one can respond to Dews' main point by suggesting that any critique of reason *cannot*, but *must*, 'perform a critical function': *it cannot* actually critique or accurately represent the object of critique because in being identitarian it imposes its own conception which it then treats as an adequate representation, but *it must* critique, because it is only by (vainly) attempting to be

critical that it is able to be identitarian. It cannot critique in the sense of identifying and explaining the world, yet it is forced to (attempt to) critique because if it does not believe in and practice the illusion of its capacity to know what is other, it in itself is in danger of discovering to its horror that it lacks any real, self-present existence - and that no doubt would be its last thought on that or any other matter, the moment of madness or suicide which periodically materialises in Foucault's thought. Thus, it is only by assuming the possibility of truth that truth can be questioned. But having said this, its equally important inverse must be stated: it is only through a questioning of truth that it becomes possible to assume its existence or efficacy.

### ***V The spectre of relativism***

Unlike Dews, even that most tenacious defender of Enlightenment values, Jürgen Habermas, has accepted that

[s]o little can the structures that make truth possible themselves be true or false that one can only inquire ... about the genealogy of [this will to truth] from some network of the practices of power (Habermas 1987: 248).

Yet it is precisely because Foucault wishes to write a genealogy of truth and Enlightenment without recourse to cherished categories such as historical continuity and causation that the chief criticism levelled at his work is that it is relativist, unable to avoid what Habermas refers to as the paradox of "self-referential critique" (Habermas 1987: 127; Dews 1987: 189). This millennia-old objection to theories which dare to step off the straight and narrow path of conventional philosophy in order to question its foundations consists of the simple claim that such theories are self-refuting. Any theory that calls the grounds of all theory into question, by doubting or relativising truth, must itself be subject to doubt. The basic assumption underlying Foucault's historical critique of the Western will to truth, argues Habermas, that "the meaning of validity claims consists in the power



effects they have", is self-referential: if correct, it destroys its own foundations; if false, the undertaking is pointless (Habermas 1987: 279).

Habermas goes further by contending that the problem of self-referentiality imposes such strict limits on the nature of critique that one must back off from it and investigate alternative possibilities inherent in a *counter-* (as opposed to a *post-*) Enlightenment discourse such as that of communicative rationality (Habermas 1987: 5, 295, 301). For to embrace self-referentiality and hence relativism is also, for Habermas, to blunt critique: if the grounds on which criticism rests are equivocal, then so too is criticism itself. By assimilating itself to power, reason relinquishes its critical force - and yet

this description of the self-destruction of the critical capacity is paradoxical, because in the moment of description it still has to make use of the critique that has been declared dead. It denounces the Enlightenment's becoming totalitarian with its own tools (Habermas 1987: 119).

Or, as Habermas puts it later with specific reference to the respective efforts of Horkheimer and Adorno, and Derrida, to escape our Enlightenment heritage:

The totalizing self-critique of reason gets caught in a performative contradiction since subject-centered reason can be convicted of being authoritarian in nature only by having recourse to its own tools. The tools of thought, which miss the 'dimension of nonidentity' and are imbued with the 'metaphysics of presence', are nevertheless the only available means for uncovering their own insufficiency (Habermas 1987: 185).

From this line of reasoning, Habermas draws the implication that the Enlightenment cannot *be* totalitarian, and its critical tools worthless, for otherwise one would not have tools capable of criticising it *as* totalitarian. It follows that, while there are elements of Enlightenment thought which are worth criticising, there are also elements worth salvaging, and an opportunity exists to build a new and better theory concerned with human freedom and progress.

Foucault agreed with Habermas that modernity, as an "attitude" or "mode of relating to contemporary reality", is not to be distinguished from 'premodernity' or 'postmodernity' but should be contrasted against attitudes of "countermodernity" (Foucault 1984a: 39). Yet he saw no reason to avoid or step back from his attempt to carry out a critique of Western and particularly Enlightenment reason. Part of the reason for this is that it is possible to draw out a second, equally valid but far more paradoxical, implication of the performative contradiction, and that is that we in fact cannot tell if the Enlightenment is totalitarian, because the only tools which we have available for such an analysis are premised on a conception of Enlightenment as liberation and progress. Nor can we tell if its tools are insufficient, because the Enlightenment would be incapable of criticising its own (in)capacity to criticise; the performative contradiction thus both requires that which one wishes to dispense with - the critical capacity of reason - and dispenses with that which one requires - the rational capacity to criticise. Thus there is more than just a single alternative to the problems which late modern theorists of almost all persuasions perceive in the Enlightenment; and instead of balking, with Habermas, at paradox, it is equally viable to embrace it. Paradox is our Kantian heritage, but instead of bemoaning and resisting it, we could celebrate and exploit it. It is the latter stance which seems to best characterise Foucault's position, when he suggests that the analytical tools bequeathed to us by the Enlightenment (not to mention those that preceded the Enlightenment) cannot either be accepted uncritically or dismissed as irredeemably tainted; rather, one must "accept the groupings that history suggests only to subject them at once to interrogation" (AK: 26). Thus, while he is right to point out that anyone who takes and wishes to hold the position that paradox is at the foundation of philosophy, must also claim that there is no way out, not even a way back (Habermas 1987: 128), Habermas' conviction that self-referentiality is untenable prevents him from considering the alternative, immanent in Foucault's approach, of total and effective immersion in paradox.

Habermas claims that "if thinking can no longer operate in the element of truth, or of validity claims in general, contradiction and criticism lose their meaning. To *contradict*, to negate, now has only the sense of '*wanting to be different*'" (Habermas 1987: 124;

emphasis in the original). Firstly, while Habermas is right to point out that the possibility of critique is dependent on the existence of truth, he is simply wrong to infer that Foucault denies the presence or efficacy of truth in and for thought; on the contrary, Foucault is interested in the conditions of possibility of truth (which is to say that the truth in question must exist, because otherwise criticisms thereof would be impossible) understood not as some kind of Archimedean point, but as a set of powerful and effective mechanisms which at best manufacture such a point in the process of ordering our world.

Secondly, Habermas' argument in this instance suffers from his thoroughly Enlightenment understanding of critique as an operation that necessarily negates and transcends, unmasking and goes beyond, and as such is an indispensable part of a dialectic that seeks *Aufhebung*. Yet it is not difficult to conceive of a non-dialectical and pseudo-transcendental but nevertheless meaningful critique that, aware of the impossibility of avoiding truth, engages in the more limited and finite enterprise of *unmasking the series of masks worn by a faceless reason*. For the activity of contradiction, even where the truth that gives contradiction its edge is in question, need not be attenuated into a mere 'wanting to be different' (which presupposes a desiring subject), nor must it ultimately culminate in a resolution (the desire for transcendence) but can also be an 'exposing what is different' (which is pseudo-transcendental in that it seeks only to recognise, not resolve, differences). The intention here is not to celebrate difference but to de-limit it (in both senses of the word), to criticise not for the sake of 'difference' but for the sake of 'the same' (which is like placing difference at the centre of one's vision, in order to be able to perceive the same out of the corner of one's eye), so as to distinguish it (difference) from the same which is now its (difference's) other, and hence to call 'the same' into question - indeed, in order to render 'the same' questionable and available for critical examination, to produce it as an object for analysis.

Habermas offers an analogy to support his argument that recourse to a theory of power shorn of validity claims transforms the effect of critical 'unmasking' such that it is no longer like a lightning-flash of insight, "the way *understanding* the point of a joke causes

liberating laughter" (Habermas 1987: 127; emphasis in the original), but instead like the way Nietzsche's affirmative de-differentiation produces shock. In this he does not pay sufficient attention to the fact that much of Foucault's work focuses not on illuminating what is in shadow ('understanding a joke') but rather on making visible the effects of assuming a boundary between light and shadow (the fact that the joke is as much a product of the listener or the one 'understanding' as of the joke-teller, from which it follows that critique depends on that which is being critiqued), and hence that what is interesting for Foucault is how and why we moderns take so much for granted that light illuminates shadow which conceals (for shadow also delineates light which also dazzles), that truth unproblematically underpins critique (for critique also manufactures truth), and that a joke has a point independent of a listener (for to fail to catch a joke destabilises the self-identity of the joke itself as much as that of the listener and the teller). The act of 'understanding a joke' not only produces laughter but makes the joke itself possible; the act of critique both conditions and depends upon that which is being criticised.

In short, to criticise "the permanent anthropologism of Western thought" (Foucault 1993a: 222), to question these continuist, universalist, rationalist and subject-centred forms of knowledge which arrogate to themselves the privileges and powers of scientific truth, need not entail relativism. While Foucault's approach and truth-claims are open to similar questioning (Margolis 1991: 203; Habermas 1987: 273-4), so too are those of his critics, who problematically "affirm conceptions of truth and subjectivity constantly called into question in the modern episteme" (Connolly 1985: 372) such as "abstract justice" or "decontextualized individuals" (Calhoun 1995: 75). This impasse does not prevent these questions from being asked, nor from having effects. One can accept "the fact of science", even if "only in order to ask the question what it is for that science to be a science" (AK: 192). Instead of asking, 'What is true knowledge?', what Foucault questioned was "the way in which knowledge circulates and functions, its relations to power" (SP: 212). Truth here is *neither* absolute - objective, universal and complete in itself - *nor* relative to an age, a context, a power or a being: absolutist truth-claims are defended on relativist or pragmatic grounds (that they preserve essential values and make theoretical analysis



meaningful), while relativist and pragmatic truth-claims respond in absolutist terms that truth simply *is* relative or pragmatic (Culler 1983: 155). Truth is always, and paradoxically, *both* absolute and relative; indeed, for want of a better term, one might say that truth is absolutely relative, or relatively absolute: truth is manufactured by social forces which are themselves enthralled by truth.

It would be better, however, to speak of truth in completely different terms: truth is an operation, functional or dysfunctional as the case may be, and what is held to be true is a product of at least three factors: relations of power which saturate it, forms of knowledge which surround it, and rules of conduct which infuse it. Might makes the right upon which it depends for its definition and its legitimacy. It follows that even if, following Nietzsche, "there are indeed nothing but appearances determined by perspectives, then the viewpoint ... which posits a real world behind appearances would be no less valid than any other perspective" (Dews 1987: 179). Historically, this latter viewpoint has prevailed not because it is true but because it has proved capable of producing powerful effects of truth.

Fittingly (if also ironical and most paradoxical), foremost amongst the Western cultural inventions at our disposal is the critically reflexive attitude of an enlightened modernity itself (Giddens 1991: 36-9). To accept this, argued Foucault, does not entail doctrinal faithfulness but a recognition that what connects the present to the Enlightenment is "a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era" (Foucault 1984a: 42). This ethos knowingly directs the Enlightenment question at the Enlightenment itself, aiming to imagine the present as "otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is" (Foucault 1984a: 41), and to this extent the analysis of the present at the same time generates a critical transformation of its object. On the one hand, as Jameson has warned, to speak thus of 'permanent criticism' or 'permanent revolution' is characteristic of capitalist modernity itself, and thus "the exhilaration with such revolutionary dynamism is a feature of the bonus of pleasure and the reward of the social reproduction of the system itself" (Jameson 1984: xx). On the other hand, to deconstruct modernity requires, problematically, that

one assume that it is homogeneous (Lethen 1986), unidimensional and uncontested (Calhoun 1995: 98), when it patently is not. But while modern mechanisms such as these ensure that one does not escape the will to truth and power, since it is the principle from which one proceeds, nor is one hopelessly entangled in it, for not only is this principle under scrutiny but it is also complexly folded in upon itself in potentially contradictory ways.

This is the radicalism of modern self-reflectivity, manifested in self-referentiality: paradox forms the basis of modernity, and it is this paradox which is being problematized. As a "reflection upon the nature of reflection itself", "the reflexivity of modernity actually subverts reason" (Giddens 1991: 39). Yet self-referentiality ought not to be taken to be an obstacle to be avoided, for it is a resource to be fostered; it is not a doom but the conduit to an inventory which is both a repertoire of what is and a forge of what might be. The object of critique is always already critique's object. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argued that the power relation underlying punishment is duplicated by an "object relation" in which the criminal is caught up, objectified and individualised. Most relevant for our purposes here, "this object relation is not superimposed, from the outside, on the punitive practice .... [but instead] originate[s] in the very tactics of power and of the arrangement of its exercise" (DP: 102). By analogy, the device of subjecting the present to an objectifying critique only repeats what is already immanent within critique itself. Indeed, it is only by demonstrating its immanent relationship to its object that a critique can avoid being merely an arbitrary subjective expression or a slightly less arbitrary imposition of external values (Calhoun 1995: 87). Thus, a strategy which seeks to exploit the contradictions of modernity could be called 'homeopathic', in that it gives modernity a taste of its own medicine: by constituting modernity as its object, it re-enacts the archetypical modernist manoeuvre. In this vein, Foucault demonstrates his proximity not only to Kant but also to Kant's mentor, Rousseau, who hoped to find "an antidote in the poison" of corrupting civilisation (Starobinski 1993: 127-131).

Against those who would deride this manoeuvre as futile, even impossible, Foucault enjoined us to refuse "the 'blackmail' of the Enlightenment" (Foucault 1984a: 42),

the blackmail which has very often been at work in every critique of reason or every critical enquiry into the history of rationality (either you accept rationality or you fall prey to the irrational) operates as though a rational critique of reason were impossible ... (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 201).

One does not have to be 'for' or 'against' the Enlightenment, either accepting it and its rationality or criticising and trying to escape it. It is quite possible to be *both for and against* (Foucault 1982c: 33) aspects or even the whole of the Enlightenment, in the sense that the 'homeopathic' approach mentioned above assumes the relevance and importance of that which is being examined (the Enlightenment) for that which provides the means of critical examination (again, the Enlightenment).

As Habermas rightly notes, "[e]ngagement marks his [Foucault's] learned essays right down to the style and choice of words" (Habermas 1987: 282); but this is no reason to dismiss the latter's arguments, least of all his critique of modern reason. Habermas presumes that because criticism presupposes a normative judgement, Foucault's apparent reluctance to address normative issues calls his criticisms into question. However, one may perfectly well abstain from the question of whether some discourses or regimes of power are more legitimate than others, and even question the very basis of modern normativity, without lapsing into incoherence. In the first place, modernity is itself an invention, one which "*has to create its normativity out of itself*" (Habermas 1987: 7; emphasis in the original); why should this immanent productivity not take place reluctantly, sarcastically, irreverently or paradoxically?

Without sarcasm modern-day Enlightenment can have no healthy relation to its own history. We can only choose between a pessimism - reminiscent of decadence - loyal to its beginnings and a light-hearted disrespect in pursuit of original tasks (Sloterdijk 1984: 193).

In the second place, the very process through which this 'self-creation of normativity', this perpetual transition to the future or continuous renewal of the past, occurs, must conceivably be available for problematization - for being treated as an object which can be interrogated as to whether and how it happens, and how it may have been, or may still become, different. Thus there is no reason why Foucault, that consummate "denouncer of the normality of anonymous norms" (Canguilhem 1995b: 283), needs to treat the normativity that modernity *has* generated as a given; it is perfectly legitimate - and, indeed, normative - to question the very basis of normativity. In this way one can both presume the fact of normativity, and that that fact is problematic, thus simultaneously asserting and denying normativity, or modernity itself. Foucault's supposed "cryptonormativity" (Habermas 1987: 275) is thus nothing more than a red herring.

A critical history of Enlightenment reason presupposes the at least partial utility of Enlightenment reason itself: as Foucault remarked in the context of our specifically Hegelian heritage, "to make a real escape [from Hegel, or, by analogy, from the Enlightenment] ... presupposes an exact appreciation of what it costs to detach ourselves ..." (Foucault 1984b: 134). Thus it is not futile but essential to subject modern rationality to critical scrutiny; or, better, specific modern rationalities in specific fields, since rationality is not singular (SP: 210) and "[i]t is not reason in general that I am fighting. I could not fight reason" (Foucault 1980e: 4). In fact, it is precisely modern philosophy's self-conception as a 'permanent critique', philosophy conceived of as the problematization of the present, which should prompt us to examine, again and again and in the best tradition of Kant, the context which has made possible a form of thought which is conscious of its own context: "*What* is this Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers?" (Foucault 1984a: 249; emphasis in the original; Foucault, in Friedrich 1981: 88).

It is precisely here that Dews' and Habermas' criticisms fall short in Foucault's reckoning, for while the last agrees that to abandon the work of Kant is to risk lapsing into irrationality (Foucault 1984a: 248), he also points out that

if it is extremely dangerous to say that Reason is the enemy that should be eliminated, it is just as dangerous to say that any critical questioning of this rationality risks sending us into irrationality (Foucault 1984a: 249).

A rational critique of reason is in fact the only critique possible, and far from being irrational, it is a logical and consistent extension and application of the principal strands of the Western philosophical tradition. Derrida states the case well:

Who is more faithful to reason's call, who hears it with a keener ear, who better sees the difference, the one who offers questions in return and tries to think through the possibility of that summons, or the one who does not want to hear any question about the reason of reason? (Derrida 1983: 9)

At least since Plato, we have not been able to define a strategy *exterior* to an imperious reason which is implacable, enthralling, despotic and perfidious. Yet we remain able to criticise and strategise *in terms of* reason; and through appropriate forms of governance, including technologies of the self and techniques of power, we may yet "invent a way in which power can be exercised without instilling fear" (Foucault 1976b: 459) or at least "allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination" (Foucault 1987b: 129).

It is indeed in this field of obligation to truth that we sometimes can avoid in one way or another the effects of a domination, linked to structures of truth or to institutions charged with truth .... not by playing a game that was a complete stranger to the game of truth, but in playing it otherwise or in playing another game, another set, other trumps in the game of truth (Foucault 1987b: 126).

While the greater one's freedom, and the more open the game, "the more attractive and fascinating it is" (Foucault 1987b: 131), and "the greater the temptation on both sides to determine the conduct of others", all games of truth are multiple, variable and open to modification, lacking a 'complete, peremptory and exclusive definition', and hence



[t]here is always a possibility, in a given game of truth, to discover something else and to more or less change such and such a rule and sometimes even the totality of the game of truth (Foucault 1987b: 128).

This is the hope held out by Foucault: that an immanent critique of Enlightenment reason may have transformative effects upon the world that that reason has built (as well as upon the critical tools which the same reason has bequeathed to us). To be drawn in or enticed into the Western will to truth is a necessary condition for one to draw it out, in all senses of that phrase: to expose and outline it, to continue it and to push it to its limits and beyond.

Such a critique, which is rational without either taking rationality for granted or lapsing into irrationality, does not attempt, in Habermasian fashion, to avoid the 'blackmail' of the Enlightenment "by introducing 'dialectical' nuances while seeking to determine what good and bad elements there may have been in the Enlightenment" (Foucault 1984a: 43). Notwithstanding Canguilhem's assessment that Foucault's thesis (which was published as *Madness and Civilization*) evinced "from beginning to end a dialectical vigor that comes in part from his sympathy with the Hegelian vision of history and from his familiarity with the *Phenomenology of Mind*" (Canguilhem 1995a: 280), Foucault had little use for dialectical analysis, not least because it drives theory in the direction of harmony and closure. Only four years after Canguilhem's report, in an article published in 1964, Foucault clearly celebrated the fact that *homo dialecticus* - "This figure [which] has been the master subject and the object slave of all the discourses concerning the human, in particular human alienation" - was, as he saw it, dying (Foucault 1995: 292). Dialectical analysis, closely associated with the Hegelian and Marxist currents hegemonic in France until at least the mid-1950s, was an obvious target for Foucault, who concluded that we must try to think criticism and struggle "in terms of a logic free of the sterilising constraints of the dialectic" (Foucault 1980a: 144).

Let us then follow Foucault, and proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings profoundly determined by a peculiar history of which the most prominent recent episode was the Enlightenment, an analysis oriented toward "what is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects" (Foucault 1984a: 43).

[I]t is a matter at bottom of examining a reason, the autonomy of whose structures carries with it a history of dogmatism and despotism - a reason, consequently, which can only have an effect of emancipation on condition that it manages to liberate itself from itself (Foucault 1980c: 54).

By questioning the apparently self-evident yet precarious rationality of our present, we can both make visible the intimate relationship between truth and power and indicate a way forward. It is important to be clear here: this rational critique of reason or problematization of the present, directed as it is against the very procedures that for over two hundred years have been promising us emancipation, can paradoxically only have an emancipatory effect by freeing rationality from itself. In order to achieve this, one must simultaneously acknowledge the modern roots of this discursive practice and go beyond it, for to liberate something from itself is also to transform it beyond recognition. Here is the answer to the conundrum at the heart of modern thought: it is not a question of educating the educator, or liberating the liberator, but of re-educating education and liberating liberation itself. As even the most consummate defender of the Enlightenment project, Habermas, has recognised, "[m]ythic traditions cannot be revised without danger to the order of things and to the identity of the tribe set within it" (Habermas 1987: 114-5); it follows that to call into question the rational scientific myth that is Enlightenment is to undermine not only modern philosophy but also the established order of things - our present - and the identities set within it - our very selves.

It is thus necessary to identify which of our taken for granted assumptions and everyday practices can be expelled from our discursive armoury; among these will surely be many of the ways in which we commonly think and act in relation to objects (knowledge), others

(power) and ourselves (ethics). We must try to imagine "what the world and thought and truth might be if man did not exist" (OT: 322), rather than imagining that modernity and its truths will "liberate man in his own being" (Foucault 1984a: 42), for it is precisely this latter fantasy, which demands that we turn in upon and regulate ourselves, that has both founded and justified successive disciplinary regimes of truth:

Was the labor then so arduous that it had to be enchanted by this promise? Or had this knowledge become so costly - in political, economic, and ethical terms - that in order to subject everyone to its rule, it was necessary to assure them, paradoxically, that their liberation was at stake? (HS: 80).

On the contrary, the rational critique of reason "compels him [Man] to face the task of producing himself" (Foucault 1984a: 42); it demands that we "give up thinking of man, or, to be more strict, to think of this disappearance of man" (OT: 386), which requires that we liberate ourselves from this form in which we have only recently taken shape, by, paradoxically, reformulating what it means to be human.

The notion of critique as used in Foucault's work - the critique of Enlightenment reason, the genealogy of truth, the reconceptualisation of power relations and the critique of the subject - thus has important implications for how we ought to understand theory, practice politics and act ethically. To criticise is simultaneously to re-interpret and to re-fashion; it is to transform both that which is being criticised and that which is criticising. All criticism, even the most negative, the most 'trivial, uncomprehending and ignorant' criticism, is not only, "in a certain manner, formed and nourished" by that which is under critique, but it also involves "a certain manner of coding and transcribing a book, a singularly systematic transformation" (Foucault 1971b: 58). To criticise something is to practically engage and enter into a relationship with that thing, to the extent that both terms of the relationship will be different as a result.

I don't think that one can oppose criticism and transformation, 'ideal' criticism and 'real' transformation. A critique does not consist in saying that things are not good as they are. It consists in seeing what kinds of self-evidences, liberties, acquired and



non-reflective modes of thought, the practices we accept rest on. ... Criticism consists in ... showing that things are not as obvious as we might believe, doing it in such a way that what we accept as going without saying no longer goes without saying. To criticize is to render the too-easy gesture difficult (Foucault 1982c: 33-4).

Theoretical criticism is thus a practice: it does not merely express a disagreement but 'does this in such a way' as to effectively and practically alter reality, whether this is the reality of a theory or a text, a function or an enterprise, an action directed at others or oneself. To criticise, or to transform, then, is to introduce "impostures within the critical space ... like monsters within the realm of [the] living" (Foucault 1971b: 58); it is to fabricate or fiction that which is common, or familiar, or taken for granted. And like all monsters, these fabricated but effective criticisms, composed largely of myths, lack universality and objectivity; the effects that are put into play are precarious and ultimately doomed, forever "waiting for their St. George" (Foucault 1971b: 58).

The rational critique of the effects, limits and dangers of modern reason, premised as it is on that which is under question, is much more productive and creative than it is negative and destructive. The critic does not seek to reconstitute an immanent secret in a pre-given text, but constructs, imagines or invents an object for analysis out of diverse textual materials: "Placing himself at the exterior of the text, he constitutes a new exterior for it, writing texts out of texts" (Foucault 1989: 21). This critical construction of the world correlates with the modern need to create meaning by articulating it:

We find the sense of life through articulating it. ... Discovering here depends on, is interwoven with, inventing. Finding a sense to life depends on framing meaningful expressions which are adequate (Taylor 1989: 18).

Invention, not liberation or truth, is the name of Foucault's game. Having established that a rational critique of reason - the questioning of the Enlightenment using its own tools, or the problematizing of the Western will to truth - is not only possible but necessary, the following chapter will explore in more detail how Foucault's genealogical approach

attempted to operationalise such a critique. Utilising the concept of 'problematization', it will be shown, in relation to the specific phenomenon of madness and thereafter with respect to the Enlightenment itself, how one might go about conducting such an immanent critique.

## CHAPTER TWO: GENEALOGY AND THE PROBLEMATIZATION OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Foucault's immanent critique of the present is built upon the examination of the conditions of possibility and effects of singular and relatively insignificant chance events. This critique, which redefines modernity as an attitude which demands that we constantly re-invent ourselves, is "genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method" (Foucault 1984a: 46, 50).

Genealogy is a form of "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary" erudition which opposes itself to the search for origins (Foucault 1977a: 139, 140) and instead by examining errors, perversities, accidents and conditions of possibility, "disturbs what was previously considered immobile; ... fragments what was thought unified; [and] ... shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself" (Foucault 1977a: 147). Genealogy thus "introduces discontinuity into our very being - as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself" (Foucault 1977a: 154; 1984b: 127). Disrupting, fragmenting, multiplying and dividing, the rationale behind Foucault's genealogical approach is simultaneously analytical, political and personal: one must be familiar with one's object, including one's self, before one can defamiliarise or problematize it, or transform oneself.

Archaeology, on the other hand, can be characterised as a practice or 'science of the archive' (Foucault 1989: 3; AK: 128-31) which Foucault suggested was not exactly a discipline but a "domain of research" (Foucault 1989: 1). Archaeological research examines not the meaning or truth but the 'positivity' of discourses, their *historical a priori* or conditions of possibility, existence and transformation (AK: 126-27). In addition, by treating the practices, institutions and theories of a particular socio-historical period as on the same plane in terms of their "common traits", "structures" or "invariants", archaeology is intended to permit the researcher to avoid "every problem concerned with

the anteriority of theory to practice, and the inverse" (Foucault 1989: 2-3). Hence one must read "*Don Quixote*, Descartes, and a decree by Pomponne de Belierre about houses of internment in the same stroke" (Foucault 1989: 3); the adoption of what he called a "theoretico-active", as opposed to Sartrean 'practico-inert', approach (Foucault 1989: 2), would allow the researcher to treat such diverse texts not merely as 'literature' (and as such largely devoid of truth), 'philosophy' (accurately reflecting reality) or 'law' (delimiting practice) but as both conditions and effects of the period in question, and thus having both practical effects and theoretical implications. Whereas the efficacy of modern science makes it assume its own truth but ignore its historicity, archaeology, by recognising its own historicity (that the rules which define it as a discursive practice "are caught up in the very things that they connect" - AK: 127), and by not - or only - pretending to be true, seeks to produce effects. A "theoretico-active" approach thus takes cognisance of the effective implication of itself in the discursive practices under analysis, rather than assuming its distance from them. In short, for archaeology, the madness of a knight who tilts at windmills is as important a benchmark of the times as a cogito which, never doubting its own sanity, issues a proclamation demanding the knight's internment.

In his inaugural lecture, however, and despite having recently published *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault preferred to refer to what we are here calling 'archaeology' as a 'critical' analysis. He argued that such an analysis, standing alongside a 'genealogical' analysis, reverses commonplace assumptions about authors being the origin of works in order to grasp the effects of relations of power in producing, excluding, limiting and appropriating knowledge and subjecting individuals. In these terms, the effects of power upon knowledge and individuals must be analysed in relation to "how they [relations of power] are formed, in response to what needs, how they have been modified and displaced, what constraint they have effectively exerted, to what extent they have been evaded" (Foucault 1984b: 130). From this point on, Foucault referred less and less to 'archaeology', and more and more to 'genealogy', and given his increasing interest in how relations of power produce forms of knowledge, this is hardly surprising.

The word 'archaeology' also bothered Foucault in its connotations of a search for origins, or an excavation of something which had been concealed. Despite referring once or twice to the need to undertake, as in Marxist ideology-critique, a critical unmasking of things which appear to be self-evident, neutral or independent, Foucault, as a good Kantian, did not believe that that which might be excavated or unmasked constituted anything essential in itself; indeed, as a student of Nietzsche, he took this insight further and suggested that if one were able to remove the mask, all that might be found would be the traces of other masks. His contemporary Roland Barthes captured this dismissal of foundations well - though referring specifically to texts, he could as well have been writing about history or society:

If until now we have regarded the text as a species of fruit with a kernel (an apricot, for example) the flesh being the form and the stone the content, it would be better to see it as an onion, a construction of layers (or levels, or systems) whose body finally contains no heart, no kernel, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing except the infinity of its envelopes which envelop nothing other than the unity of its own surfaces (Barthes, quoted in Merquior 1986: 171-2).

Thus, instead of attempting to unveil a hidden truth, or to archaeologically unearth a buried treasure, Foucault sought to reveal that which is so obvious and so superficial that it is passed over and accepted without further comment:

What I'm looking for are not relations that are secret, hidden, more silent or deeper than the consciousness of men. I try on the contrary to define the relations on the very surface of discourse; I attempt to make visible what is invisible only because it's too much on the surface of things (Foucault 1989: 46; see also AK: 131).

For the purposes of this thesis, then, I follow Arnold Davidson who has argued that Foucault's initial emphasis upon 'archaeology' as a description of the conditions or rules (the *episteme*, '*savoir*' or *historical a priori* - AK: 15) by which statements and domains of objects come to be produced was not so much displaced or abandoned as widened by his later, more thoroughly genealogical approach (Davidson 1986: 227; see also Gutting 1989: 270-71).

To return, then, to genealogy: rather than seeking universal structures of knowledge or moral action (*à la* Habermas), genealogy investigates how we have constituted and recognised ourselves as subjects and attempts to work out "the possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking what we are, do or think", in this way "seeking to give new impetus ... to the undefined work of freedom" (Foucault 1984a: 46, 50). In this task, as we saw in Chapter One, it is paradoxically assisted by the very drive to universality of modern thought, especially the human sciences: notwithstanding the mostly good intentions of the Western search for disembodied truth and rationality, "it is the *culture* and *society* of western science and philosophy that is ultimately being defended, not timeless mental values" (McLennan 1992: 341; emphasis in the original). The more the human sciences attempt to transcend history and attain universality, the more clearly they reveal their rootedness in history (OT: 371).

From within the present, genealogy reconfigures the past which made both it and modern scientific thought possible; it thus sets our recent history against itself, and reconceptualises modernity as

an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them (Foucault 1984a: 50).

The modern ethos is thus understood as "a *limit-attitude*" which simultaneously confirms Kant's inauguration of modern philosophy and transforms his question of the limits of knowledge into "a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression":

in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? (Foucault 1984a: 45; emphasis in the original).



The Enlightenment located and defined itself in relation to a present which it problematized. In order to understand what it means for us to be children of the Enlightenment, we must problematize those forces, conditions and representations which Foucault once likened to the "positive unconscious" of science and human knowledge (OT: xi; 1989: 39; see also Macey 1993: 162) (analogous to Heidegger's "*Lichtung*" or clearing - Fraser 1989: 38) and which have made our present possible, particularly our peculiar, even unique, configuration of scientifically sanctioned modes of soothsaying and subjection.

### ***I Problematization: theory as practice***

Analysing, criticising, and experimenting with alternatives to, what we, as denizens of the present, have become, Foucault wanted to know

whether one cannot discover the system of regularity, of constraint, which makes science possible, somewhere else [than the conscious actor], even outside the human mind, in social forms, in the relations of production, in the class struggles, etc. (Foucault, in Elders 1974: 160).

Differently put:

The history of the 'objectification' of those elements which historians consider as objectively given (if I dare put it thus: of the objectification of objectivities), this is the sort of circle I want to try and investigate (Foucault 1981f: 14).

He pursued this investigation into the history of, and systemic or structural basis for, what we presently consider to be true, primarily through recourse to what he called 'problematization' (otherwise translated as 'problemization'):

Problematization doesn't mean representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It is the totality of discursive or non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false

and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.) (Foucault 1988a: 257).

Problematization thus does not refer to conventional methods of analysis which are premised on a relationship between thought and the world, or between the analysis and what is being analysed, as processes assumed to be both separate and yet more or less closely aligned. Instead, problematization refers to the practical conditions which make something into an object of knowledge, and specifically to the networks of power, institutional mechanisms and existing forms of knowledge which direct the attention of theorists to specific phenomena and in this way produce new knowledge.

Genealogy consequently starts from the assumption that objects of analysis are neither purely external to and independent of, nor entirely internal to and dependent on, thought. Thought is not merely a mental, cognitive, speculative or linguistic phenomenon; as a set of practices in its own right, it is implicated in constituting the objects of which it speaks and has specific and identifiable political effects. Consequently,

the idea that to devote oneself ... to properly theoretical and speculative activities is to turn away from politics strikes me as completely false (Foucault 1989: 42; OT: 328).

For Foucault, 'theory' (or forms of knowledge) and 'practice' (or relations of power) are not opposed but are so closely intertwined that "theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice" (Foucault 1977a: 207-8), and "violent, discontinuous, pugnacious, disorderly, ... and perilous" to boot (Foucault 1984b: 126; OT: 328). Contrary to those who aver that he upholds a 'theory/practice' dichotomy (Rabinow 1984: 9), for Foucault theory is practical and political in at least four ways: in the sense that theory is produced by and through powerful groups which in this way distinguish themselves from and exclude others; in the sense that it "is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized" (Foucault 1984b: 110); in the sense that theory plays a role in producing the objects it will

subsequently analyse; and in the sense that theory may help to constitute "a certain point of view" (Foucault 1984a: 350) or offer tools which are not only analytically useful but can engender disturbances in and disruptions of what we consider to be real.

It follows that theory is not a representation of given facts, events or states of affairs. Instead, it is at one and the same time a condition of possibility, alongside other political, economic and social conditions of possibility, of states of affairs, *problematizing* and rendering them as objects amenable to analysis and intervention, and the effect of the interplay between relations of power and knowledge immanent within these states of affairs. Modern thought, including Foucault's, is "both knowledge and a modification of what it knows, reflection and a transformation of the mode of being of that on which it reflects" (OT: 327). Derrida's account of the nature of rational analysis is useful here:

The modern dominance of the principle of reason had to go hand in hand with the interpretation of the essence of beings as objects, an object present as representation [*Vorstellung*], an object placed and positioned *before* a subject. This latter, a man who says 'I', an ego certain of itself, thus ensures his own technical mastery over the totality of what is. The 're-' of *repraesentatio* also expresses the movement that accounts for - 'renders reason to' - a thing whose presence is *encountered* by *rendering* it present, by bringing it to the subject of representation, to the knowing self (Derrida 1983: 9-10; emphasis in the original).

Rational, objective analysis of reality (what is) is inseparable from the interpretation of beings as objects, which objectifies or reifies some beings in relation to others. This is the violence of a modern reason which, historically, has adopted a colonising relationship with all other societies, including its own (OT: 377); it is centred around "representational man", said to be endowed with "hard eyes permanently open to a nature that he is to dominate" (Derrida 1983: 10). Antiquity's optical and visual metaphors of light and sight have not been lost on a thought which, comparatively recently, declared its age to be an 'enlightened' one: "the eye ... has the power to bring a truth to light that it receives only to the extent that it has brought it to light" (Foucault 1976a: xiii). Speculative, voyeuristic and honed to a sharp self-reflective edge by its need to generate its normativity out of

itself, modern reason drives subjects constantly to treat themselves and others as objects (Habermas 1987: 7).

Consequently, what we know of the other, what knowledge we produce in knowing the other (by extorting truth or provoking action), is conditional upon the forms in, and relations of power and knowledge through, which we constitute it, and actually reveals more of ourselves than of the other (Bauman 1987: 9; Hall 1992a: 294). "The subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak 1988: 308): the other is always the other *for us*, its exotic charm demarcating the limitation of ourselves (OT: xv). It is never the other *as other* ('in itself') because the latter is effaced and muted in the very process by which meaning, identity or voice is inscribed upon it. To attempt to know or give voice to the other is literally to forge that knowledge or voice and the subject represented by it, to produce an artificial and counterfeit representation of the other which subordinates it even in the process of empowering it. Despite the fantasies of oral history, there is no "authentic" popular voice: some subjects speak for others as much as theory speaks for the facts. In interpreting beings as objects, reason (re)presents them fourfold - as *objects* in relation to a subject, as objects represented or *portrayed*, as objects represented or *spoken for*, and as objects *placed and positioned* before a subject. The objects of reason are accounted for (made known) and encountered (as if discovered) by literally rendering them present, constituting them in a form available for analysis and mastery (Deacon 1996: 232). Similarly, what Foucault calls problematization is a process of rendering or representing reality, and 'theory', as both part of this process and a product thereof, can be said to produce and reproduce itself and the *episteme* or *apparatus* (see below) of which it forms a part.

In the light of this, Foucault's assertion in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that theories or discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (AK: 49), should be understood in the sense elucidated by Laclau and Mouffe, such that theory "is an *articulatory practice* which constitutes and organises social relations" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 96; emphasis in the original). Laclau and Mouffe draw a distinction between "the being (*esse*) of an object, which is historical and changing, and the entity

(*ens*) [or existence] of that object" (1987: 85; emphasis in the original). To the extent that theory is involved in the production of the 'being', *esse* or meaning of its objects of analysis, though not their actual existence or *ens*, theory is part of the process which constitutes or problematizes reality. Rorty, too, points out that there is a simplistic sense in which

the way people talk can 'create objects', in the sense that there are a lot of things that wouldn't exist unless people had come to talk in a certain way. Examples of such things are universities, contracts, governments, international monetary exchange mechanisms, traditions of historiography, revolutions in philosophy, and so on (Rorty 1986: 42).

Even if it has only recently begun to operationalise it, philosophy of science has long been aware that "it is the theory which decides what we can observe" (Einstein, quoted in Heisenberg 1971: 63). In all these instances, and more, reality is not something given, "out there", a set of brute data more or less easily accessible to a theory which describes and explains it and proceeds to modify or transform it in accordance with social and economic needs, cultural demands or political power. Reality, instead, is ultimately always the product of these constituting and colonising activities of theory; reality is a terrain which coalesces and metamorphosises under the impact of the conceptual maps which claim, after the fact, to merely, if ostentatiously, illuminate that which is said to exist independently of, and external to, the scientific observer.

This is a fundamental insight, and while it infuses Foucault's work, it was stated most clearly by Baudrillard, for whom reality is a "*precession of simulacra* - it is the map that engenders the territory" (1983: 2; emphasis in the original). Truth, consequently, does not consist in the accuracy of theory's depiction of reality (a correspondence model), but in the power of theory's production of reality (which as both Alcoff (1993: 109) and Rorty (1978: 143) have argued, more or less resembles a coherence model): "[t]ruth is inseparable from the procedure establishing it" (Deleuze 1988: 63). Theory is not a passive representation of something else, deemed to be activity or practice, but is "itself a



mode of action in the world" (Ulmer 1985: 183) which, in the form of a Foucauldian genealogical approach, is also a regulatory violence intentionally done to objects of knowledge (Foucault 1984b: 127).

[T]he reality represented does not determine the representation or the means of representation. Instead, the process of signification itself gives shape to the reality it implicates (Henriques *et al* 1984: 99).

As even as uncompromising a critic as the Marxist, Callinicos, accepts, however, it does not necessarily follow from Foucault's understanding of theory as a problematizing practice (which Callinicos associates with Nietzschean 'perspectivism'), that reality is a product of theory alone, or that mind literally creates matter. Instead, theory does not always successfully produce reality; it may have unintended consequences and effects; and it is also a product of a perpetual struggle (Callinicos 1987: 107).

Thus, despite some provocative and polemical formulations in Foucault's early work, such that

[r]eality does not exist .... language is all there is, and what we are talking about is language, we speak within language (Foucault, quoted in Macey 1993: 150),

there is no need to revert to the various idealist positions of Platonic forms, early Christian theology or Hegelian metaphysics. Theory is always confronted by reality, and must grapple with it in its specific context, to the extent that theory must to some degree assume the givenness of its object (and thus objectify it). As a result the object is always derived and contrived, at most the compacted sediment of epochs of socially produced and practiced relations of power and forms of knowledge.

Foucault's genealogical approach thus acknowledges the power of 'discursive' (or 'idealist') as much as 'non-discursive' (or 'materialist') factors to constitute what is taken to be real. Not only is it the case that, as Giddens once put it, "What passes for social



reality' stands in immediate relation to the distribution of power" (Giddens 1976: 113), but theories of reality also extend or alter the way power is distributed. However, there is an additional dimension to the relationship between that which we commonly describe as theory and reality, and that is that theory is itself modified by the reality which it in part constitutes. In its confrontation with the real, the observing or theorising subject which represents others, itself and the world as external objects, transforms itself to the same degree as it transforms the real. The identity of social beings as much as of their discourses is "purely relational" and is "constantly deferred" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 86), in that it depends upon being recognised - in the Hegelian sense - or concretely validated by these representations which it reifies; however, the moment of recognition also conceals this relational character:

The principle of reason installs its empire only to the extent that the abyssal question of the being that is hiding within it remains hidden, and with it the question of the grounding of the ground itself (Derrida 1983: 10).

It follows that to problematize reality, or to write a history of the present, is as much to transform the self as it is to render the objects of reason present and to expose and unmask the ground of the current *episteme*. "We must understand how actors - even cultures, if I may be permitted that shorthand - change in becoming capable of understanding various others" (Calhoun 1995: 80). This issue of the freely determined transformation of the self under the impact of various political rationalities will be addressed in more detail in the following section and in Chapter Five.

Problematization, then, refers to the totality of historical practices, "discursive or non-discursive", which raise an issue, pose a question or introduce a hitherto unacknowledged element into the field of thought; it is "the historically conditioned emergence of new fields of experience" (Burchell 1993: 277). This totality of practices, or 'apparatus', which includes 'discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions', consists of "strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by,

types of knowledge" (Foucault 1980a: 194-6). Here Foucault acknowledges a shift in his use of concepts, from 'episteme' in *The Order of Things*, and 'episteme' and 'savoir' in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, to 'apparatus' in *The History of Sexuality*:

what I call an apparatus is a much more general case of the *episteme*; or rather, that the *episteme* is a specifically *discursive* apparatus, whereas the apparatus in its general form is both discursive and non-discursive, its elements being much more heterogeneous (Foucault 1980a: 197; emphasis in the original).

Prior to arriving at this position in the mid-1970s, where conditions of possibility are understood as simultaneously intra-, inter- and "extradiscursive" (the latter referring to "economic, political and social changes") (Foucault 1978b: 13), Foucault had tended to distinguish between what is discursive and what is non-discursive (Foucault 1989: 19, 59; Deleuze 1988: 31-2) - for example, between discourse and the "nondiscursive context in which it functions (institutions, social relations, economic and political conjuncture)" (Foucault 1978b: 10).

This conceptual shift, then, marks the abandonment of a narrow identification between language and discourse, and a consequent thoroughgoing 'materialisation' or 'institutionalisation' of discourse. It is also a mark of the extent to which Foucault's ideas were themselves products of their time and context: the claim that theory is a practice which does not merely reflect but produces reality was also articulated by Althusser, for whom ideology had both a material existence and acted as a political weapon (Althusser 1971: 21, 157). One consequence of the post-1968 climate which resonated through both Foucault's and Althusser's work was

above all to grasp ideas in their materiality, not only insofar as they are texts and words but also in that, fundamentally, they also produce institutions and forms of conduct - that text and practice are so intermingled that the project of privileging one or the other is already restrictive, and contains the embryo of dogmatic reduction (Chatelet 1979: 24).

Althusser's structuralist Marxism was unable to avoid such a reduction "in the last instance"; Foucault, as we shall see, attempted to avoid this problem by linking knowledge to power relations and problematizing them both.

Foucault's theoretical trajectory in this respect is again echoed by that of Laclau and Mouffe, who rejected his early distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices, in texts such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, on the grounds that discursive practices were identified exclusively with language; and instead affirmed "that every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 107). Whereas Foucault at the time understood the *episteme* and its component discursive practices largely if not exclusively as linguistic or theoretical phenomena, discourse for Laclau and Mouffe is defined as the "totality which includes within itself the linguistic and the non-linguistic" (Laclau & Mouffe 1987: 82), and thus to argue that every object is discursive, that 'nothing can be constituted as an object outside of discourse' (or, in Foucault's terminology, extra-epistemically), is not to say that nothing exists outside of language but that nothing has meaning outside of discourse (or the apparatus, following Foucault's conceptual shift). Even though 'institutions' are really the *only* 'non-discursive' elements within Foucault's apparatus - "all the field of the non-discursive social ... is an institution" - Foucault in fact shared Laclau's and Mouffe's desire to avoid both what was tantamount to linguistic idealism and a simple correspondence between language and world: "I don't think it's very important to be able to make that distinction [between 'discursive' and 'non-discursive'], given that my problem isn't a linguistic one" (Foucault 1980a: 198).

The genealogical concept of problematization thus alerts one to the violence of representation and blurs the stark clarity of conventional distinctions between thought and reality, theory and practice and cause and effect. Problematization refers simultaneously to the historical process of producing an object for thought (the conditions of emergence), the specific discursive and non-discursive mechanisms involved in this production (the apparatus), as well as the manner in which human beings, particularly but not exclusively

intellectuals, find themselves engaged objectively, communicatively and governmentally with both process and product (technologies of power, knowledge and the self):

Actually, for a domain of action, a behaviour, to enter the field of thought it is necessary for a certain number of factors to have made it uncertain, to have made it lose its familiarity, or to have provoked a certain number of difficulties around it. These elements result from social, economic, or political processes (Foucault 1984a: 388).

To one set of difficulties, several different responses can be made simultaneously, and the task is to discover "the general form of problemization that has made them possible - even in their very opposition" (Foucault 1984a: 389).

This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, this is what constitutes the point of problemization and the specific work of thought (Foucault 1984a: 389).

Problematization is thus very far from deconstruction (Foucault 1984a: 389), perhaps simultaneously its inverse and its precondition, in that it is characterised by the coalescence of a problem whereas deconstruction seeks to subvert what has been problematized.

In concluding this section, it must be borne in mind that Foucault's analyses were themselves made possible by various 'social, economic, or political processes' which de-familiarised and rendered problematic conventional understandings of the relationships between knowledge, relations of power and soothsaying subjects. Foucault seldom adumbrated these processes, no doubt because he was often too completely immersed in them, but in each case he insisted that the important thing was not to centre one's analysis on the conceptualised object - the Enlightenment, for example, or relations of power - itself, but to focus on "the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualization" (SP: 209). Some of the processes or historical conditions which made the Enlightenment

central to contemporary preoccupations - the extension of disciplinary mechanisms; disillusionment with the politics of revolution; and globalisation - were referred to in Chapter One; others which prompted Foucault's reconceptualisation of power relations will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Three and Four; the next section will examine how Foucault's own work brought about a problematization of the phenomenon of mental illness.

## ***II The problematization of madness***

The productive power of discursive and non-discursive historical practices can be illustrated with reference to the problematization of madness. Madness, for mainstream psychology, is a given phenomenon, a brute objective datum which requires analysis, explanation and treatment. Foucault was not immune from such conceptions. Even in the midst of his critique of reason's 'internment' of its 'other', there is a definite sense in *Madness and Civilization* of a romanticisation of madness as some kind of natural, incorruptible 'thing-in-itself' peering over the asylum walls (Weeks 1989: 55; Hacking 1986a: 29). Derrida went so far as to argue that Foucault's book not only portrayed madness as a unique if unfortunate entity, but in the process reaffirmed its misery: "a powerful gesture of protection and internment", *Madness and Civilization* was "a Cartesian gesture for the twentieth century. A reappropriation of negativity" (Derrida 1978: 55). However, Foucault later dissociated himself from this conception (AK: 16, 47; 1980a: 118), and while he continued to insist that the Western history of truth which has brought about the institutionalisation of madness is essentially despotic and perverse, this fact does not confer any particularly noble traits upon madness:

The rationality of the abominable is a fact of contemporary history. The irrational, however, does not, because of that, acquire any indefeasible rights (Foucault, quoted in Blanchot 1990: 81).



Even a critic as unyielding as Habermas accepts that Foucault's early romanticisation of madness had been exorcised from his work by the time of *The Birth of the Clinic* (Habermas 1987: 241).

Instead, Foucault's approach ought to be understood as relating "an almost Kantian story in which our experience of the mad is a mere phenomenon conditioned by our thought and our history" (Hacking 1986a: 29). Madness is not a phenomenon about which medical science and psychiatry have gradually accumulated knowledge and on that basis have recommended forms of institutionalised cure, but rather something historically produced, evaluated and labelled on the basis of and through forms of constraint.

Is it not important to our culture that unreason could become an object of understanding only to the extent that it first had been an object of excommunication? (*Histoire de la Folie* 1972: 119, quoted in Eribon 1993: 96).

If the medical personage could isolate madness, it was not because he knew it, but because he mastered it; and what for positivism would be an image of objectivity was only the other side of this domination (*Madness and Civilization* 1965: 272, quoted in Eribon 1993: 97).

The language of psychiatry, which is reason's monologue *on* madness, could only be established on the basis of such a silence [that is, the silence established by reason's definition of madness as mental illness] (*Histoire de la Folie* 1961: ii, quoted in Macey 1993: 95; emphasis in the original).

This complex network of relations which Foucault at times referred to as "power-knowledge" is, he argued, "productive of consciousness and gives an absolute right to non-madness over madness: the power of competence over ignorance, of normality over disorder and deviation, of common sense's access to reality over the errors of illusion, hallucination and fantasy" (Foucault 1981c: 237).



Canguilhem, in his report on the thesis which was to become *Madness and Civilization*, points out that, for Foucault, madness is a specific experience literally created (as opposed to merely explained) by the power-effects that accompany science:

Mr. Foucault essentially endeavors to show that madness is an object of perception in a 'social space' structured in diverse ways throughout the course of history, an object of perception created by social practices rather than grasped by a collective sensibility, rather, above all, than broken down analytically by speculative understanding (Canguilhem 1995a: 278).

The object of perception that is madness is not only a product of social practices but is simultaneously subjected to exclusion and confinement:

police and juridical practices and the historical constitution of a *social experience of internment* were necessary in order for categories of abnormality to emerge from that point as realities offered to knowledge. Medical knowledge of madness that benefits science rests without any doubt on an active experiment in social segregation based on anathema (Canguilhem 1995a: 279; emphasis in the original).

In return for a knowledge of madness, then, science and the modern world, let alone those deemed to be mad, have had to pay a huge price: "the price of constituting the mad person as absolutely other, paying not only the theoretical price but also an institutional price and even an economic price, as determined by the organization of psychiatry" (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 202). The theoretical price of objectifying ourselves and others, mediated by the human sciences; the institutional price of subjection to formal disciplinary mechanisms; the economic costs of internment and therapy; and no doubt also the political price entailed by exclusionary practices and the ethical price of self-regulation and confession.

The sciences that arose out of the Enlightenment constituted human beings as simultaneously objects to be known and subjects that seek to know, at the price of excluding other subjects designated as mad, perverted, dangerous, childish, criminal and sick, not to mention the numerous classifications referring to race, class and gender.

Thus, it is through the exercise of power over others that madness first became an object of knowledge; it is the identification and isolation of madness that allowed for the emergence of the human science known as psychiatry; and it is in turn psychiatric knowledge that in purporting to explain madness facilitated the extension of power relations over all concerned: over those classified as mad as much as over those doing the classifying and the rest of us who conduct our lives in terms of the received division between reason and madness.

Madness is, in addition, an experience which is inflicted upon a free being, and with productive effects; it is not 'discovered' within a passive 'victim'.

It was indeed through a certain mode of domination exercised by certain people upon certain other people, that the subject could undertake to tell the truth about its madness, presented in the form of the other (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 207).

As anti-psychiatrist R.D.Laing (1960: 28) put it, "[t]he behaviour of the patient is to some extent a function of the behaviour of the psychiatrist in the same behavioural field. The standard psychiatric patient is a function of the standard psychiatrist, and of the standard mental hospital". At the same time, mental illness, more than just a physiological, psychological or neurological disease waiting to be discovered, is a mode of subjection in which individuals may actively and voluntarily participate: "the madman is obliged to objectify himself in the eyes of reason" (Foucault 1971a: 249). "[H]ysteria", for example, "[is] the very illustration of the way in which the subject constitutes himself as mad" (Foucault 1987b: 122) and at the same time a form of resistance, "a counter-blow against the very exercise of psychiatry" (Foucault 1980a: 186). It is also no coincidence that hysteria has been studied "exactly where there was a maximum of coercion to compel these individuals to consider themselves mad" (Foucault 1987b: 122). Madness is thus an experiential and conceptual product of an exercise of power over a free and participating subject: "the success of a normalizing power also depends on the willing compliance of the subject who is the target of the technologies of normalization" (Henriques 1984: 116).

The mad, like criminals, must recognise and accept the diagnosis of those who declare them to be mad, if they wish to be cured (or rehabilitated, as the case may be).

Nor is madness the only experiential phenomenon in which individuals participate in their own subjection: processes of educating children and adults, of treating the sick, of punishing criminals, of ministering to congregations, of giving alms to the poor, of entertaining an audience, of advertising goods to consumers, of counseling deviants, of providing therapy to patients, and of developing, enskilling or empowering anything from an individual through a community to an entire country all involve individuals or groups who actively constitute themselves as specific subjects in relation to, if not always in the presence of, powerful and knowledgeable others who declare them lacking or deficient in one or other form (Deacon & Parker 1995: 116). In all these cases, the productivity of power relations are evident through the positive application of knowledge, mediated through others, to selves, resulting simultaneously in the disciplining and the transformation of all concerned and, indeed, potentially producing new forms of subjectivity. In addition, Habermas has argued that pedagogical, medical, psychiatric and penal knowledge offers what he calls an "*ambiguous liberation*" for both patient and professional, and quotes, from the German version of *Madness and Civilization*, a passage not cited in the English edition: "The knowledge of madness presupposed on the part of those who possess it a specific way of ridding themselves of madness, of freeing themselves from the start from its dangers and its magic ..." (Foucault *Wahnsinn und Gesellschaft*, quoted in Habermas 1987: 246; emphasis in the original). Knowledge of the experience of madness is thus also a means of protecting oneself from it.

The experiential concepts with which Foucault concerned himself - not only madness, but also sexuality, crime and health - ought to be understood as in themselves "evaluations, of which remain to be grasped the norms of logical and technical formation" (Chatelet 1979: 23). In other words, forms of knowledge, and in particular the modern human sciences, are mechanisms which evaluate subjects in terms of their proximity to, or distance from, a scientifically established norm and in this way constitute them as sane or mad, normal or

perverted, law-abiding or criminal, healthy or sick; and it is the rules of formation of these norms and evaluations, not a given experience in itself, that need to be explained. That which science takes as symptomatic of a phenomenon is more often than not that which has made that phenomenon and its attendant explanation possible; ostensibly causal factors are preceded by their apparent effects:

our society has been afflicted by a disease, a very curious, a very paradoxical disease, for which we haven't yet found a name; and this mental disease has a very curious symptom, which is that the symptom itself brought the mental disease into being (Foucault, in Elders 1974: 188-89).

As Canguilhem puts it, "what the supposedly scientific psychology of the nineteenth century had attempted to establish as truth, the delimitation of the 'normal', is in fact only the discursive consecration of practices for establishing the juridical incapacity of an individual" (Canguilhem 1995b: 283). Finally, to the extent that an experience such as madness is not given but produced or problematized, so too does it require a new problematization before "the problem of the division between reason and unreason [can even] become possible" and available for analysis (Foucault 1989: 4); perhaps then it was fitting that those, like Nietzsche and Artaud, who were among the first to problematize this division, also fell prey to its effects.

### ***III Problematizing the Enlightenment***

In a roundabout but necessary way, we have arrived back at our starting point, namely, the contemporary importance of the Enlightenment. Indeed, Foucault's genealogy of the present would have been impossible unless 'a certain number of factors' had rendered modernity and its Enlightenment origins 'uncertain' and 'unfamiliar' by 'provoking a certain number of difficulties' around it: widespread civil apathy and philosophical disillusionment juxtaposed against the scientific and technological progress of a globalising but no longer visibly revolutionary Western culture. To this extent, the currently problematic nature of the Enlightenment project, which genealogy seeks to address, was

itself made possible by a prior genealogical process (in which the work of Nietzsche no doubts figures prominently): genealogy is thus present at its own birth, as it were.

In asking, following Kant, "[W]hat is our present? What is the contemporary field of possible experience?", Foucault seeks to problematize our present, to produce "an ontology of ourselves" (Foucault 1993b: 18). Central to his proposed combination of historical analysis and immanent critique of, and experimentation with, the legacies of the main Enlightenment tradition, is thus "a certain form of problematization that defines objects, rules of action, modes of relation to oneself" (Foucault 1984a: 49). He "put the matter clearly" in an interview given in 1981 to the journal *Ideology and Consciousness*:

my problem is to see how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth (Foucault 1981f: 8-9).

People govern themselves and others, and at the same time produce truth, in the context of rules, regimes of practices or programmes of conduct which prescribe what is to be done and what is to be known (Foucault 1981f: 5). In particular, it is the interplay between that which orders human conduct - relations of power, including strategies of resistance - and that which rationalises or justifies such conduct - forms of knowledge, including refinements in the technology and the instruments employed, and calculations of the economic costs both of these means and of the resistance encountered (SP: 224; 1989: 188) - that fascinated Foucault:

[h]ow can one analyse the connection between ways of distinguishing true and false and ways of governing oneself and others? The search for a new foundation for each of these practices, in itself and relative to the other, the will to discover a different way of governing oneself through a different way of dividing up true and false - this is what I would call 'political *spiritualité*' (Foucault 1981f: 11; emphasis in the original).

In these two statements are brought together the three defining themes of Foucault's *oeuvre* - power, knowledge and human subjects - themes which he built into the title of his

chair at the Collège de France: History (specifically, human history) of Systems (power) of Thought (knowledge).

The following question flows out of these themes: through recourse to which forms of knowledge and through what relations of power have human beings come to be what they are? In other words, what can be said about the "rationalization of the management of the individual" (Foucault 1980e: 4), these free subjects of processes that they have fabricated but over which they appear to have little control and even less understanding. But there is a second, equally important question: how might these relations, forms and beings be problematized and made different from what they are? It is in this latter instance that spirituality enters the picture, defined as the transformations which a subject must make of itself in order to accede to a mode of being, transformations which, at least in ancient times, were almost identical with philosophy (Foucault 1987b: 125). Political *spiritualité*, then (a form of which Foucault is reported to have discerned in the early days of the Iranian revolution - Bernauer 1981: 4), can be understood as self-transformation in the light of truth under the aegis of power. To investigate anew the history of the will to truth is simultaneously to re-examine the ways in which we govern ourselves and others in the present and to prefigure or fabricate alternative conceptions of knowledge, power and identity.

To speak in this way of 'fabricating' history, knowledge and power will surely suggest to some that Foucault was merely engaged in an elaborate and entertaining, but ultimately speculative, game of writing fiction pretending to be fact. Indeed, he freely admitted that his entire genealogical approach (the questions he asked, the objects and the form of his analyses) was a "fabrication" (Foucault 1980a: 212). Describing himself (in Macey 1993: 426) as "simply someone who manufactures books", he suggested that *The Order of Things*, for example,

is a pure and simple 'fiction': it's a novel, but it's not I who invented it; it is the relationship between our period and its epistemological configuration and this mass



of statements [about grammar, natural history and political economy] (Foucault 1989: 20).

This does not mean, however, that Foucault's writings can be discounted as some kind of 'irrelevant fantasy'. For Foucault, *all* present accounts of past events are fabrications: given that "historians always take their problems from the present", from their personal lives, their country's social and political life or their specific institutional environment (Foucault, quoted in Friedrich 1981: 88), the constant flux of our personal, political and institutional present renders the past permanently open to re-interpretation, re-interpretations which will in turn exert an effect - always violent (Heidegger 1969: 207; Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 112) - on our current understanding of ourselves.

[I]f interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations (Foucault 1977a: 151-52).

Taylor picks up on this to ask, pertinently but awkwardly: "where one can do violence by distortion, may one not alleviate by a less unfaithful description?" (Taylor 1985b: 380). This is awkward because one does not *choose* to do violence; all descriptions distort, and there is no independent standard to which we can be faithful. But it also pertinent because different descriptions distort differently, and when pitted against each other may serve to problematize and modify the rules of the game. The genealogical purpose of fabricating history is not to reveal the past, nor to express a truth, but to disturb the cobwebs of our present. It follows, though, that Habermas' criticism of Foucault's work as "presentistic" lacks real force; Foucault does not claim that his conception of history as "meaningless kaleidoscopic changes of shape in discourse totalities" can avoid contemplating such totalities in relation to the concerns and contingencies of the present (Habermas 1987: 275-8).

Thus, when Foucault described what he did as "a kind of historical fiction" which he knew very well was not true, and perhaps even "singleminded, exaggerated" (Foucault 1980e: 5), he was not attempting to gain some literary status but in fact aiming to 'produce effects of truth in the present', or, at the very least, "somehow, to some degree, not remain altogether foreign to some such real effects" (Foucault 1981f: 12):

What I want to do ... is to ... work out an interpretation, a reading of a certain reality, which might be such that, on the one hand, this interpretation could produce some of the effects of truth; and on the other hand, these effects of truth could become instruments within possible struggles. ... Deciphering a layer of reality in such a way that the lines of force and the lines of fragility come forth; the points of resistance and the possible points of attack; the paths marked out and the shortcuts. It is the reality of possible struggles that I wish to bring to light (Foucault 1989: 189; 1980a: 62).

As Connolly puts it, Foucault's textual strategy sought "to *excite* in the reader the experience of discord between the social construction of normality and that which does not fit neatly within the frame of these constructs" (Connolly 1985: 368; emphasis in the original). By self-consciously and deliberately fabricating or reinterpreting the historical understandings which support our conceptions of ourselves as modern beings, genealogy seeks to make strange what we take to be familiar, and in this way to provide indirect assistance to contemporary and usually localised struggles and forms of knowledge - at the very least "render[ing] them ... capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse" (Foucault 1980a: 85; 1987c: 205), and at best making possible the *future* formation of a political group - "a community of action" - with its own independent values and objectives (Foucault 1984a: 385).

By deciphering reality in such a way that would be both epistemologically and strategically useful, Foucault clearly paid more than mere lip-service to the interconnectedness between theory and practice, seeing the former in particular as not only informing the latter but as effective in its own right:

any diagnosis concerning the nature of the present .... does not consist in a simple characterization of what we are but, instead - by following lines of fragility in the present - in managing to grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 206).

It is in the light of this endeavour that Foucault's claims about writing historical fiction, or seeking to produce effects of truth, must be understood. *Madness and Civilization*, he argued, had "an effect on the perception of madness. So the book and my thesis have a truth in the nowadays reality" (Foucault 1980e: 5). As Canguilhem has pointed out, this work was later enlisted in support of antipsychiatric protests, and to this extent "Foucault comforted, if he did not sustain or lead, movements of cultural and political indiscipline that were still looking for justification" (Canguilhem 1995b: 285). To the degree that *Discipline and Punish*, too, is said to have circulated within some French prisons during the revolts of the early 1970's, "that's a proof of a truth - a political and actual truth - which started after the book was written", prompting Foucault to "hope that the truth of my books is in the future" (Foucault 1980e: 5). Indeed, a few years later, and after the publication of *The History of Sexuality*, a government commission requested Foucault's advice in relation to a reform of the penal code with particular reference to censorship and sexuality (Macey 1993: 373). A final example: "I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent", because fiction can function in relation to and induce effects of truth, and can even make it come about that a true discourse "engenders or 'manufactures' something that does not as yet exist, that is, 'fictions' it" (Foucault 1980a: 193).

It is in this context that Foucault's own works can be listed amongst those tools available both as disturbingly different 'points of view' and as effective strategic implements:

All my books ... are little toolboxes, if you will. If people are willing to open them and make use of such and such a sentence or idea, of one analysis or another, as they would a screwdriver or a monkey wrench, in order to short circuit or disqualify systems of power, including even possibly the ones my books come out of, well, all the better (Foucault, quoted in Eribon 1993: 237).

On a more global scale, "[t]he role for theory today ... [is] to build little by little a strategic knowledge (*savoir*)" (Foucault 1980a: 145) which might be useful for, or at least can be made available to, various struggles. Foucault also conceived of the courses that he taught at the Collège de France as modestly contributing to such a strategic knowledge: they were intended "to initiate a series of individual analyses that will gradually form a 'morphology of the will to knowledge'" (Foucault 1977a: 199). This statement speaks volumes for Foucault's understanding of the role of knowledge in relation to its object: not unsystematic and yet particular, the production of knowledge does not function by superimposing some grand narrative upon reality. Instead, and inductively more than deductively, specific analyses, serially linked together, gradually coalesce into a shape which composes a 'body of knowledge' - which is simultaneously knowledge of an object, the grounds which make that object possible, the tools with which the object is known, and the known object itself (AK: 16).

'Fabricating' or 'fictioning' was thus a way in which Foucault sought to bring about specific political effects; it also helps to show how what is taken to be true has in fact been produced or manufactured, and as a result makes strange that which is so familiar and visible that it is literally invisible. As he put it somewhat turgidly:

fiction consists not in showing the invisible, but in showing the extent to which the invisibility of the visible is invisible (Foucault 1990b: 24).

Last but not least, 'fictioning' undermines the will to truth and opens up for interrogation its high priest, the self-conscious human actor and author. It follows that what for many of his interlocutors seemed polemical about his work was for Foucault a straightforward and necessary, even unavoidable, approach:

The apparently polemical character [of *Madness and Civilization* and *The Order of Things*] stems from the fact that it is a question of hollowing out the whole mass of discourse that's accumulated under our feet (Foucault 1989: 30).

This mass of discourse, particularly our modern Enlightenment-inspired conceptions of knowledge and power, is likened to "a molehill about to cave in", in that it is being undermined, burrowed into and subverted by new conceptions and struggles (Foucault 1982a: 37). The differences between a Foucauldian and a Marxist approach could not be more evident here: whereas the latter tends to favour topographical and structural metaphors (the base and the superstructure; seizing the commanding heights), Foucault preferred archaeological comparisons. There are no lofty edifices to be overthrown, through purist, universal, climactic revolutionary transcendence, only humble molehills to be (further) undermined, through implicated, specific, irreverent and perpetual subversion.

This attempt to undermine the very foundations of modern Western thought also has a useful self-evaluative function built into it. Foucault sought to both provoke and examine the effects on our historical self-understandings of a critique which pits modernity against itself:

What I am trying to do is provoke an interference between our reality and the knowledge of our past history. If I succeed, this will have real effects in our present history (Foucault 1980e: 5).

More specifically,

I would just like to find out what effects the question [of the 'objectification of objectivities'] produces within historical knowledge. ... [I]t's a matter of the effect on historical analysis of a nominalist critique formulated elsewhere [in philosophy] but by way of an historical analysis (Foucault 1981f: 14).

Foucault's book's, then, "aren't treatises in philosophy or studies of history: at most, they are philosophical fragments put to work in a historical field of problems" (Foucault 1981f: 4). Such an approach, of provoking the effects one then examines, also has the advantage of putting one's "nominalist method" to the test of history (Foucault 1981d: 353-54). As Rajchman puts it, Foucault was not attempting to discover the truth of the present, or of



the past, for that matter, but trying to bathe in an unfamiliar light those historical events and practices through which the present has come to conceive of itself, its thought, its politics and its denizens, in a particular way (Rajchman 1985: 52, 55-60; 1991: viii, 64).

Together with this nominalist approach which is highly suspicious of all claims to universal truth (Rabinow 1984: 4), anti-universalism and non-foundationalism constitute perhaps Foucault's only clearly-stated philosophical position:

- All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence. They show the arbitrariness of institutions and show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made (Foucault 1988b: 11).

"Nothing is fundamental" (Foucault 1984a: 247): neither truth, nor power, nor even the conscious human subject stands outside of every social and historical web of relations, and consequently if any of these can be said to have an essence, a universality or a necessity this is no more than a label assigned to an arbitrary set of rules (truth), a strategic situation forever in flux (power) and a being subject to these rules and strategies.

#### ***IV Philosophising with a hammer***

Since the target of Foucault's deliberate interventions into the history of our present is precisely what makes the present itself appear so solid and stable, "the archaeologist, like the Nietzschean philosopher, is forced to resort to the blows of the hammer" (Foucault 1989: 30). This notion of 'philosophising with a hammer' once again highlights the close interconnection, for Foucault, between theory and practice, in the sense that philosophy does not merely analyse and interpret and then stand aside for politics to instigate change; philosophy is an engaged, committed, passionate and practical activity which penetrates into the order of things and, like the work of René Magritte which fascinated Foucault, plays an ambiguous role: "supporting pegs and yet termites that gnaw and weaken" (Foucault 1982a: 38). For example, in Magritte's picture, *This is not a pipe*, the manner



in which an object to which we are accustomed (a pipe) is represented calls into question the very nature of the object and allows its meaning to proliferate. The picture is not itself a pipe; neither is the representation of the pipe; nor is the statement, 'This is not a pipe', a pipe. Indeed, in relation to this picture Foucault identifies "seven discourses in a single statement - more than enough to demolish the fortress where similitude was held prisoner to the assertion of resemblance" (Foucault 1982a: 49). Simple, taken for granted identities, unities and meanings are in this way shown to be complex and multiple, intersected and fought over by numerous systems. Here, by provoking an 'interference' between present and past, fact and fiction, and being and existence, a genealogical approach (and also, interestingly, an archaeological approach - AK: 131), by "mak[ing] visible all of those discontinuities that cross us", by exposing the modest conditions of possibility of much-vaunted meaning, aims "not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation" (Foucault 1977a: 162).

Similarly, Magritte's *L'Art de la conversation* (1950) can be seen as a representation (or an ordering) of the order of things: it contains, apparently carved out of stone, words - *reve* (dream), *treve* (peace), and *creve* (death) - which by contrast represent mere fleeting images (Foucault 1982a: 37). We need, therefore, to adopt, in all spheres of life, a strategy similar to that which Magritte adopted in his painting: "deploying largely familiar images, but images whose recognizability is immediately subverted and rendered moot by 'impossible', 'irrational', or 'senseless' conjunctions" (Translator's Introduction to Foucault 1982a: 8). This strategy, directed at our recent history, seeks through parody not to reveal truths but to fabricate them: by pushing the "masquerade" of history "to its limit", genealogy constitutes history as a "great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing", and in this way it 'unrealises' "the identification of our faint individuality with the solid identities of the past" (Foucault 1977a: 161). For example, the hold of modern progressivist histories can be undermined by referring to the discontinuities that have been papered over, to the instances of chance that have been suppressed by causation or to the impact of 'great men' who have been replaced with non-gender specific popular masses.

We must, nevertheless, be aware that the deployment of what is familiar, albeit in a fictionalised form which alerts us to its problematic status, must be done sensitively and in a carefully calculated manner. Not just any deployment is likely to produce effects of truth; on the contrary, most deployments will simply reinforce what we take for granted. What is most important is for a deployment not merely to appropriate the familiar but to "heretically misappropriate" it, following Judith Butler (interviewed in Worsley 1997: 20), in the way that American 'gangsta rap' lyrics, or gay movements, or local South African music, have taken up erstwhile derogatory labels such as 'nigger', 'dyke' and 'queer', and 'kaffir', respectively, as marks of pride and self-assertion.

As in judo, the best answer to an adversary maneuver is not to retreat, but to go along with it, turning it to its own advantage, as a resting point for the next phase (Foucault, quoted in Baudrillard 1987: 65).

Deployments which recognise and exploit their implication in that which they critique and resist are neither new nor exclusively 'postmodern': when a decree was issued by the German occupational forces requiring Danish Jews to wear yellow Stars of David for ease of identification, the entire population, led by their King, successfully nullified it by adopting the symbol as part of their everyday attire.

Black consciousness-raising strategies from Fanon through Malcolm X to Biko also regularly stressed the importance of psychologically liberating oneself by positively redefining discriminatory labels:

Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being (Biko 1978: 62).

Thus, the strategy of making the familiar strange, or of parodying our past, must, to be effective, simultaneously underpin and undermine; indeed, it can only successfully

undermine - and not simply find itself dismissed as irrelevant - if it rigorously re-examines and thus to some extent restates that which underpins our present.

Foucault's preferred approach is thus very much that of the *raconteur* who tells the story of the present with sufficient familiar material to make it recognisable but with enough left out or embellished to make it different. Indeed, to tell the (often sordid, seldom heroic) story of modern reason, may be more effective than engaging in arcane theoretical battles:

[E]xperience has taught me that the history of various forms of rationality is sometimes more effective in unsettling our certitudes and dogmatism than is abstract criticism. For centuries, religion couldn't bear having its history told. Today, our schools of rationality balk at having their history written, which is no doubt significant (Foucault 1981e: 253).

To write a history of religion when religion is everything that there is, is tantamount to blasphemy: not only does it de-sacralise religion and the world by suggesting that both are finite and man-made, but it shows that revealed truth is no revelation but has been modified and altered over time. Similarly, to write a history of rationality when rationality monopolises what is taken to be true is to be met with claims that one's project is impossible, or that it risks lapsing into irrationality or confusion; and yet such claims in themselves constitute evidence that certain powers feel threatened. To demonstrate the proximity of reason and despotism, truth and power, to point out the countless, tiny sources of power, "to force the institutionalized networks of information to listen, to produce names, to point the finger of accusation, to find targets, is the first step in the reversal of power and the initiation of new struggles against existing forms of power" (Foucault 1977a: 214).

Thus the purpose of restating conventional wisdoms is to allow for the construction of "a counter-memory - a transformation of history into a totally different form of time" (Foucault 1977a: 160). By showing how the supposed 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' of knowledge is based on "instinct, passion, the inquisitor's devotion, cruel subtlety, and

malice" (Foucault 1977a: 162), genealogy, like Nietzsche's 'effective history', affirms not only that "knowledge is perspective" but that "all knowledge rests upon injustice" (Foucault 1977a: 156-7, 163). Genealogy is like describing a changing panorama solely with reference to what one sees from the corner of one's eye: it substitutes for the penetrating but blinkered scientific gaze an *oblique and informing glance*. In addition, the role of chance events in determining the trajectory of our recent history is brought back to centre stage from the margins to which it had been consigned by objectivist interpretations (Gray 1995: 108), in that the present is conceived of as

a throw of the dice. ... It is at once the chance within the game and the game itself as chance; in the same stroke, both the dice and the rules are thrown, so that chance is not broken into pieces and parcelled out, but is totally affirmed in a single throw. The present [is] the recurrence of difference (Foucault 1977a: 194, 192).

A genealogy or history of the present thus requires that one exteriorise the present and recognise that its apparent order, necessity and identity has in fact been invented and imposed on chaos, chance and difference. The issue is not that one thinks or does something new, but that one thinks or does the old differently and, thus armed with a counter-memory, *it becomes possible to begin to envision and fabricate alternative possible futures*.

It is important to realise, however, that while such alternative futures might be constructed *in the light of* Foucault's work, they are not present *in* his work. Blanchot suggests that at least two of Foucault's works (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* and "The Order of Discourse"), which "seem to open the future to a new form of knowledge", herald "perhaps no other fulfillment than their very promise" (Blanchot 1990: 69). The former text, for example, contains "many a formula from negative theology", where Foucault in describing what he rejects gives one a glimpse of the positivity of that which is other than, or outside of, what he rejects (Blanchot 1990: 74). This is a salient point, which ought to be generalised: Foucault's work does not represent an alternative to, let alone a dialectical transcendence of, modern forms of thought. Instead of offering an external alternative, it

provides an internal alteration; it fulfills the modern demand for it to go beyond itself by promising to do so, and in this way succeeds in effecting changes in modernity without effectively changing anything. From within modernity, it articulates a critique which modernity can neither disown nor tolerate. It is no more, and no less, than a question of style:

Style is the possibility, at once hidden and indicated, under the sovereign necessity of the words used, of saying the same thing, but differently (Foucault, quoted in White 1979: 87).

Thus, the only sense in which Foucault's work offers an 'alternative' to that which it critiques is immanent within the critique itself, an approach not dissimilar to that taken by a young man who once declared: "we do not anticipate the world dogmatically but wish to discover the new world by criticism of the old" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 36).

Indeed, Foucault recommended that one pays no heed to those who say: "'Don't criticise, since you're not capable of carrying out a reform'":

That's ministerial cabinet talk. Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in a programming. It is a challenge directed to what is (Foucault 1981f: 13).

Hence, "[i]t is not up to us to take responsibility for institutions which need to be reformed" (Foucault, in Macey 1993: 418); that would be to play the game by their rules. Foucault also specifically denied looking for and refused to "accept the word *alternative*", as in 'an alternative to the problems of the present'; rather,

I would like to do the genealogy of problems, of *problématiques*. 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 (Foucault 1984a: 343; emphasis in the original).

Blanchot adds that Foucault, "who once declared himself a 'happy optimist', was a man in danger, who, without making a display of it, had an acute sense of the perils to which we are exposed, and sought to know which ones are the most threatening and with which it is possible to compromise" (Blanchot 1990: 68).

It follows that, firstly, the Western political rationalities that are Foucault's target are not evil or bad, forms of domination from which we must supposedly liberate ourselves (Foucault 1987b: 129). That is to say: "To exercise power over another, in a sort of open strategic game, where things could be reversed, that is not evil. That is part of love, passion, of sexual pleasure" (Foucault 1987b: 129; 1987a: 5). However, to exercise power or to produce knowledge always involves danger (Foucault 1988a: 168). In a world in which nothing is fundamental, in which knowledge rests upon injustice and interpretation is a violence we do to things, in which individual and group identities are constituted as fractured and contradictory objects of knowledge within the parameters of relations of power, such that the essence of ourselves and others can never be known, and in which experiences such as illness and sexuality are mechanisms of subjection, danger lurks around every corner: the danger that a critique of Enlightenment reason will end up in irrationalism, and the danger that to believe this will render reason immune to criticism; the danger that we may miscalculate the risks (Giddens 1991: 34-5) and consequences involved in questioning the foundations of our present, as well as the danger that we may be experiencing the end of the world as we have known it, facing only "a terrifying emptiness, a kind of vertigo, or even a fracturing of our world and body-space" (Taylor 1989: 18).

Secondly, an answer to the Leninist question, 'What is to be Done?' (Lenin 1947), the direction in which one might channel one's pessimistic hyperactivism, will depend not on grand strategising but on local, contextual and everyday factors. "[T]he ethico-political



choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger"; for example, anti-psychiatric criticism contributed to the mass closure of Italian mental hospitals during the 1970s and the mushrooming of free clinics - "and they have new problems" (Foucault 1984a: 344). Just as power relations are not always to be abhorred, freedom is not always to be welcomed: liberation in itself need not entail completion or satisfaction; rather, "liberation opens up new relationships of power, which have to be controlled by practices of liberty" (Foucault 1987b: 115).

### ***V The bearers of Enlightenment***

What, then, we are to do with the Enlightenment depends to a large extent on what the Enlightenment has done with us. It also depends on how exactly we are to understand who 'we' are. Conventionally, 'our' role - that is, the role of people like Foucault, or like those who make a living commenting on the work of people like Foucault, such as the author of this thesis, as well as, no doubt, most of its readers - has been summed up in the attributes and activities assigned to the term 'intellectual'. At least since the Enlightenment, but arguably stretching as far back as Plato's comments on the 'philosopher-king', intellectuals and the theories that they are said to have authored have been taken to provide both governors and governed with a range of answers to the questions, 'What is?', 'What do we know?' and 'What is to be done?'.

Authentic philosophers ... are commanders and law-givers: they say 'thus it shall be!', it is they who determine the Wherefore and Wither [*Sic.*] of mankind .... Their 'knowing' is *creating*, their creating is a law-giving, their will to truth is - *will to power* (Nietzsche, quoted in Dews 1987: 206; emphasis in the original).

Whether conceived of as a "socially unattached intelligentsia (*freischwebende Intelligenz*)" (Mannheim 1954: 137-38), as "organic", "directive" and class-based or as "traditional" and "independent" (Gramsci 1971: 5-8), all modern intellectuals invested a lot of power and expended a great deal of energy to secure a position whereby they and no one else could legitimately be called upon to identify the deficiencies of the present, map out the road

ahead, assist those who struggle along this path and ultimately legislate a new world into existence.

Foucault consistently abjured such a role for himself. Intellectuals, he argued, are in the process of abandoning their old "prophetic function", including not only "their claim to predict what will happen, but also the legislative function that they so long aspired for" (Foucault 1977b: 161). Like Baudrillard (1987: 69), throughout his career, and especially in interviews, Foucault deplored and refused to adopt what he referred to as the epitome of modern intellectual practice, the "prophetic stance" (Foucault 1989: 190, 282; 1977b: 161; 1987a: 9; 1988a: 15, 197; 1988b: 9, 146; see also 1977a: 207-8, and in Elders 1974: 171) of the would-be universal legislator "who calms down reality" (Foucault 1989: 191). Planting his feet firmly against the ancient philosophical current which sees intellectuals as key elements in social transformation, he proclaimed that "to tell others what they have to do" (Foucault 1988a: 265), to try to advise or instruct them of their problems and alternatives is in fact "to tie them down or immobilise them" (Foucault 1981f: 13; 1980a: 62); it is to prevent them from taking action independently of and detrimental to extant structures of knowledge and power.

While there are some similarities between Foucault's genealogy and the prophesying and legislating stance of the human sciences, these are outweighed by the fundamental differences. In critical social theory as Fay describes it, "the theory is itself the catalytic agent which sparks social change by revealing to actors, given their developing situation, how they ought to act" (Fay 1975: 100 n8). Foucault's immanent critique of our history and ourselves was also intended to catalyse or produce effects of truth, though by revealing fictions and feuds rather than truths and moral principles. The primary difference, though, is that Foucault refused to prophesy to a specific individual or group what they ought to do, but sought to make it difficult for anyone, subordinate and superior alike, to carry on thinking and acting in familiar ways. (Though genealogy does not tell us what we ought to do, it itself does nevertheless *do*, and cannot avoid one or another of its formulations being *taken as* prescriptive.) Genealogy aimed

precisely to bring it about that they 'no longer know what to do', so that the acts, gestures, discourses which up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous. This effect is intentional (Foucault 1981f: 12).

"[F]rom the moment one begins to be unable, any longer, to think things as one usually thinks them, transformation becomes simultaneously very urgent, very difficult, and altogether possible" (Foucault 1982c: 34).

The events of May 1968 had revealed, Foucault argued, that "the masses no longer needed [the intellectual] to gain knowledge; they *know* perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than he and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves" (Foucault 1977a: 207; emphasis in the original); hence, no longer should they be (nor indeed, following Marx (in McLellan 1977: 575), should they ever have been) treated as expressing a mere "trade-union consciousness" (Lenin 1947: 31)) and as dependent on an intellectual vanguard. Indeed, the intellectuals are part of the problem: in their elitism they are often tempted to account for the masses "in terms of false consciousness or the banalization of mass culture" (Hall 1986: 52), and thus what the latter might spontaneously do or know is often blocked, prohibited and invalidated by systems of power of which "intellectuals are themselves agents" (Foucault 1977a: 207). At best, the role of the intellectual is "not to shape a working-class consciousness, as that consciousness already exists, but to allow that consciousness, that working-class knowledge, to enter the information system", in other words, to disseminate it (Foucault, in Macey 1993: 318). On the other hand, the intellectuals have their own problems to worry about - how they can justify their existence now that their legislative practices have been discredited in the eyes of both the masses and increasingly self-sufficient governmental apparatuses (Bauman 1987: 122).

In this new context, the role of the intellectual

is no longer ... to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge', 'truth', 'consciousness' and 'discourse'.

In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice. But it is local and regional, ... and not totalizing. This is a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious. ... [I]t is an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination from a safe distance (Foucault 1977a: 207-8).

This new role for intellectuals is a specific one: they must struggle in their own right, in their own multiple but particular locales, and with their own weapons, not in the name of but alongside and even as part of that ambiguously modern entity once treated as a homogeneous but now increasingly differentiated and de-massified, the 'masses'. "[N]o longer the rhapsodist of the eternal, but the strategist of life and death" (Foucault 1980a: 129), the intellectual must focus on concrete problems, as a savant or expert, in his or her specific life or work environment (Foucault 1980a: 126-8), and speak not in the name of universal values but in terms of his or her own specific practices (Foucault, in Macey 1993: 268).

Already in 1967, Foucault had partially anticipated this notion of the 'specific intellectual':

philosophy no longer exists; not that it has disappeared, but it has been disseminated into a great number of diverse activities. Thus the activities of the axiomatician, the linguist, the anthropologist, the historian, the revolutionary, the man of politics can be forms of philosophical activity .... [that is,] every activity that makes a new object appear for knowledge or practice (Foucault 1989: 28).

And in *The Order of Things* he suggested that the disciplines of psychoanalysis and ethnology, seemingly privileged but mythologising 'counter-sciences' which call into question the more established human sciences and their object of 'Man', were inherently particularistic and as such perhaps most conducive to the emergence of the specific intellectual (OT: 376). The category of the specific intellectual brings together the

erstwhile universal intellectual - Voltaire's just 'man of letters' - with those who once were merely "*competent instances* in the service of the State or Capital - technicians, magistrates, teachers" (Foucault 1980a: 127; emphasis in the original). In this respect, there is little difference between Foucault's 'specific intellectual' and Gramsci's "new type of [modern] intellectual" (Gramsci 1971: 9-10). As a result of the massive expansion of the white-collar and service sectors, it is possible for psychiatrists, social workers, lawyers, doctors, judges, academics or engineers to both do their jobs and also carry out 'intellectual' or 'critical' work once reserved for the writer (Foucault 1988a: 107).

Whereas biology and physics (Darwin and Oppenheimer) were the privileged zones of formation of the specific intellectual (Foucault 1980a: 129), today the university and the academic have emerged,

if not as principal elements, at least as 'exchangers', privileged points of intersection. If the universities and education have become politically ultrasensitive areas, this is no doubt the reason why. And what is called the crisis of the universities should not be interpreted as a loss of power, but on the contrary as a multiplication and re-inforcement of their power-effects as centres in a polymorphous ensemble of intellectuals who virtually all pass through and relate themselves to the academic system (Foucault 1980a: 127; see also Gramsci 1971: 10-11).

In this context, the *work* of the intellectual - for perhaps one ought no longer to speak of the task or the role of the intellectual - is no longer to prophesy, to legislate, to "shape others' political will", but to isolate, "in their power of constraint but also in the contingency of their historical formation", the systems of thought that we take for granted (Foucault 1989: 282);

it is, through the analyses he carries out in his own field, to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and institutions and on the basis of this reproblematicization (in which he carries out his specific task as an intellectual) to participate in the formation of a political will (in which he has his role as citizen to play) (Foucault 1988a: 265).



This "reproblematization" of what we take for granted is aimed at dismantling the existing coordinates of experience in order to change the self and, consequently, the selves of others: reproblematization is "an experience in which one risks oneself in the sense that one emerges from it transformed not only in what and how one thinks, but thereby in how one is or might possibly be" (Burchell 1993: 277).

The function of the intellectual no longer has as its object the conscientisation of the masses, though it deeply concerns them, nor can it claim to avoid the blandishments of the state or capital. However, specific intellectuals occupy strategic positions, and the extent to which they propagate scientific ideologies is secondary to their capacity to 'produce effects proper to true discourses' (Foucault 1980a: 131). There are, of course, many dangers associated with this new conception of the intellectual, of being unable to move beyond the local and the particular, to generate outside support, to develop a global strategy or to avoid being manipulated by local networks of power (Foucault 1980a: 130; 1984a: 46-7). Foucault was well aware that purely partial and local criticisms and struggles could leave us defenceless and bewildered in the face of global structures of domination. 'Hardly feeling capable' of doing more than merely "contribut[ing] to changing certain things in people's ways of perceiving and doing things" (Foucault 1981f: 12), he was under no illusion about the difficulties inherent in this process, accepting that "we have to give up hope of ever acceding to a point of view that could give us access to any complete and definitive knowledge of what may constitute our historical limits" (Foucault 1984a: 47) and realising "how much all this can remain precarious, how easily it can all lapse back into somnolence" (Foucault 1981f: 12).

Nevertheless, Foucault rejected what he referred to as "this whole intimidation with the bogy of reform" (Foucault 1980a: 145), that criticisms and struggles which are specific and localised will tend to be superficial and recuperable, rather than fundamental and transcendent as associated with the universal intellectual. Such criticisms, he suggested, are "linked to the lack of a strategic analysis appropriate to political struggle" which



ignores the fact that any balance of forces depends upon intermediate strategies and tactics (Foucault 1980a: 145); that is, that even global forms of domination like racism, capitalism and patriarchy are precariously grounded upon multiple and constantly shifting local relations of power (see Chapter Four). He also argued that the apparent dangers of abandoning a prophetic intellectual function are outweighed by its advantages, since, on the basis of the specificity of the politics of truth, combined with mutual support and politicisation, the position of the specific intellectual "can take on a general significance and ... his local, specific struggle can have effects and implications which are not simply professional or sectoral", but which can engage with the battle for or around the regime of truth, namely, "the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true" (Foucault 1980a: 132). Here Foucault's work links up with that of Bourdieu, who argued that the greater intellectuals' independence from mundane politics due to their specific locations, the greater their inclination to assert this independence and the greater their symbolic effectiveness (Bourdieu 1989: 100).

## ***VI Domains of genealogy: knowledge, power and the subject***

Contrary to the opinion of those who have popularised what was referred to in Chapter One as the 'blackmail' of the Enlightenment, the genealogical project of problematizing Enlightenment reason is not 'disordered and contingent' but has "its generality, its systematicity, its homogeneity, and its stakes" (Foucault 1984a: 47). Firstly, while it is important to study specific contemporary experiences "like madness, illness, transgression of laws, sexuality [and] self-identity" (Foucault 1981e: 239), not only can these phenomena "only be understood in relation to each other, not independently" (Foucault 1988a: 243), but they must also be located in terms of their longer, more general histories (Foucault 1984a: 49). Second, these phenomena can be examined systematically along three axes, each corresponding to the broad areas of "relations of control over things, relations of action upon others, relations with oneself" (Foucault 1984a: 48).

Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents (Foucault 1984a: 351).

As he pointed out in several interviews, his objective over the last twenty years of his life was to write a "history of the present" (DP: 31), or more specifically, "create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (SP: 208). These modes correspond to the three historical ontologies mentioned above, "three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects" (SP: 208): first, modes of inquiry with supposed scientific status, which objectivise the speaking subject (linguistics), the productive subject (economics), and the sheer fact of being alive (biology); second, modes which objectivise subjects through "dividing practices", dividing subjects internally or from others (mad/sane, sick/healthy, criminals/'good boys'); and third, modes through which a human being turns him- or herself into a subject (SP: 208). Three modes of objectification, three axes for analysis: "the establishment of a certain objectivity, the development of a politics and a government of the self, and the elaboration of an ethics and a practice in regard to oneself" (Foucault 1984a: 387; 1981e: 239; 1988a: 243).

It is important to note that it is these processes through which we govern ourselves and others in the light of truth that produce specific experiences, and subject subjects, rather than a subject being the origin of an experience (Kritzman 1988: xviii; Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 115; Deleuze 1988: 112). In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault indicated that his study was planned as "a history of the experience of sexuality, where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture", with each domain of experience corresponding respectively to

(1) the formation of sciences (*savoirs*) that refer to it, (2) the systems of power that regulate its practice, (3) the forms within which individuals are able, are obliged, to recognize themselves as subjects of this sexuality (Foucault 1987a: 4; emphasis in the original).

Experience is thus not the exclusive property of a subject, but a composite or correlative product of power, knowledge and subjects; instead of the subject being the condition of possibility of experience,

it is experience which is the rationalization of a process, itself provisional, which results in a subject, or rather, in subjects. I will call subjectivization the procedure by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more precisely, of a subjectivity which is of course only one of the given possibilities of organization of a self-consciousness (Foucault 1988a: 253).

People do not have experiences, rather, experiences happen to people: "historical experience is not *something* that ... we have (or not), it is some *way(s)* that ... we are (or not)" (Corrigan 1990: 222; emphasis in the original).

Third, subsumed beneath these three broad areas of knowledge, power and ethics and providing homogeneity for one's analyses, are what Foucault refers to as "practical systems" (1984a: 48). These practical systems have two aspects:

the forms of rationality that organize their [men's] ways of doing things (this might be called the technological aspect) and the freedom with which they act within these practical systems, reacting to what others do, modifying the rules of the game, up to a certain point (this might be called the strategic side of these practices) (Foucault 1984a: 48).

It is here that Foucault comes closest to addressing what most modern theorists would understand as the relationship between structure and agency, in that the 'technological' aspect corresponds to the ways in which social life is organised, while the 'strategic' aspect - which Foucault elsewhere (1984a: 50) refers to as "strategic games of liberties" -

corresponds to the capacity of people to act within and against the ways in which their lives are organised.

Yet the manner in which he does this serves only to problematize and undermine the conventional wisdoms. In the first place, by utilising a different terminology Foucault opens the way for a reformulation of the issue; second, these 'technological' (or structural) and 'strategic' (or voluntaristic) aspects are subordinated to the more general focus on modes of subjection, and as such are not given primacy; third, both these aspects are practices, which thus avoids reproducing the dichotomy between theory and practice; fourth, freedom and rationality, commonly taken to presuppose one another, are disassociated; and finally, the 'technological' aspect itself consists of 'forms of rationality' which, in conventional approaches, are more likely to be associated with human agency and contrasted against supposedly more material structures, such as a mode of production or a state.

This Foucauldian way of grappling with the dichotomy of structure versus agency makes more visible the implications and dangers of this Enlightened way of thinking and also alerts us to what is at stake. The dichotomy of structure versus agency has been described as the master dichotomy of Marxism (Anderson 1983: 33); Marxism itself was probably the longest lived and most influential of all the theoretical progeny of the Enlightenment. What is of considerable import in rethinking the dichotomy of structure versus agency, then, is the complex relationship between Foucault and Marxism. This is not the place to launch into a detailed analysis of the influence or otherwise of each for the other. A brief, broad sketch is sufficient for our purpose, which is to suggest that conventional oppositions between thought and reality, theory and practice and, not least, structure and agency, all of which are essential to Marxism and many other modern theories, cannot be maintained if we are to continue with the philosophical task outlined by Kant and repeated by Foucault: the problematization of the present.

## VII Refracting Marx through Foucault

On the one hand, Foucault refused to locate himself in terms of the strictures of that movement which for over a century has laid claim to the mantle of radicalism, and rejected the bulk of its theoretical arsenal. The Marxist theory of history -

a conception of history organized on the narrative model as a great sequence of events caught up in a hierarchy of determinations: individuals are grasped at the interior of this totality which transcends them and plays with them but of which they are perhaps at the same time the badly conscious authors (Foucault 1989: 12) -

was treated as an unfounded hypothesis (Foucault 1989: 15). The 'base-superstructure' dichotomy so fundamental to Marxism in all its variations was dismissed *in toto*, and the emphasis on economic needs and forces disparaged as a mere 'historical generality'; and the reduction of power relations, conceived as primarily repressive, to a ruling class and its State, was held to be yet another example of outdated but enduring theories of sovereignty. Finally, the concept of ideology was treated as peripheral to what Foucault preferred to think of as the politics of truth; and some of Marxism's strategic pronouncements, such as its theory of 'the weakest link', were ridiculed as "barely on a level with the preliminary training given to a sub-lieutenant in the reserves" (Foucault 1980a: 144). Marxism as a whole was likened to "a fish in water ... unable to breathe anywhere else" than in the nineteenth century (OT: 262).

On the other hand, Foucault accepted that

[i]t is impossible at the present time to write history without using a whole range of concepts directly or indirectly linked to Marx's thought and situating oneself within a horizon of thought which has been defined and described by Marx (Foucault 1980a: 53).

Foucault himself made reference to, and use of, elements of a Marxist, particularly Frankfurt School, analysis and critique of modernity, as well as some Marxist terminology,

in his writings up to and including the publication of *Discipline and Punish* (see, for example, Foucault 1971d; in Elders 1974: 170ff; 1977a: 203-217; SP: 210; 1982c: 34; in Raulet 1983: 200; 1988a: 95). On several occasions he suggested, in Marxist fashion, that contemporary forms of rationality and modes of subjection "reside on a base of human practice and human history; and ... since these things have been made, they can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they were made" (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 206; DP: 305; Foucault & Sennett 1982: 9). By 1975, however, Foucault declared himself "completely through with Marx" (in Macey 1993: 348). He also tended to distinguish between Marx and Marxism, negatively associating the latter primarily with its institutionalisation in political parties: "What I desire ... is not so much the defalsification and restitution of a true Marx, but the unburdening and liberation of Marx in relation to party dogma ..." (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 211).

Most importantly, Marx himself was hailed as being, along with Freud, one of the "‘initiators of discursive practices’" who, unlike great authors like Homer who established a discipline, produced the possibility and the rules of formation of other texts (Foucault 1977a: 131) and thus "cleared a space for the introduction of elements other than their own, which, nevertheless, remain within the field of discourse they initiated" (Foucault 1977a: 132). Whatever truths Marx may hold, they are no doubt generated by this fecund feature of his work, among the effects of which is the periodic 'return to the origin', a relentless search amongst successive generations of Marxists for the insights to be extracted from spectres as diverse as the 'early Marx', the 'structuralist Marx', and the 'humanist Marx' (Foucault 1977a: 134-35). The productive power-effects of forms of knowledge like Marxism is that this process constantly introduces internal modifications and as such is "an effective and necessary means of transforming [the meaning and effects of Marxism as a] discursive practice" (Foucault 1977a: 135). This aspect of Marxism bears close affinities with Foucault's oft-professed desire to let loose 'effects of truth' at the heart of our Enlightened present. The relationship between Foucault and Marxism was thus ambivalent: he acknowledged his indirect indebtedness to Marx at the same time as he eschewed what Marxism had become.



The kinds of mutations that might be wrought by an encounter between Foucault and Marxism, particularly the implications of the former's approach for the structure-agency dichotomy, can be explored by means of a re-examination of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 158). One of the effects of Marx's thesis was to firmly divide the world into those who seek to legitimate, and at most reform, the inequalities of the present and those who engage in praxis aimed at their revolutionary overthrow and transcendence. Thought and interpretation are assumed to supply historical actors with knowledge which can inform political practice and social change, Marx being adamant that every form of knowledge which ideologically mystifies the present could not merely be "understood in its contradiction" but also needed to be "revolutionized in practice" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 157). Taking into account that Foucault's work tends to straddle these dichotomies of theory and practice and thought and reality, a Foucauldian fabrication of Marx's thesis might provoke a number of metamorphoses (all of which are conceivable, even if they could not be operationalised, within the discursive practice which Marx bequeathed to us): practical transformation depends on interpretation ("things ... can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they were made"); practical transformation engenders re-interpretation ("It is the totality of discursive or non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false and constitutes it as an object for thought"); and, most importantly, to interpret the world is *also* to change it ("a certain point of view which can be very useful as a tool for analyzing what's going on now - and to change it") (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 206; 1988a: 257; 1984a: 350).

Both Marx and Foucault share a desire to effect changes in the present. Both identify interpretation as an integral part of that process, but while the former treats interpretation as a condition for effecting desirable change, the latter wields interpretation as itself a potentially effective instrument of change. While Marx distinguishes between scientific and ideological thought, but treats them both as products of their context, Foucault

distinguishes between different forms of thought on the basis of their capacity, actual or potential, to bring about political effects and thus treats them as conditions for, or producers of, their context. It is this inherent productivity (one might say, paradoxicality) of an historically peculiar Western reason which entices its practitioners into a never-ending pursuit of its supposedly hidden treasures; it is also this feature which indicates what is at stake in, and what price must be paid by, any genealogical analysis of the present. What, at a simple level, is at stake is the power of a particular discourse; but at a more global level, at stake is the capacity of Western reason to mount a rational critique of the links between its own rationalities and the ancient and all-too-human will to power. Built into these stakes is a profound paradox, pregnant with peril as well as promise: "the paradox of the relations of capacity and power", referring to the fact that, contrary to Enlightenment expectations, the growth of human capabilities and of human autonomy have gone hand in hand with the extension and intensification of relations of power (Foucault 1984a: 47). This is because "disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination" (DP: 138).

Taylor phrases the problem in terms of modern self-identity: "We have to search for a way in which our strongest aspirations towards hypergoods do not extract a price of self-mutilation" (Taylor 1989: 106). Leaving aside the teleological humanism implicit in this, there is a substantial overlap in this respect (though in few others) between the approaches of Taylor and Foucault, who asked: "How can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?" (Foucault 1984a: 47-8). One should in no way interpret what Foucault is saying here as a utopian call to rescue our essential human nature, truths and freedoms from their enthrallment by relations of power; the only thing essentially human about us is the manner in which we have been subjected. On the contrary, he is calling for what most modern theories would deem to be impossible: a critical analysis of the intersection of forms of knowledge and relations of power and their role in the subjection of human beings.

Such a critical analysis is not only possible, it is the only possibility - ever since Kant defined modern philosophy as the problematization of a present, we moderns (in the human sciences) have necessarily careered from one theoretical dichotomy to the next, returning always to the master dichotomy of structure and agency. Such an analysis is as old as the Enlightenment itself: fittingly so, since it is Enlightenment which is (and has always been) under critique. It is no more, and no less, than Enlightenment itself: it delimits the Enlightenment, simultaneously repeating it and making visible its 'other side'; by making visible that which we take for granted, it problematizes and makes strange the view, the viewer and what is under (re)view. Finally, the solution it offers - of experimenting with and reinventing the capabilities of our autonomised selves - does not attempt to stand outside of the problem. Having gone some way towards formulating the problem - that the expansion of human freedoms has been accompanied by the extension of relations of power - it remains now to investigate whether this is a coincidence to be deplored or an exigency to be explored. The following two chapters will attempt to apply the insights of Foucault's genealogical approach to his own historical and analytical account of the character of modern relations of power.

## CHAPTER THREE: POWER AS SOVEREIGNTY AND THE HISTORY OF DISCIPLINE

### *1 Power as sovereignty*

Conventional histories of political philosophy recount the familiar tale of how the government of some by others has progressed, over several centuries, from autocratic forms towards increasingly popular and democratic modes of rule. At least since the Middle Ages, and specifically since the twelfth century resurrection of Roman Law, the traditional questions with which political philosophy has concerned itself have been formulated in terms of sovereignty: the King and the prerogatives and limits of royal power. Jean Bodin's ruminations on the concept of sovereignty, Machiavelli's precepts to a Prince bent on establishing political order out of chaos, and, not least, the Hobbesian account of the contractual constitution of a sovereign state out of its component subjects, have provided at least the starting-point if not a substantial proportion of much modern political theory (de Jouvenel 1952: 34-46; Gray 1995: 159; Berki 1977). It is these theories of right or sovereignty, ostensibly concerned only with the centralisation of political power in the state but complexly coupled with the development of power technologies aimed at governing individuals (Foucault 1981e: 227), that Foucault referred to as the embodiment of the prevailing "juridico-discursive" conception of power.

Starting out from a set of assumptions about 'Man' as an autonomous individual or collective agent, conventional political thought conceives of the nature of the state as a constituted phenomenon with law as its power.

[T]he juridical model of sovereignty .... presupposes the individual as the subject of natural laws or primitive powers [;] ... sets out to account for the genesis, in ideal terms, of the State [; and] ... makes law the fundamental manifestation of power (Foucault 1980d: 15).

As de Jouvenel explains, all theories "which explain and justify political authority by its efficient cause .... are those of Sovereignty" (De Jouvenel 1952: 34); and this sovereign power, commonly identified with the state regardless of whether the latter is divine or popular in its derivation, is taken to be a right, legitimately possessed and exercised (de Jouvenel 1952: 39-40). Lukes elaborates by arguing that, in all modern theories, "power is attributed to (individual or collective) human agents" (Lukes 1977: 6); in addition, with the possible exceptions of the work of Parsons and Arendt, the tendency is also to treat power as restrictive and determining: "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests" (Lukes 1974: 34; see also Hall 1984: 14-18, and Clegg 1989: 156-59).

This perennial interest in the rights and powers of sovereign individuals in relation to those of sovereign states was an indication, for Foucault, that, despite numerous reformulations of the problem (from Machiavellian to contractarian, liberal and Marxist), "[i]n political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king" (HS: 88-9). The juridical problem of sovereignty has persisted up to and including the modern period in which, even with the emergence of a political science, it has become "more acute than ever" (Foucault 1979a: 19): Foucault believed that this conception of a power that declares 'Thou shalt not' is not limited to classical theories of sovereignty (Hobbes and Locke) let alone superseded by later modern doctrines such as liberalism and Marxism, but is so widespread as to be discernible in psychoanalytic theory (Freud and Lacan) and even in "the contemporary analysis of power in terms of libido" (a reference to the work of Foucault's friend and fellow philosopher Gilles Deleuze) (Foucault 1980a: 140).

Under this "juridico-discursive" conception, power is assumed to be rule-based or law-like but above all negative: it represses, excludes, limits, refuses, censors, blocks, divides and rejects. A grim force, it is believed to be homogeneous and centralised, in the hands of a ruler, a state and its apparatuses, an elite or a ruling class; in such locations, self-conscious sovereign individuals and groups are seen to possess and exercise it intentionally and

comprehensively in a unitary, top-down and dominating fashion over comparatively powerless others; the intrinsic freedom of those who are dominated is as a consequence either (justifiably) limited or, at times, (illegitimately) curtailed by prohibitory laws and customs, and should they transgress they are liable to be punished; nevertheless, they may resist and even overcome their oppression, by organising themselves into a counterpower; power is also assumed to be external to, and tending to the distortion of, knowledge, thus generating distinctions between manifest truth and unsubstantiated belief, between science and ideology and between the 'disinterested' theorist and the 'interested' ruler; and this last, power-distorted knowledge, is taken to mask the true nature of things, thus concealing oppression, generating alienation and making conscientisation and resistance difficult (HS: 82-5; 1980a: 139-40; DP: 27-8).

This conventional account of power can be illustrated with reference to Marxist theories of the state. Like liberalism and the classical 'reason of state' that preceded it, Marxist theories of the state (which, apart from Marx himself, can be validly attributed only to Miliband, Poulantzas and, to a lesser extent, Gramsci) assume that "ideally and by nature, power must be exercised in accordance with a fundamental lawfulness" (HS: 87). Even though it sees the legal system that it criticises as merely a class violence aimed at justifying social inequality and exploitation, Marxism does not challenge but reinforces the conventional understanding of power as sovereign and repressive.

The excessive value attributed to the problem of the State is expressed, basically, in two ways: the one form, immediate, affective and tragic, is the lyricism of the *monstre froid* we see confronting us; but there is a second way of over-valuing the problem of the State, one which is paradoxical because apparently reductionist: it is the form of analysis that consists in reducing the State to a certain number of functions, such as for instance the development of productive forces and the reproduction of relations of production, and yet this reductionist vision of the role of the State in relation to everything else makes it absolutely essential as a target to be attacked and a privileged position to be taken over (Foucault 1979a: 20).

This essentialist conception of the nature of the state as a relatively autonomous mechanism attempting to maintain bourgeois class domination by repressing opposition



and reproducing the conditions of market production is, for Foucault, far too simplistic to constitute an adequate account of the functioning of modern power relations, primarily because it involves "a sort of schematism ... - and which incidentally is not to be found in Marx - that consists of locating power in the State apparatus, making this into the major, privileged, capital and almost unique instrument of the power of one class over another" (Foucault 1980a: 72).

Against this approach, Foucault was adamant that all roads to power in modern societies do not lead to the state nor to any other comparable institution; the state and its apparatuses, as well as governments, classes, parties, institutions, constitutions, Bills of Rights and rules of law are rather "only the terminal forms power takes" (HS: 92; SP: 213). He warned that any analysis of power relations in terms of specific and often institutionalised rationalities (such as state apparatuses, schools and families), though legitimate, must, firstly, take care to avoid confusing power relations with institutional mechanisms of reproduction and, secondly, recognise that a power relation's "fundamental point of anchorage ... is to be found outside the institution" (SP: 222; HS: 95,96). While "fairly closely related" to power structures (Foucault 1988a: 265), institutions are only forms in which relations of power (and forms of knowledge) materialise: traditional predispositions, legal structures, customs and fashions, as in the family; apparatuses with specific loci, regulations, hierarchies, and relatively autonomous functions, as in schools and military institutions; and complex systems with multiple apparatuses like the state, with the function of general surveillance "and, to a certain extent also, the distribution of all power relations in a given social ensemble" (SP: 223; 1989: 188). Distinguishing his work from that of Goffman which focused on 'total institutions' *as institutions* (Goffman 1968), Foucault declared himself more interested in "the history of rationality as it works in institutions and in the behavior of people" (Foucault 1980e: 4).

The state may be the "most important" form of power, and "in a certain way all other forms of power relation must refer to it", but "this is not because they are derived from it" but because "power relations have come more and more under state control (although this

state control has not taken the same form in pedagogical, judicial, economic, or family systems)" (SP: 224). For example,

although the police as an institution were certainly organized in the form of a state apparatus, and although this was certainly linked directly to the centre of political sovereignty, the type of power that it exercises, the mechanisms it operates and the elements to which it applies them are specific (DP: 213).

Hence, without wishing "to minimise the importance and effectiveness of State power", Foucault felt that "excessive insistence on its playing an exclusive role leads to the risk of overlooking all the mechanisms and effects of power which don't pass directly via the State apparatus, yet often sustain the State more effectively than its own institutions, enlarging and maximising its effectiveness" (Foucault 1980a: 72-3; see also 1980a: 122,158; and 1977a: 213). Certainly, the idea that fathers, husbands, employers and teachers 'represent' a state power which in turn 'represents' a class power "takes no account of the complexity of mechanisms at work" (Foucault 1980a: 188).

Nevertheless, notions of power as residing within sovereign and predominantly repressive institutions remain widely accepted and practiced in modern society for several reasons: they disguise real relations of domination, and justify their necessity; they conceal the ubiquity of power relations, and obscure the venal conditions of possibility of modern liberal democracies; and they help regulate and energise these disciplinary conditions even as they are being colonised by them. First, "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask [Sic.] a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms" (HS: 86; 1989: 98-9), and the role of the theory of right has in part been to mask or "efface the domination intrinsic to power" (DPS: 231):

Right, in other words, exactly because it is *anachronistic*, has the *contemporary* ideological function of masking disciplinary domination and thus contributes to it (Fraser 1989: 58; emphasis in the original).

The face of power is too terrible to reveal in full, not because power relations *are* only about domination but because to believe that they are not, that power relations are only a pure limit placed on our otherwise infinite desires, leaves intact "a measure of freedom", slight but enough to ensure the continued acquiescence of the oppressed (HS: 86).

Second, this is linked to the degree of effectiveness of contemporary structures of power: we tolerate and accord legitimacy to relations of power wearing the accoutrements of sovereignty to the extent to which we fear the chaos which allegedly will result from the absence of the King, whether he takes the form of autocracy or democracy. For example, the effectiveness of the police, that apparatus of the state closest to the dream of the managed society, is intertwined not only with the amount of confidence and trust publicly invested in them, but also the intensity of the threat:

What makes the presence and control of the police ["these uniformed men, who ... carry arms, ... demand our papers [and] prowl on our doorsteps"] tolerable for the population, if not fear of the criminal? (Foucault 1980a: 47).

As the myth of the transition from a state of nature to society would have us believe, we relinquish some of our powers to others to ward off the greater fear of abdicating all our freedom - despite the fact that the state of our freedom has always been a product of these very powers which we arrogate to ourselves but which surpass us.

Third, the foundations of modern society could not survive the revelation that relations of power extend well beyond the state, operating outside (and are even constitutive) of the formal laws and rights intended to contain and regulate them. "The presence of the law is its concealment" (Foucault 1990b: 33):

Power in the West is what displays itself the most, and thus what hides itself the best: what we have called 'political life' since the 19th century is the manner in which power presents its image (a little like the court in the monarchic era). Power is neither there, nor is that how it functions (Foucault 1977b: 157).

Fourth, though Foucault clearly accepts that the rise to power of the bourgeoisie was "masked by the establishment of an explicit, coded and formally egalitarian juridical framework, made possible by the organization of a parliamentary, representative regime", these formal laws and rights were themselves made possible by the spread of disciplinary procedures which "constituted the other, dark side of these processes" (DP: 222). Thus (bourgeois, as distinct from monarchical) sovereignty does not veil disciplinary procedures as much as being produced and utilised by them.

It follows that, fifth, it is equally mistaken to treat conceptions of law, right and sovereignty merely as 'ideological' mystifications which conceal the 'essential' brutality commonly attributed to power; their persistence in the modern epoch is also attributable to their regulative and strategic utility as "polymorphic" and recurrent (Foucault 1981d: 356), though perhaps ultimately "transitory" (HS: 89), instruments of criticism not only of monarchical institutions but also of their democratic successors, criticisms which assume that power relations are fundamentally lawful (HS: 88; 1980a: 141). In the form of liberalism, for example, power as sovereignty constitutes "both ... a schema for the regulation of governmental practice and ... a theme for sometimes radical opposition to such practice" (Foucault 1981d: 356; see also Rose 1993: 284).

Finally, and most importantly, the prevalence of the conception of power as sovereignty can be explained by the fact that its very mechanisms are being colonised and penetrated by "new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus" (HS: 89). Theories of sovereignty, by revealing what they take to be the transcendent principle underlying and justifying power, in fact in themselves "tend to render subjects obedient" (de Jouvenel 1952: 45). That sovereignty is becoming another tactic in the arsenal of these new methods of power is something to which theories of sovereignty are themselves blind, since by centring their focus upon states, parliaments, elites, bureaucracies, patriarchy or ruling classes they prove unable to explain or account for "the complexity of mechanisms



at work, their specificity, nor the effects of inter-dependence, complementarity, and sometimes of blockage, which this very diversity [of relations of power] produces" (Foucault 1980a: 188).

The persistence of this "juridico-discursive" conception of power thus has a great deal to do with its naturalisation as a conventional wisdom, its necessary concealment in liberal-democratic societies which pride themselves on their ability to regulate and hold power in check, and its practical as opposed to analytical usefulness. It follows that to call it into question is to threaten how we conceive of our present and to endorse changes in our hitherto taken-for-granted political practices and beliefs. To sum up: "the juridical model of sovereignty" (Foucault 1980d: 15) ought to be criticised and abandoned not merely because it is inadequate but because it is both a dangerous weapon and a stake of contention in contemporary power struggles.

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

In order to free ourselves from the juridico-discursive conception of power, Foucault suggested that we need to develop an "analytics", as opposed to a 'theory', of power relations (HS: 82), or at least "theory as a toolkit" (Foucault 1980a: 145). In other words, instead of attempting to say *what power is*, we must attempt to show *how it operates* in concrete and historical frameworks, in the sense of "By what means is it [power] exercised?" and "What happens when individuals exert (as they say) power over others?" (SP: 217). Similarly,

*how* does one punish? This was the same procedure as I had used when dealing with madness: Rather [*Sic.*] than asking *what*, in a given period, is regarded as sanity or insanity, as mental illness or normal behaviour, I wanted to ask *how* these divisions are operated (Foucault 1981f: 4, emphasis in the original; see also DPS: 229).

Each of Foucault's books constitutes a case study of how power relations have functioned in relation to specific experiences such as madness, sickness, punishment and sexuality. While any attempt to generalise from these specific manifestations of power would be dangerous, it is nevertheless possible and, arguably, useful in an experimental sense, to distill from Foucault's *oeuvre* as a whole a rough periodisation of Western technologies of power from ancient times to the present.

What are the intended effects of an 'analytics' of power relations? Similar to the effects of writing a history of the present, or publishing documents such as the Riviere dossier: "to draw a map ... of those combats, to reconstruct these confrontations and battles, to rediscover the interaction of those discourses as weapons of attack and defense in the relations of power and knowledge" (Foucault 1978a: xi). Since, as argued in Chapter Two, different maps engender different territories, the drawing of a map will not only assist further exploration but, more importantly, reconfigure the terrain of power relations. In addition, the utility of analysing the historical conditions of possibility of modern disciplinary relations of power is to be found not in the capacity to propound an alternative universal theory of power, but in illuminating the changing context which makes such theories inapplicable. On this basis, we can begin to rethink relations of power against and in spite of prevailing theories of sovereignty and demonstrate the deficiencies of a view which reduces power relations to forms of domination completely independent of the autonomy they are said to restrict. In turn, this will allow us (in Chapter Four) to explore the intrinsic role of freedom, resistance and struggle within relations of power, and on this basis to suggest an alternative, non-foundational conception of power understood as relations of strategy and government. It will also allow us (in Chapter Five) to bring to the fore the ramifications of this alternative conception with regard to the production of forms of knowledge such as the human sciences, of rituals of truth like the confession and of the individual human subject itself.



## ***II Truth and power in Western political rationalities***

A significant finding of Foucault's work is that the processes whereby some people discipline or govern others are frequently closely connected to procedures of identity-constitution or self-discipline. "For example, if we take educational institutions, we realize that one is managing others and teaching them to manage themselves" (Foucault 1984a: 369-70). As Foucault himself summed it up, in his work from *Madness and Civilisation* to *Discipline and Punish* he had "tried to show how we have indirectly constituted ourselves through the exclusion of some others: criminals, mad people, and so on". In his last works, chiefly, *The History of Sexuality*, he turned to the question of "[h]ow did we directly constitute our identity through ethical techniques of the self which developed through antiquity down to now?" (Foucault 1988b: 146). According to Foucault, "pastoral" techniques aimed at governing oneself and others originated in early Middle Eastern societies, were given a particular gloss by Greek and Roman practices of mastery of the self, and then were taken further by early Christian monastic and penitential practices. At some point during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these various "technologies of the self", central to which was the practice of confession, fused together with more global processes of political centralisation and population management into a complex system of relations which Foucault referred to as modern "disciplinary" power.

From the start, Western political rationalities have been characterised by the intimate coexistence of relations of power with forms of knowledge. In this regard, Foucault wanted to

show how self-control is integrated into the practice of controlling others. ... [H]ow is an 'experience' formed in which the relationship to oneself and the relationship to others are linked together? (Foucault 1988a: 258).

In all those experiences that Foucault himself examined - madness, sickness, punishment and sexuality - technologies for governing oneself and others are bound together by the

notion that the truth of these experiences are, firstly, internal to the self and, secondly, can be discovered, hermeneutically extracted, and exploited through the intervention of others.

The idea that certain truths are only to be found in the relation of human beings to themselves, is a thread which runs, albeit unevenly, throughout the history of Western thought. Apocryphally, this 'relation to self' is said to derive from the oracle at Delphi: 'Know thyself'. Equally apocryphally, perhaps, the same saying is attributed to Socrates (Foucault 1987b: 131). St. Augustine phrased it as follows: "In the inward man dwells truth" (Taylor 1989: 129); and the thread is also clearly evident among twelfth century scholastics such as Aelred of Rievaulx and William of Saint Thierry:

The Answer of the Delphic Apollo was famous among the Greeks: 'Man, know yourself'. The same thing was said by Solomon, or rather Christ in the Song of Songs: 'If you do not know yourself, go forth' (William of Saint Thierry, in Morris 1972: 64).

The importance of the Western obsession with truths that are deemed to be internal to ourselves cannot be overstated. The fact that our yearning for truth is nowhere near being satisfied even after nearly three millenia have passed almost suggests that "existence is so empty and fragile that it can be endured only by the illusion of a search for its secret" (Eco 1990: 622). It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that it was on the basis of this obsession that Western scientific values, political forms, moral customs and economic practices have come to dominate the rest of the planet. This obsession links together relations of power, forms of knowledge, feelings of desire and procedures of subjection, including mechanisms for governing others and technologies of the self. It assumes that the truth is good and worth knowing; that it is discoverable but not transparent, and is often mixed up with belief, error and desire; that it requires rigorous procedures which can plumb the murky depths of the self (or the world) and distinguish between the true and the false; and that such procedures often require the intervention or assistance of others, who can validate one's findings. All these assumptions are combined at the heart of that which today characterises the majority of our taken-for-granted beliefs and practices: "the

formidable injunction to tell what one is". This injunction is the product of "an immense labor to which the West has submitted generations in order to produce - while other forms of work ensured the accumulation of capital - men's subjection: their constitution as subjects in both senses of the word" (HS: 60).

### ***III Pagan and Christian pastoralism***

Foucault traced the origins of this powerful injunction back to the ancient societies of Egypt, Assyria and Judaea, in which a king, a leader or, especially for the Hebrews, God, was likened to a shepherd leading a flock of sheep. Similarly, the Platonic conception of the relationship between God and human beings was like "that between a pilot and the passengers of a boat" (Foucault 1980e: 5). However, unlike the great religions, the territorial focus and finite nature of Greek and Roman practices of political leadership

entailed neither the right nor the possibility of a government which would be understood as an activity of attempting to guide individuals throughout their lives, and placing them under an authority of one who is responsible for what they do and what happens to them (Foucault 1981c: 239).

The shepherd's power over the flock required instead his immediate (and, since early Christianity, permanent) presence, authority, guidance, vigilance, responsibility and, if necessary, sacrifice in order to ensure both their general welfare and individual salvation (Foucault 1981e: 227-30). This pastoral practice thus "involves a power which individualizes by attributing, in an essential paradox, as much value to a single lamb as to the entire flock" (Foucault 1981c: 239; Morris 1972: 10). One might say that it is on the basis of this paradox that Western technologies of power over almost two millennia have followed both an individualising trajectory (concerned with the single lamb) and a totalising trajectory (concerned with the entire flock), tendencies which over the past few centuries have come together: on the one hand, "the development of power techniques oriented towards individuals and intended to rule them in a continuous and permanent

way", and on the other hand, the centralisation of political power in the state (Foucault 1981e: 227).

Equally significantly, pastoral power depended for its exercise on a knowledge not only of the actions of 'Each and Everyone' (Foucault 1980e: 4) but also their minds, souls and innermost secrets - hence "it implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it" (SP: 214). Such detailed knowledge of all members of a community was obtained through the use of particular instruments: techniques of self-examination and, ultimately, of confession, which were intended to enable an individual "to open up entirely to its director - to unveil to him the depths of the soul" (Foucault 1981e: 238). Inherent in such pastoral relations of power was thus the increasingly permanent role played by authoritative others (particularly that strata of society which we today call the intellectuals) in initiating, mediating, guiding and adjudicating the power-effects of these technologies which individuals direct at the bodies and souls of themselves and others (Bauman 1987: 10-20).

In contrast to later Christian understandings, for Plato and the Stoics the main emphasis was placed on progressive self-mastery as a means of acquiring and assimilating the truth of the cosmic order (Foucault 1988b: 35). Foucault argued that the Greeks made a clear distinction between 'know yourself' and 'take care of yourself', with the former in fact premised on and subordinated to the latter (Foucault 1988b: 19-20; 1984a: 359):

in order to practice freedom properly, it was necessary to care for self, both in order to know one's self [Plato] ... and to improve one's self, ... to master the appetites that risk engulfing you [Stoicism] (Foucault 1987b: 116).

"One cannot care for self without knowledge", but in addition, "[t]o care for self is to fit one's self out with these truths" (Foucault 1987b: 116). Thus, while the modern search for truth within the self can be traced back as far as Plato, who derived our power to act morally from our Idea of the Good (Taylor 1989: 143), the Stoics added an important detail to this argument by linking self-knowledge and ethical behaviour to the mediating

intervention of an external master: "For Plato, one must discover the truth that is within one. For the Stoics, truth is not within oneself but in the *logoi*, the teaching of the teachers" (Foucault 1988b: 35). Nevertheless, for the Greeks (though not for the Christians) the master-disciple relationship was circumstantial, provisional and did not imply complete obedience (Foucault 1993a: 205).

For both Plato and the Stoics, the process of learning, memorising or 'fitting one's self out' with the principles and rules which would allow one to act ethically required particular techniques of care for the self including an increasingly important role for writing (both notes to oneself and letters to others), as well as meditating about anticipated events, testing one's memory, interpreting one's dreams, and putting oneself to the test in situations which might call for one to abstain from various forms of gratification, suffer privations or undergo rituals of purification (Foucault 1988b: 27-39). In addition, the art of listening, so as to distinguish between truth and dissimulation, in oneself and in another, becomes important for the Stoics, to the extent that, for Philo of Alexandria, listening required a particular posture (Foucault 1988b: 32). This first major type of self-examination - "self-examination with respect to the way our thoughts relate to rules (Seneca)" (Foucault 1988b: 46) - involved administering and taking stock of oneself, pursuing virtue via a life of simplicity, meditation and guidance by a mentor (Morris 1972: 15), and rectifying one's mistakes in the light of fundamental precepts (Foucault 1993a: 210), rather than judging one's own past (Foucault 1993a: 207; Foucault 1988b: 33).

The ultimate aim was to internalise the truths and principles of right conduct to the extent that "[y]ou will have become the *logos* or the *logos* will have become you" (Foucault 1987b: 117). The goal of the Greek schools of philosophy was focused more upon "the transformation of the individual", arming the individual with enough precepts to permit him to comport himself appropriately, than upon the teaching or elaboration of theory (Foucault 1993a: 205). The care for the self involved *ethos*,



the deportment and the way to behave. It was the subject's mode of being and a certain manner of acting visible to others. One's *ethos* was seen by his dress, by his bearing, by his gait, by the poise with which he reacts to events, etc. (Foucault 1987b: 117).

"Care for self [also] ... implies complex relations with others": firstly, it implies "the art of governing" others (one's wife, one's children, one's home); secondly, "care for self renders one competent" politically and socially; thirdly, "in order to really care for self, one must listen to the teachings of a master" (Foucault 1987b: 118). "[T]he one who cared for himself correctly found himself, by that very fact, in a measure to behave correctly in relationship to others and for others" (Foucault 1987b: 118). Thus the care for the self was "a way of controlling and limiting" the abuse of power. A tyrant who illegitimately and unduly imposes his whims on others "is in reality a slave to his appetites", whereas "the good ruler is precisely the one who exercises his power correctly, i.e., by exercising at the same time his power on himself" (Foucault 1987b: 119).

Conventional wisdom suggests that Christianity set in place a far more severe and austere array of moral precepts than the ancient world had experienced up to that time. For Foucault, however, the most important changes between Greeks and Christians were not in the code but in the ethics, in one's relation to oneself (Foucault 1984a: 355):

between paganism and Christianity, the opposition is not between tolerance and austerity, but between a form of austerity which is linked to an aesthetics of existence and other forms of austerity which are linked to the necessity of renouncing the self and deciphering its truth (Foucault 1984a: 366; 1987a: 31-2).

And as Morris has argued, in the writings of the eleventh century theologian and scholar Peter Damiani "the purpose of renouncing the world was precisely to know oneself in one's own true being" (Morris 1972: 31); renunciation did not replace but reinforced the search for truth within the self.



Early Christianity drew heavily upon Stoicism, especially the latter's emphasis on subjecting oneself to the teachings of a master. In this instance, however, the search for truth within the self is aimed not at self-mastery but at contemplating, and expunging all that cannot be said to emanate from, the ultimate spiritual master, God himself (Foucault 1993a: 216; 1988b: 45; Taylor 1989: 139). This reflective renunciation of the self is coupled to a modification of the Stoic relation between disciple and master, in that early Christianity aimed not merely to internalise the teachings of others but in fact to externalise one's inner truths, on a permanent basis, to others with greater experience, wisdom or seniority (Foucault 1993a: 216, 219; 1988b: 44, 47): "'confess, to your spiritual guide, each of your thoughts'" (Foucault 1993a: 204). As such, "Christianity is a confession": it involves obligations not only to hold as true a dogma and certain books as well as decisions by certain authorities, but also to know one's own thoughts, faults and temptations, "to bear public or private witness against oneself" (Foucault 1988b: 40; 1993a: 211). Christianity was also "much more concerned with thoughts than with actions" (Foucault 1993a: 216), and particularly with intentions. Indeed, for Peter Abelard, sin lay solely in the intention (Morris 1972: 75). Moreover, for Cassian, the very act of verbalisation - or *exagoreusis* (Foucault 1993a: 220) - contained "a specific virtue of verification", for to blush or to try to hide one's thoughts was a sure sign that evil must inhabit them (Foucault 1993a: 220). However, "the price of the permanent verbal was to make everything that couldn't be expressed into a sin" (Foucault 1988b: 48).

The confession thus makes its appearance early on the stage of Western history, eventually becoming tightly meshed into the Western will to truth, and constituting a condition of possibility for the development of modern disciplinary power relations and the human sciences. At first, however, confession and self-examination were applied to no more than an elite. Far more important, though not dissimilar, were penitential rites and the rigours of monastic life: in the first centuries of Christianity, "penance was not an act" but a long-term "status" (Foucault 1993a: 212; 1988b: 41) involving *exomologesis*, the dramatic, theatrical 'publication of oneself' as a sinner, as one who prefers spiritual death or martyrdom to earthly life, and hence involved "a kind of representation of death"

(Foucault 1993a: 214). The second major type of self-examination identified by Foucault, then, is "the examination of self with respect to the relation between the hidden thought and an inner impurity" (Foucault 1988b: 46), aimed at the conversion, renunciation or "rupture of the self" (Foucault 1993a: 224 n.47).

More importantly, though, in this chastity-oriented, Cassian Christian asceticism "a process of 'subjectivization'" is apparent, a process based not on an ethics of physical self-control but on the development of complex hermeneutic techniques "for analyzing and diagnosing thought, its origins, its qualities, its dangers, its potential for temptation and all the dark forces that can lurk behind the mask it may assume" (Foucault 1988a: 240).

Thought about thought, an entire tradition wider than philosophy, has taught us that thought leads us to the deepest interiority (Foucault 1990b: 13).

This hermeneutics, which aimed to discover the reality (a power, the devil) hidden 'inside' the thought, "the presence of somebody else in me" (Foucault 1993a: 227 n.44), constitutes, believed Foucault, "the first time in history that thoughts are considered as possible objects for an analysis" (Foucault 1993a: 227 n.44). In other words, instead of, or even in spite of and because of the sexual prohibitions and renunciations imposed by Christian morality (many of which in fact were of Stoic origin - Foucault 1980a: 191), a process is initiated which embodies the development and the productive opening up of a whole hitherto unexplored area: thought itself. Foucault does not explicitly say so, but it was around this moment in history that the Western will to truth began to look inward, not merely towards conduct and the body but also, and most crucially, towards discourse and the soul (Gurevich 1995: 91-2). Philosophy, as a discourse producing thought about thought, perhaps does not begin with Plato - but with St. Augustine!

It was only between 1000 and 1200, however, that the universal adoption of individual confession by the Catholic Church took place (Morris 1972: 73). Other aspects of individualism also emerged: the twelfth century saw the development for the first time in

its full form of the art of autobiography, as well as the development of portraiture, not least in the form of royal tomb sculptings (Morris 1972: 79, 89). Individualism, as Foucault and others have shown, is not a modern invention but a phenomenon with a long and ancient history, albeit understood in very different ways at different times; in twelfth century European society, for example, economic growth and the expansion of higher education "faced the individual with choices" which a century earlier would have been unimaginable (Morris 1972: 47; Gurevich 1995: 112). "It was a vigorous, mobile society which generated, like our own age, both optimism and anxiety" (Morris 1972: 48). Indeed, one might say that mutations in social relations were the conditions of possibility for the (re)discovery of the individual at different times in Western history: at the brink of the modern era, for example, demographic expansions, the proliferation of disciplines and the hundred-fold multiplication of choices facing subjects allowed for the emergence of the figure of 'Man'.

An essential ingredient in this emergence was the evolving confession itself. Transmuted through an ascetic and monastic setting, by the thirteenth century the confession had been established as a major ritual. Without reducing Christian moralities to a model which emphasises codes of behaviour (since 'ethics-oriented' forms of subjectivation have often functioned alongside them), Foucault suggests that the organisation of the penitential system, from thirteenth century to the Reformation, closely conformed to this quasi-judicial model in which the ethical subject referred his or her conduct to a set of laws enforced by authorities (Foucault 1987a: 29-30). "The truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power" (HS: 58-9), and was associated with the shift from where "the individual was vouched for by the reference of others and the demonstration of his ties to the commonweal (family, allegiance, protection)", to a situation where one's status, identity and value was granted not by another but by oneself, where one's authentication took place through "the discourse of truth he was able or obliged to pronounce concerning himself" (HS: 58). Long before Kantian man shrugged off the tutelage of others, the individual was already being assembled by the Christian confessional.

#### ***IV Reason of state***

During "the ten great centuries of Christian Europe" pastoral technologies remained secondary and limited, conditioned as they were on an especially urban experience then in decline, a certain level of culture among both pastor and flock, and personal bonds different to those developed under feudalism (Foucault 1981e: 240). In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, these technologies underwent an institutional crisis consequent on the general questioning of ways of governing oneself and others at the end of feudalism (Foucault 1981c: 239). New forces - indeed, an entire new world - appeared on the horizon. A new form of political rationality began to take shape, in the context of the formation of the great territorial monarchies, Catholic and Protestant traditions of pastoral care, a revival of Stoic practices of self-government (Taylor 1989: 159), and an increasing concern with the government of children. What was required was "a new concept of social control ... together with a new formula for the legitimation of political authority" (Bauman 1987: 25). At first, this new political rationality took the form of 'reason of state', through various treatises on the art of government which took the emerging modern state as their object. Consequent upon the collapse of feudal political structures which had been understood to be divinely-designed, it became possible not only to question this collapse but, more importantly, to propose human-designed remedies, which took the form of "a 'social contract', a legislator or design-drawing despot" (Bauman 1987: 54).

Alongside but to a greater degree than the theories of sovereignty being developed at the same time by Bodin, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, 'reason of state' concerned itself with the mundane practices and tactics of government. For the most part this art of government was formulated in relation to Machiavelli's seminal work, which was interpreted as positing "the Prince in a relation of externality and singularity and consequently of transcendence to his principality" (Foucault 1979a: 7; see also Pocock

1975: 161-64, 185). It followed from this that the link between the Prince and his principality was fragile and threatened both internally (by subjects who had no *a priori* reason to accept the rule of the Prince) and externally (by other Princes); and it was concluded that the aim of relations of power are to strengthen and protect this link (Foucault 1979a: 8; Pocock 1975: 198; Berki 1977: 124). One's government of oneself (morality), the government of a family (oeconomy) and the government of a state (politics) were conceived as interconnected, and increasing importance was given to those factors that might facilitate practices of government: pedagogical and ethical technologies of self-formation aimed at individualising subjects, and policing mechanisms directed at entire populations (Foucault 1979a: 9-10; Bauman 1987: 59-60). Internal and external affairs of state meshed together ever more tightly:

The classical age saw the birth of the great political and military strategy by which nations confronted each other's economic and demographic forces; but it also saw the birth of meticulous military and political tactics by which the control of bodies and individual forces was exercised within states (DP: 168).

These individualising and totalising tendencies both conditioned and were reinforced by the crystallisation of a new historical perception of inter-state struggles for survival, consequent upon the effacement of the hitherto dominant theme of imperial Rome and the spread of republicanism (Calhoun 1995: 237). In this early modern world, "the principal difficulty faced is the mobilization of the forces and rational techniques which permit State intervention" (Foucault 1981c: 240; 1988b: 152), and such mobilisation and intervention is essential in order both to guarantee the state through alliances and military strength (leading to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648), and to increase its forces from within by means of a police technology (Foucault 1981c: 240-41).

For the theorists of the art of government, such as Guillaume de La Perriere, "government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end" (quoted by Foucault 1979a: 10): 'things', here, refer not only to the territory and subjects of the Prince (as in the theory of sovereignty), but primarily to their interrelations; and the 'end'

envisaged is no longer the ancient 'common good' of obedience to the law, to the sovereign and to God, but instead 'good government', which in turn was seen as multiple (falling under the auspices of fathers, superiors and teachers as well as the specifically political authorities), as internal to the state (Foucault 1979a: 9), and as involving an informed and tactical - as opposed to divinely ordained - use of the law (Foucault 1979a: 13). Thus, this new and pragmatic political rationality, "instead of seeking its foundation in transcendental rules, cosmological models or philosophical-moral ideas" (Foucault 1979a: 14), was premised on the existence of the state: "the art of governing is rational, if reflexion causes it to observe the nature of what is governed - here, the *state*" (Foucault 1981e: 243, emphasis in the original; 1988b: 149; 1981d: 355).

While the development of 'reason of state' was on the one hand delayed by the exigencies of war, financial crises and the pre-eminence of the concept of sovereignty (Foucault 1979a: 15), on the other hand it paralleled and was assisted by the voracious demand on the part of the emerging modern state for greater knowledge of its own expanding affairs. Significant among the new (human *and* 'inhuman') sciences associated with this demand was statistics, the science of the state (Foucault 1981e: 246; Bauman 1987: 60; Giddens 1991: 42). 'Reason of state', as an art of government which is simultaneously an analysis and an application of that analysis, also readily lent itself to being assimilated into the *Polizeiwissenschaft* (police science) of the eighteenth century (Foucault 1981e: 252). The most prominent feature of this ever-closer correlation of power and knowledge was no doubt the *Encyclopédie*: an encyclopedia, with its never-ending cross-references and proliferation of interpretations, was much more in keeping with the contemporary demand for the production of effective and useful knowledge than a dictionary (such as Bayle's), with its attempt to pin down the meanings of words (Bauman 1993: 115). It was thus fitting that *les philosophes* dreamed of their *Encyclopédie* as manifesting order and authority: its vast accumulation of knowledge was conceived of as "a grand and noble avenue, stretching into the distance, and along which one would find other avenues, arranged in an orderly manner and leading off to isolated and remote objects by the easiest and quickest route" (Diderot, in Hamilton 1992: 27; see also Bauman 1987: 55).



In this vein, it is also instructive to note that, contrary to the conventional wisdom that Enlightenment thought represented the ideology of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, the audience of the *Encyclopédie*, that centrepiece of the Enlightenment obsession with knowledge as power, was in fact composed as much of new state functionaries as of traditional elites (Hamilton 1992: 29).

[M]anufacturers and merchants showed remarkably little interest in [the *Encyclopédie*], or indeed in literature of any kind; for the most part, subscribers were royal officials, parlementaires, provincial administrators, lawyers, professionals, and others of wealth (Wuthnow 1989: 204).

The true patrons and beneficiaries of the Enlightenment were thus not the manufacturing and merchant classes but the potentates of the old order in tandem with the technicians of the emerging modern state: "public officials, administrators, parliamentary representatives, courtiers, lawyers, professionals, military officers, men and women of leisure, university faculty, and in some cases clergy associated with the hierarchies of state churches" (Wuthnow 1989: 312). This "rising elite, distinguished by education and technical merit", was to this general extent part of a broader bourgeoisie, but its defining feature was "the vital connection it had to the central governing agencies of its respective societies" (Wuthnow 1989: 313; Bauman 1987: 31-33).

Moreover, the state in the Enlightenment not only shaped the resources to be made available for intellectual pursuits, but was itself a constitutive element of Enlightenment discourse: "From the beginning, questions of the public good, the relations of political issues to the scholarly life, and the relevance of knowledge to the state were to play an important role in the Enlightenment" (Wuthnow 1989: 172). The modern state reformed college instruction and established academies; and provided patronage for scholars (scientists first became important not in the contexts of universities or industries but by providing administrative services and expertise for an expanding state). The state to some extent became a subject in its own right, in that it played a major role in advancing the

publishing industry, and itself constituted or created much of the market for Enlightenment literature; its shadow touched even the Paris salons through associations between the women who ran them and state officials (Wuthnow 1989: 181-85).

This close relationship between Enlightenment thought and the emerging modern state, each of which has been hugely responsible for making the present what it is, is simply one example of the intersection, during the period 1660 to 1760, of "political mechanisms and discourse-effects" (Foucault 1979e: 82), the knitting together, in a new mode, of "relations of discourse, of power, of everyday life and of truth" (Foucault 1979e: 89). It was during this period that "that great system of constraint by which the West compelled the everyday to bring itself into discourse" (Foucault 1979e: 91) coalesced: a "new imperative", "injunction" or "constraint" ("I was going to say this moral"), which "acts to constitute what one might call the ethic immanent to the literary discourse of the West", namely, "the duty to tell the most common of secrets" (Foucault 1979e: 90). The Protestant rejection of the sacred and of priestly mediation of the word of God, building upon the privilege accorded by the Renaissance to writing (the invention of printing, and the arrival in the West of Oriental manuscripts) (OT: 38), reorganised the relations of power over everyday life already assured through the confession, which, in the simple form of the singular self-regulating verbal avowal, becomes transformed into "a rule for everyone" (HS: 20): "Western man has become a confessing animal" (HS: 59).

Consider the enormous obligation to confess, and the ambiguous pleasures which simultaneously make it disturbing and desirable: confession, education, the relations between parents and children, between doctors and the sick, between psychiatrists and hysterics, between psychoanalysts and patients (Foucault 1978c: 6).

Along with the spread of confessional practices came transformations in literature and philosophy, the latter "seeking the fundamental relation to the true, not simply in oneself - in some forgotten knowledge, or in a certain primal trace - but in the self-examination that yields, through a multitude of fleeting impressions, the basic certainties of consciousness" (HS: 59-60).

In the work of early modern philosophers such as Descartes and especially Locke, both drawing upon the radically reflexive twist woven into Western philosophy by St. Augustine, detailed self-examination now becomes far more important than it ever was for the Ancients or the Christians, in that truth is said to reside not outside of ourselves (in the cosmos, a teacher or God) but in the very practice of disengaged self-reflection and self-objectification (Taylor 1989: 175; Foucault 1988b: 22). The third of the three major types of self-examination intertwined with practices of confession is thus "self-examination with respect to thoughts in correspondence to reality (Cartesian)" (Foucault 1988b: 46). In European culture, at least up to the sixteenth century but arguably right up to the present, "truth always has a price; no access to truth without ascesis [the practice of self-discipline]" (Foucault 1984a: 371). In the nonetheless "ascetic" exercise carried out in his *Meditations*, (Foucault 1979b: 19-20), Descartes broke with this by basing access to truth not on ascesis but on evidence, making possible the institutionalisation of modern science and separating ethics and truth (Foucault 1984a: 371-2; HS: 59-60; OT: 55; Taylor 1989: 144). This in turn began to ring the changes for confession's "dark twin": torture. Classical criminal procedures which had involved torture had tended necessarily to the confession, both because a confession constituted a strong proof of guilt, and because the confession extorted from the criminal an acceptance of responsibility (DP: 38). "[O]ne confesses - or is forced to confess" (HS: 59): not too far from the body where torture located truth and upon which it inscribed itself, confession located truth in the self and via more conventional writing techniques inscribed itself in the soul.

## **V The rise of the disciplines**

At the dawn of the modern era, as the light of Enlightenment illuminated 'the West' and cast a growing shadow over 'the Rest', new technologies of power and forms of knowledge multiplied, intertwined and spread, displacing (without replacing) sovereign power with what Foucault referred to as 'disciplines' or 'disciplinary mechanisms', giving

new meaning to practices of penance and confession, producing new ethics of the everyday and the common and, via new technologies of the self, offering up for sacrifice 'Man' as at once a subject and an object. Indeed, Foucault at one point more precisely dated this "moment when, paradoxically but significantly, the most brilliant figure of sovereign power is joined to the emergence of the rituals proper to disciplinary power": this was the moment when, "several years" after the event, a medal was struck to commemorate Louis XIV's first military review on 15 March 1666 (DP: 188-9). Significantly, in the very next year the King appointed the first Lieutenant-General of Police (Bayley 1975: 344). However, beyond the outer limit of the period in question, it is the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte, the "Newton of 'small bodies'" (DP: 141), which for Foucault stands "at the point of junction of the monarchical, ritual exercise of sovereignty and the hierarchical, permanent exercise of indefinite discipline" (DP: 217).

Given that these modern disciplinary mechanisms began to emerge when sovereign power was still at its zenith, it was necessary that they first orientate themselves in relation to the king and appropriate the same language and grandiloquence, in order to creep into and utilise the existing mechanisms of power. The infamous *lettre de cachet* offers a prime example of how, first, mechanisms of discipline infiltrated into those of sovereignty, and second, began to restructure them. Usually portrayed and indeed roundly criticised as a symbol of royal arbitrariness, the *lettre de cachet* was in fact more likely to be solicited from someone's family, relatives, neighbours, priest or community; although it was supposed to be preceded by a police inquiry, it tended to be used by whomever was enterprising enough to tap into or profit from it.

It [the *lettre de cachet*] didn't ensure the spontaneous eruption of royal arbitrariness in the most everyday element of life. Rather it ensured its distribution along complex circuits, and in a whole play of demands and responses (Foucault 1979e: 85; DP: 214).

In this way "political sovereignty comes to insert itself at the most elementary level of the social body", making available, to those who "know how to play the game", resources and weapons beyond the traditional ones of authority and obedience (Foucault 1979e: 85).

Nevertheless, the *lettre de cachet* proved too unwieldy, "artificial", "maladroit" and "theatrical" an instrument to outlast its colonisation by disciplines developing

in a language claiming to be that of observation and of neutrality. The banal will be analysed according to the efficacious but grey grid of administration, of journalism, and of science; except to search for its splendours a little further afield, in literature (Foucault 1979e: 89).

Thus it can be said that *the banal, the commonplace, the mundane and the customary - in short, everyday life - did not preexist modernity, waiting only to be 'discovered', but was an analytical product of modern disciplines.* Moreover, and paradoxically, the omnipresence of the monarch was a condition for this extension of disciplinary power relations into everyday life (Foucault 1979e: 87) - another reason why discipline, confusingly but deliberately, still bears many of the violent and spectacular trappings of an age which for all intents and purposes appears to have been surpassed. Similarly, that symbol of the disciplinary society, the Panopticon, testifies to the continued presence of traces of sovereignty in being organised around a central tower (DP: 317 n4). Thus: "At the moment of its full blossoming, the disciplinary society still assumes with the Emperor the old aspect of the power of spectacle" (DP: 217).

The modern age may not have given birth to disciplinary mechanisms *per se*; it did, nevertheless, nourish and promote what have become the disciplines. "Many disciplinary methods had long been in existence - in monasteries, armies, workshops. But in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the disciplines became general formulas of domination" (DP: 137), crossing "the 'technological' threshold", that is, raising themselves to "a level at which the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process" (DP: 224) and spreading



throughout the social body to form "what might be called in general the disciplinary society" (DP: 209; 1979d: 64) or "a society of the disciplinary type" (DP: 215). This concerted cultivation, spread and generalisation of the disciplines was motivated both negatively, by anxieties about the real and imagined contagion and disorder prevailing as feudal society disintegrated, and positively, by a need to support emerging bourgeois social and political structures.

Firstly, a deep-seated fear of the plague: "Underlying disciplinary projects the image of the plague stands for all forms of confusion and disorder; just as the image of the leper, cut off from all human contact, underlies projects of exclusion" (DP: 199; see also 1971a: 202). Second, a fear of the 'dangerous classes' and a need to assure, once again but in a new form, "the ordering of human multiplicities" (DP: 218; Bauman 1987), consequent upon the massive demographic expansion of the eighteenth century and influenced by the earlier model supplied by the Great Confinement (Foucault 1971a: 39). In the course of the generalisation of the disciplines, "[t]he crowd ... is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities" (DP: 201). It is also in this context that the Physiocratic concept of 'population' comes to be seen as the measure of the wealth of a kingdom, and 'reason of state' begins to dissolve into various 'political economies' of the liberal and socialist varieties. On the basis of the demographic as well as monetary and agricultural expansions, the new science of statistics was able to demonstrate to its chief patron, the centralising administrative state, the inadequacy of the family model of government. The concept of *population*, it showed, constituted a specific and more inclusive entity with its own irreducible regularities and cycles. The family, whose "relations of togetherness or dependency" had already been "opened up to administrative and political control" by mechanisms such as the *lettre de cachet*, was reduced to a nonetheless privileged instrument of governance: it provided information on the state of the population (demography; age; longevity; mortality rates; disease; marriage and procreation; education and training; income; occupations) (Foucault 1979a: 16-17; 1980a: 171), and as "a relay in the process of medicalisation ... it acts both as the permanent source and the ultimate instrument" (Foucault 1980a: 177; see also 1971a: 254).



The *de facto* shift from sovereignty to discipline, if not its subsequent extension in practice or its recognition in political theory, was now complete:

The population now appears more as the aim of government than the power of the ruler .... Interest, both at the level of each individual who goes to make up the population, and also the interest of the population as such, regardless of individual interests and aspirations, this is the new target and the fundamental instrument of the government of population (Foucault 1979a: 18).

Third, and more positively, the impetus towards generalisation of the disciplines coincided with the rise to economic and political dominance of the bourgeoisie:

In fact, the two processes - the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital - cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them; conversely, the techniques that made the cumulative multiplicity of men useful accelerated the accumulation of capital (DP: 221).

Moreover, the bourgeoisie's formal liberties, equality and representative government required the support of an underlying system of non-egalitarian, asymmetrical micro-powers, the dark side of the Enlightenment. While representation made it possible for the "will of all to form the fundamental authority of sovereignty", the disciplines guaranteed "the submission of forces and bodies. The real, corporal disciplines constituted the foundation of the formal, juridical liberties .... The 'Enlightenment', which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines" (DP: 222).

Unlike the power of the sovereign, the power of the disciplines extracts time and labour, not wealth and commodities, from bodies, through a system of continuous and coercive surveillance - it is "power in terms of the minimum expenditure for the maximum return" (DPS: 239). The disciplines are to be distinguished from slavery, in that they are not based on a "costly and violent" "relation of appropriation of bodies"; they differ from

'service', which was based on a master's caprice; unlike vassalage, they are not centred around allegiance and the products of labour; finally, they are not to be confused with asceticism and monastic disciplines, in that they seek neither renunciation nor "an increase of the mastery of each individual over his own body" (DP: 137). Christianity may have bequeathed much to the modern disciplinary society - confession, penitence, salvation - but each of these has been substantially modified over time, not least by the exigencies of modernity:

For centuries, the religious orders had been masters of discipline: they were the specialists of time, the great technicians of rhythm and regular activities. But the disciplines .... altered them first by refining them [down to quarter hours, minutes and seconds] .... [and also by assuring] the quality of the time used [through supervision to ensure its usefulness] (DP: 150).

With the advent of the disciplines, we enter the age of the effectivity of knowledge and the productivity of networks of power: "We have passed from a form of injunction that measured or punctuated gestures to a web that constrains them or sustains them throughout their entire succession" (DP: 152).

The objective of the disciplines is the inculcation in bodies of *an immanent spiral of increasing compliance and utility*: "the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely" (DP: 138). They seek to achieve this by proceeding "from the distribution of individuals in space", which "sometimes requires enclosure" (DP: 141), attested to initially by the Great Confinement and thereafter schools, barracks, clinics, workshops and factories. This "principle of 'enclosure'", however, "is neither constant, nor indispensable, nor sufficient in disciplinary machinery" which "works space in a much more flexible and detailed way" by differentiating, partitioning and dividing individuals (DP: 143). As Aries (1962) has shown, until the eighteenth century the house remained an undifferentiated space, containing rooms in which one might successively sleep, eat, cook or receive visitors. Thereafter the spaces of the house became differentiated and functionalised, into bedroom,

dining room, kitchen and living room (Foucault 1980a: 149); at more or less the same time, the school, which initially consisted of a single, suitably demarcated, space, began to develop individual classrooms (Jones and Williamson 1979; Hunter 1988: 59).

Superimposed upon this segmentation - indeed, 'cellularization' (DP: 149) - of space was an apportionment of time: "adding up and capitalizing" it, dividing and multiplying it into successive or parallel segments, and organising these progressively from the simple to the complex (DP: 157-9).

Concomitant with its emphasis on time and space, compliance and utility, the age of discipline is above all the age of the fabrication of individuals: "[d]iscipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (DP: 170). The modern subject is a product of a despotic reason, combining enlightenment and discipline, as in this eerie echo of Foucault in the work of one of his chief critics:

We had to be trained (and bullied) into making it [the modern subject], not only of course through imbibing doctrines, but much more through all the disciplines which have been inseparable from our modern way of life, the disciplines of self-control, in the economic, moral and sexual fields (Taylor 1989: 175).

Three procedures were and are central to this making of modern man: hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and the examination. These terms are significant in that each hints simultaneously at an exercise of power (hierarchy; judgement; testing) and a formation of knowledge (observation; normalisation; evaluation). In the first instance:

The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible (DP: 170-71).

In the second instance, "the art of punishing, in the régime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. It brings five quite distinct

operations into play: .... [it] compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*" (DP: 182-3; emphasis in the original). Normalisation is an instrument of the disciplines and the human sciences that have been associated with them since the eighteenth century; since then, "[t]he power of the Norm ... has joined other powers - the Law, the Word (*Parole*) and the Text, Tradition - imposing new delimitations upon them" (DP: 184).

Normalisation also feeds on and encourages the paradoxical twin trajectories of totalisation and individualisation that have been the hallmark of Western political rationalities:

In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences (DP: 184).

Thirdly, hierarchical observation and normalising judgement are combined in the examination:

the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance (DP: 184-5).

"[A]t the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge" (DP: 192), the examination first enters on the modern scene in the context of the increasingly regular, extended and more rigorous inspecting 'visits' to hospitals by physicians since the seventeenth century, including within its cumulative effects emerging categories of subject (nurse; *homo medicus*, initially

itinerant, thereafter resident, and in the case of mental hospitals, firstly as 'wise man' or thaumaturge and only thereafter as psychiatrist), the production and dissemination of knowledge and the variability of power relations (DP: 185-6; 1971a: 270-74).

"Similarly, the school became a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that duplicated along its entire length the operation of teaching" (DP: 186). The examination, "the bureaucratic confession of faith" (Marx 1970: 51), permits particular features of the subjects under observation or analysis to be reported, classified, assessed and utilised, and functions both to produce and to discipline, since it not only authenticates what in context is a "transubstantiation of profane into holy knowledge" (Marx 1970: 51), but extorts for the benefit of others an immense tactical knowledge (DP: 187). It was also accompanied by writing techniques which intensified individualising procedures. Whereas "[f]or a long time ordinary individuality - the everyday individuality of everybody - remained below the threshold of description" (DP: 191) (because it was only the great and the powerful who had their lives chronicled), techniques of notation, registration, filing and tabling opened up its human objects to individualisation - and at the same time totalisation: "firstly, the constitution of the individual as a describable, analysable object, ... and, secondly, the constitution of a comparative system that made possible the measurement of overall phenomena", groups, collective facts and distributions in a given population (DP: 190).

"The disciplines mark the moment when the reversal of the political axis of individualization - as one might call it - takes place" (DP: 192), the moment of Enlightenment, when a visible power which overshadowed those on whom it was exercised became transmuted into an shadowy power which illuminated its objects: "[d]isciplinary power ... is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility" (DP: 187). Concomitant with the shift in the source of legitimate rule from divine right to 'the people', whereas under sovereign power individualisation was 'ascending' and thus greatest at the highest levels (through rituals, kinship, deeds, monuments, ostentatious expenditure and allegiance), in a disciplinary regime "individualization is 'descending'" (DP: 193):



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).

In the face of this 'descending' individualisation, we are all (potential) criminals now, not to mention sick, mentally unstable and childlike. In addition, though Foucault never suggests this, 'descending' individualisation has been accompanied by an 'ascending' totalisation, in the form of a shift in focus from the individualised 'great men' of history - emperors, kings, popes and cardinals who were contrasted against the ill-defined and amorphous 'crowd', 'people' and 'masses' - to the clear collectivities of modern governments, political parties, classes, elites and bureaucracies.

Enter the Panopticon: a "laboratory of power"; "a figure of political technology" which is "polyvalent in its applications" (DP: 204-5) and "destined to spread throughout the social body [,] ... to become a generalized function" (DP: 207); it is "the general principle of a new 'political anatomy' whose object and end are not the relations of sovereignty but the relations of discipline" (DP: 208). The theme of the Panopticon is simultaneously "surveillance and observation, security and knowledge, individualization and totalization, isolation and transparency" (DP: 249). It

arranges things in such a way that the exercise of power is not added on from the outside, like a rigid, heavy constraint, to the functions it invests, but is so subtly present in them as to increase their efficiency by itself increasing its own points of contact (DP: 206).

In other words, power relations become more effective the more they infiltrate into everyday life, as they shift from being externally imposed to being internally invoked, from being authoritarian to being participatory, and from acting primarily upon bodies to acting



in addition and more particularly upon souls and actions: "a physics of a relational and multiple power, which has its maximum intensity not in the person of the king, but in the bodies that can be individualized by these relations" (DP: 208).

## ***VI The extension and intensification of discipline***

The spread of disciplinary institutions outwards from the "exceptional disciplinary model" of the plague-stricken town, where power perpetually threatened death (DP: 207), to the Panopticon which amplified and rearranged power relations and made them more economical and effective, prompted three additional developments. Firstly, the functions of disciplinary institutions shifted from being largely negative (neutralising dangers) to being positive, seeking "to increase the possible utility of individuals" (DP: 210), "to strengthen the social forces - to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply" (DP: 208; see also 1976a: 64). For example, the justification for schools during the seventeenth century was based on their presumed capacity to prevent "ignorance of God, idleness (with its consequent drunkenness, impurity, larceny, brigandage); and the formation of those gangs of beggars, always ready to stir up public disorder ..." (DP: 210). By the beginning of the French Revolution, the aims of primary education had become "to 'fortify', to 'develop the body', to prepare the child 'for a future in some mechanical work', to give him 'an observant eye, a sure hand, and prompt habits'" (DP: 210-11). With the discipline inculcated through education thus becoming central to modern society, new social and occupational categories began to form: the policeman, the resident physician, the missionary, the social worker, the psychologist, the prison warder, and not least, the proselytising power of the educator (Bauman 1987: 48-9).

Secondly, in the form of religious groups and charity organisations, disciplinary centres of observation tended to be disseminated throughout society (DP: 212), and disciplinary institutions tended to develop a whole margin of lateral controls:

Thus the Christian School must not simply train docile children; it must also make it possible to supervise the parents, to gain information as to their way of life, their resources, their piety, their morals (DP: 211).

The absence or bad behaviour of a child becomes a pretext for one to question the neighbours, to delve into the parents' background and to inquire about the number of beds in their house, and certainly not to leave without providing alms, a religious picture or additional beds (DP: 211). Thirdly, particularly in France but to far lesser extent in England, part of the functions of religious and charity organisations were soon taken over by a police apparatus which concerned itself with the minutest details of the entire social body, "everything that happens" (DP: 213), from religion, morals, health, the arts and sciences through public safety to supplies, roads, trade, factories, workers and the poor, that is, everything except justice, the exchequer and the army (Foucault 1981e: 249; 1976a: 25-26; 1980a: 170-71; 1988b: 156; Tilly 1975: 60).

The emergence of positive disciplinary functions - the injunction to 'increase and multiply' the capabilities of individuals and society, the lateral spread of surveillance and the partial centralisation of policing - were effects of and the condition for a revival in fortunes for Christian pastoral techniques, now in great demand by theorists and statesmen acutely aware of the need to fill the void - or supplement the traces - left by the decline of feudal society. Already in the twelfth century, the attention of the Catholic Church had shifted considerably from a focus on the salvation of 'mankind' as a whole to the deliverance of the individual (Morris 1972: 152); under new circumstances, however, the objective of pastoral power was transformed from leading people, either individually or as a whole, to salvation in the next world, to ensuring it in this world, with salvation taking on different and more worldly meanings: "health, well-being (that is, sufficient wealth, standard of living), security, protection against accidents" (SP: 215); "health replaces salvation" (Foucault 1976a: 198).

Through Protestantism, eighteenth century pedagogy and nineteenth century medicine, the Christian confession mutated into a most improbable thing: "a confessional science" (HS: 64), or better, a set of sciences, including psychology, psychiatry and Destutt de Tracy's science of ideas, or ideology. Converting sin into illness, the human sciences incorporated practices of confession into administrative mechanisms of registration with the not dissimilar objective of extorting truth from individualised bodies, though with the additional emphasis on the multiple accumulation of written, rather than mainly verbal, traces (Foucault 1979e: 84; Foucault, quoted in Macey 1993: 321). Or, better put:

from the eighteenth century to the present, the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by the so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self (Foucault 1988b: 49).

These recent transformations in Christian practices of self-examination have in turn given rise to the debates about "the possibility of constituting a science of the subject, the validity of introspection, lived experience as evidence, or the presence of consciousness to itself" (HS: 64), not to mention that hallmark of social scientific practice: ideology-critique.

These confessional social disciplines, in many cases centred around sexuality, were made scientifically acceptable, firstly, by combining the confession with examination and interrogation. Second, by postulating sexuality as a fundamental 'cause of any and everything', "the limitless dangers that sex carried with it justified the exhaustive character of the inquisition to which it was subjected" (HS: 65-6). Third, since sexuality was assumed to be latent, the confession had to be modified: "it tended no longer to be concerned solely with what the subject wished to hide, but with what was hidden from himself" (HS: 66), knowledge which could only gradually come to light through the respective roles of questioner and questioned. Fourth, the discipline of producing the truth required that a close relationship be established between questioner and questioned in order for the confession to be properly interpreted and scientifically validated: the truth

was present but incomplete and blind in the speaker, and could achieve completion only in the one who assimilated, recorded, hermeneutically interpreted, deciphered and verified it (HS: 66-7). Finally, the confession was given scientific sanction in that its extortion and its effects were recodified as therapeutic operations (HS: 67).

The confession, "a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement" (HS: 61), had unfolded within a power relationship of dependence on the (at least virtual) presence of another acting as an authority (HS: 61). However, while in Antiquity and under Christianity mastery of oneself or the renunciation of self, respectively, involved a dissymmetrical relation to (or mastery over) others (Foucault 1984a: 357), once the notion of mastery was related to the fact of human rationality, as took place during the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment, self-other relations became more reciprocal (Foucault 1984a: 358). Despite this, rationality continued to be considered a relatively exclusive property: "every incantation of the universality of the faculty of reason was invariably accompanied by a reminder that the ability to use it is a sparsely distributed privilege" (Bauman 1987: 58). At the same time, the practice of confession became much more widespread, particularly so given the widespread impact of disciplinary practices and associated human sciences on modern social institutions.

In terms of these therapeutic sciences, especially psychiatry and pedagogy, in which knowledge is understood as "a praxis" tied to "the relation between two individuals, one of whom is listening to the other's language" (OT: 376), the injunction to speak has become a ritual where truth is corroborated by ordeal, and where the very confession "produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it" (HS: 62). The practice of confession and associated techniques of self-examination seek "to get individuals to work at their own 'mortification' in this world" - "a kind of everyday death" (Foucault 1981e: 239; see also Goffman 1968: 24-5). Early forms of mortification included confession itself, penance, self-flagellation, *exagoreusis*, *exomologesis*, and hermeneutic forms of 'subjectivisation'; more modern forms include those procedures in an asylum, an

army, a school or a prison aimed at destroying personal autonomy and existing forms of subjection through the imposition of numbers instead of names, the replacement of personal clothing with uniforms and the removal of property, the shaving of the head, isolation from previous influences (family and work), the prioritising of self-discipline and the repression of alternative forms of knowledge. The individual is then 'remodelled' in the image of a specific regime of power-knowledge.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission currently holding hearings on human rights violations in South Africa since 1960 is a good composite example of the centrality of confession (as a knowledge-producing and subject-altering rehabilitative ordeal) in modern society. Through its recorded public hearings the Commission formally and visibly conducts examinations of victims and perpetrators alike, demanding that they verify incidents that they have been required to re-live. While its seventeen commissioners, deriving from divergent social, political and racial backgrounds, are subject to close media scrutiny and a small degree of political contestation, as a group they are taken to represent the authoritative conscience of the nation, and, as such, are distanced from those who appear before them and, in testifying, are specifically identified and individualised. The Commission is also therapeutic both at the level of individual subjects by requiring perpetrators not only to reveal their motives but to acknowledge their responsibility, and at the level of the population as a whole by seeking "to promote or foster reconciliation, through a telling of the truth" (Lyster 1997: 21). Just as the confession divested itself of the trappings of torture, so too does the Commission offer amnesty instead of prosecution, exercising a nonetheless mortifying power over life rather than a power that seeks revenge and kills. Finally, it aims to produce an officially sanctioned "new written history of the apartheid years", "a mutually acceptable and collective understanding of the truth of the past, which can endure, which can be taught in schools and which can be passed on" (Lyster 1997: 21). By thus rewriting our history on the basis of true confessions, the Commission seeks to transform, heal and unify an abused South African social order.



The shift from Christian pastoral practices to the modern disciplines was made all the easier given the former's already close association with some of these 'new' aims: the welfare function of medicine was already assured by the Church, which also provided many of the functionaries required to staff new state apparatuses, especially the all-encompassing police, as well as welfare societies and philanthropic associations (SP: 215), in the process helping to swell the ranks of a self-consciously intellectual stratum. Ironically, this expansion occurred at the moment when Kant was exhorting 'Man' to achieve enlightenment by having the courage and resolve to throw off his dependence on the authority and guidance of others (Kant 1996: 51). As Foucault showed in relation to the prison, and as attested to by de Jouvenel and Arendt, changes in the relations of power brought about changes in the number and function of the subjects of power; unlike violence which relies on implements, "power always stands in need of numbers" (Arendt 1969: 42; de Jouvenel 1952: 98). Contrasted thus against sovereignty, "the disciplinary gaze did, in fact, need relays" (DP: 174) in order to function effectively:

As a result of this new restraint [the shift by which punishment ceased to inflict pain upon the body], a whole army of technicians took over from the executioner, the immediate anatomist of pain: warders, doctors, chaplains, psychiatrists, psychologists, educationalists; by their very presence near the prisoner, they sing the praises that the law needs: they reassure it that the body and pain are not the ultimate objects of its punitive action (DP: 11).

This expansion in the number of technical relays of relations of power was not confined to the prison but was a society-wide phenomenon: the grouping of large masses of workers in factories created a demand for managers, foremen and clerks; and the state-directed expansion of education multiplied not only the numbers of teachers and bureaucrats but also created a whole series of supervisors from the ranks of pupils themselves: "intendants, observers, monitors, tutors, reciters of prayers, writing officers, receivers of ink, almoners and visitors" (DP: 175).

Furthermore,



the multiplication of the aims and agents of pastoral power focused the development of knowledge of man around two roles: one, globalizing and quantitative, concerning the population; the other, analytical, concerning the individual ... [and producing] an individualizing 'tactic' which characterized a series of powers: those of the family, medicine, psychiatry, education, and employers (SP: 215).

Since their murky origins in ancient societies along the eastern Mediterranean littoral, these political rationalities which we now label as Western have been characterised by simultaneously individualising and totalising tendencies. Modern disciplinary power relations extended these trajectories considerably. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, Western Europe experienced a double movement "of state centralisation on the one hand and of dispersion and religious dissidence on the other" (Foucault 1979a: 6); as a consequence of this and the close but complex relationship between disciplinary practices and the centralised modern state, the latter exercises "both an individualizing and a totalizing form of power" (SP: 213). Indeed, at the end of the twentieth century, this phenomenon is stronger than ever, with the simultaneous formation of the European Union and the spread of disintegrative political tendencies so violently evident in the Balkans and Eastern Europe but also present in the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), France (Bretagne), Spain (the Basques), Italy (the South) and Germany (erstwhile East Germany). The trend towards global cultural homogenisation is being accompanied by a revival of ethnicity and nationalism, in addition to the fact that most modern nations are culturally heterogeneous, often based on conquest, and subjected to the hegemony of a particular aspect (such as London and the South in Britain), not to mention divided in terms of class, gender, and race (Hall 1992b: 297, 313).

Coupled to these individualising and totalising tendencies are what Foucault distinguished as, firstly,

*the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body ... centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls (HS: 139; emphasis in the original);*

and secondly,

*regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population ...* focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary (HS: 139; emphasis in the original).

Together, these two poles of "the disciplines of the body and the regulation of the population" (HS: 139) - the former involving the rapid development of "various disciplines - universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops" (HS: 140), and the latter, "the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration" (HS: 140) - were indispensable elements in the development of modern capitalism.

This modern power over life, a constituting gaze directed at living bodies especially by a medical science which ironically could objectify the individual "only in the opening created by his own elimination", or death (Foucault 1976a: 197), is also a reflection of the importance of the everyday - productive activity and family life - in modernity (Taylor 1989: 13). It is manifested in "the coexistence in political structures [of] large destructive mechanisms and institutions oriented toward the care of individual life": the French Revolution coincided with the first systematic public health programme, and welfare programmes first made their appearance during and after World War II (Foucault 1988b: 147).

At the moment the state began to practice its greatest slaughters, it began to worry about the physical and mental health of each individual. ... This game between death and life is one of the main paradoxes of the modern state (Foucault 1980e: 4).

"For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence ..." (HS: 142):

Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body (HS: 142-3).

Death itself has become a threat to modern Western societies premised on the subjection of live individuals: it was no coincidence that suicide became one of the first forms of individual conduct to enter sociological analysis, or that the death penalty has become progressively more difficult to apply (HS: 138-9), or that issues important to the aged (health care and retirement) are becoming central to Western electoral politics.

### ***VII The 'disciplinary society'***

Despite occasional references to a "disciplinary society" associated with the omnipresence of the police, and statements such as: "Prison begins far away from the prison gates. Just outside the door of your house" (in Macey 1993: 270), Foucault is not suggesting that we replace conventional characterisations of modern societies as 'liberal-democratic', 'capitalist', 'patriarchal', 'fundamentalist', 'nationalist', 'racist' and the like with a new designation as 'disciplinary'. Modern societies are as much bourgeois- or male-dominated as they are imbued with disciplinary mechanisms: not only can and do these labels overlap, but existing states of domination premised on class, race or gender are, like the disciplinary mechanisms themselves, global products of the intertwining of specific local relations of power:

'Discipline' isn't the expression of an 'ideal type' (that of 'disciplined man'); it's the generalisation and interconnection of different techniques themselves designed in response to localised requirements (schooling; training troops to handle rifles) (Foucault 1981f: 9).

Fraser believes that one can imagine a perfected disciplinary society where hierarchical, asymmetrical relations of power and surveillance of some by others have become internalised and hence superfluous. In such a society, "all would surveil and police themselves", and, consequently, all would be autonomous (Fraser 1989: 49). But this kind of negative after-image of the Marxist withering away of the state is far from Foucault's conception: not only is such a resistance-free, self-policed society an unrealisable Utopian dream, but the police and other disciplinary subject positions such as teachers, doctors, wardens and psychoanalysts are necessary conduits of and supports for modern relations of power. Moreover, 'autonomy' would be meaningless in a society impossibly shorn of relations of power.

In the same vein, "it would be wrong to believe that the disciplinary functions were confiscated and absorbed once and for all by a state apparatus" (DP: 215). Rather,

'[d]iscipline' may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology

which can be taken over or utilised by diverse institutions and apparatuses (DP: 215).

Again:

Power of the disciplinary type ... does not adequately represent all power relations and all possibilities of power relations. Power is not discipline; discipline is a possible procedure of power (Foucault 1984a: 380).

It is only on the basis of proviso's such as these that

one can speak of the formation of a disciplinary society ... [n]ot because the disciplinary modality of power has replaced all the others; but because it has infiltrated the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them and above all making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements. It assures an infinitesimal distribution of the power relations (DP: 216).

Thus not only are power relations not reducible to the disciplines, or the latter to the apparatuses of the state, but it would also be wrong to see the disciplines as replacing or transcending sovereignty, as if Foucault had merely reversed Enlightenment histories of progress in order to relate the story of the rise of unfreedom.

On the contrary, Foucault rejected both a 'progressivist' and a 'regressivist' history, and also derided the notion of a past golden age as an "historical absurdity" (Foucault 1988a: 164). Nevertheless, as specific political anatomies of power existing alongside and often within power as sovereignty, the disciplines do function as "a sort of counter-law" in relation to the formal bourgeois freedoms and equality: "introducing insuperable asymmetries and excluding reciprocities" (DP: 222); undermining the legal fiction of the (work) contract, partially suspending the law, even to the extent of "unbalancing power relations definitively and everywhere" (DP: 223); and inverting, and substituting themselves for, the content of the law (DP: 224).

The emergence and consolidation of the disciplinary society to which we have become accustomed was neither planned nor inevitable, neither freely brought about nor rigidly determined. As Foucault demonstrates in his account of the birth of the prison, what the legal reformers of the late eighteenth century proposed - a 'gentle way in punishment' - was premised upon, but surpassed by, the piecemeal coalescence of disciplinary mechanisms and the arbitrary yet logical privileging of detention. The legal reformers had proposed that

the punishment must proceed from the crime; for example, the law must appear to be a necessity of things, and power must act while concealing itself beneath the gentle force of nature [by] .... set[ting] the force that drove the criminal to the crime against itself (DP: 106).

Moreover, the idea was that "the guilty person is only one of the targets of punishment. For punishment is directed above all at others, at all the potentially guilty" (DP: 108).

Hence, where the body of the condemned was once the property of the King, now it becomes "the property of society, the object of a collective and useful appropriation" which is "why the reformers almost always proposed public works as one of the best possible penalties" (DP: 109). Punishment must be visible, "it must open up a book to be read"; furthermore, "[t]his legible lesson, this ritual recording, must be repeated as often as possible; the punishments must be a school rather than a festival; an ever-open book rather than a ceremony" and hence having effects on the guilty and spectators alike (DP: 111). Society as a whole must become a school (Foucault 1979d: 64; Bauman 1987: 71), perhaps even a medical school (Foucault 1976a: 32-34, 68), that punishes potential criminals even before they have committed a crime and prevents the outbreak of disease; such a generalised and therapeutic pedagogy would seek to normalise subjects precisely by enlightening them.

In this 'gentle way in punishment', "the use of imprisonment as a general form of punishment is never presented in these projects for specific, visible and 'telling' penalties" (DP: 114); indeed, "the idea of penal imprisonment is explicitly criticized by many reformers", for several reasons: it does not correspond to the desired specificity of crimes; it has no effect on the public; it is useless, even harmful, to society (in that it is costly, fosters the idleness of convicts and multiplies their vices); it is difficult to supervise and cannot prevent arbitrariness; and it is tyrannical to deprive someone of their liberty, which thus presupposes that the judges, the guards, ultimately even society itself, must be composed of tyrants (DP: 114). Yet "within a short space of time [under twenty years, between the principles of the Constituent Assembly and the Code of 1810], detention became the essential form of punishment" (DP: 115); "[t]he theatre of punishment of which the eighteenth century dreamed and which would have acted essentially on the minds of the general public was replaced by the great uniform machinery of the prisons" (DP: 116). While the spread of confessional practices and the rise of the human sciences suggest that the prison did not simply replace but at most supplemented and recodified what the reformers proposed, it must be asked how it happened that the reformers' desire to react to criminal offences by "restor[ing] the juridical subject of the social pact" was in



part subordinated to a penitentiary process (already partly discredited due to its association with the arbitrariness of the *lettres de cachet* - Foucault 1979e: 86) of "shap[ing] an obedient subject, according to the general and detailed form of some power" (DP: 129).

The answer is a new political anatomy:

Small acts of cunning endowed with a great power of diffusion, subtle arrangements, apparently innocent, but profoundly suspicious, mechanisms that obeyed economies too shameful to be acknowledged, or pursued petty forms of coercion - it was nevertheless they that brought about the mutation of the punitive system, at the threshold of the contemporary period (DP: 139).

It was these "humble modalities, minor procedures [specifically: "hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and their combination in ... the examination" (DP: 170)], as compared with the majestic rituals of sovereignty or the great apparatuses of the state [,] ... which were gradually to invade the major forms, altering their mechanisms and imposing their procedures" (DP: 170). Not a sudden discovery, this political anatomy was "a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate each other, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method" (DP: 138). It is these small, local, heterogeneous and unstable relations of power, producing, being extended by and operating apparently innocuously within and through individual subjects, forms of knowledge and institutions modelled in terms of sovereignty, which now demand closer examination.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RECONCEPTUALISING POWER RELATIONS

### *1 Towards an Analytics of Power Relations*

The historical emergence and consolidation of the disciplinary relations of power which underpin modern political practices, forms of knowledge and institutions are to be distinguished, it was argued in Chapter Three, from forms of domination such as slavery and serfdom. Reference has also been made, first, to the utility of modern relations of power in fabricating individuals and constituting docile bodies through practices of surveillance, normalisation and examination, and, second, to the knowledge that is produced in and through these procedures. We turn now to a more detailed examination of power relations, states of domination, freedom and resistance, and how power relations can be said to produce knowledge and subject individuals. Foucault's relational and multilevelled conception shifts one's focus away from conventional accounts of power as a kind of scarce possession which is wielded over against freedom, to power relations, ubiquitous and microscopic, which are called into being by free actions.

In thus rethinking how power relations operate in the present, it must constantly be borne in mind that while Foucault's comments do not in themselves constitute a new theory of power relations, they are intended to support a process which aims "to cut off the King's head" (Foucault 1980a: 121). By undermining the self-evidence and exposing the inadequacies of contemporary theories and practices of power, they may ultimately contribute towards imagining and bringing into being "new schemas of politicisation" (Foucault 1980a: 190), or "a new economy of power relations" (SP: 210). Foucault suggested that this may be achieved by approaching the question of power relations simultaneously from two sides:

it is a question of forming a different grid of historical decipherment by starting from a different theory of power; and, at the same time, of advancing little by little toward

a different conception of power through a closer examination of an entire historical material. We must at the same time conceive of sex without the law, and power without the king (HS: 90-91).

The paradox inherent in attempting to produce a new conception of power on the basis of an historical analysis which already assumes this new conception of power, should be obvious; yet paradox is the hallmark of Foucault's approach. Nor was he unfamiliar with this strange, almost back-to-front, task that he set for himself: his *Archaeology of Knowledge* had attempted to formulate the tools already forged in the heat of his prior analyses of madness, illness and the order of things (AK: 16).

Thus armed, as it were, with two crowbars, one speculative in that 'a different theory of power' can as yet only be imagined, and one concrete in that it is grounded on historical data, Foucault aimed to pry apart and begin to dismantle the struts and pilings of our present conception of power as sovereignty. This thesis has already, in Chapter Three, sought to advance part of the way along the concrete, historical path; this must now be supplemented by an attempt to outline a theory of power relations, once again drawing directly on Foucault's texts. The ideal outcome would be similar to that radical transformation of medical discourses between 1770 and 1830 to which Foucault refers, resulting in

the application of an entirely new *grille*, with its choices and exclusions; a new play with its own rules, decisions and limitations, with its own inner logic, its parameters and its blind alleys, all of which lead to the modification of the point of origin (Foucault, in Elders 1974: 150; emphasis in the original; see also AK: 170; 1976a: 54).

While the application of a new 'grille' to relations of power will lead to a rewriting of their historical and theoretical trajectory, so too will a modification of the 'point of origin' of current theories of power (which Foucault categorised under the term sovereignty and traced back to Hobbes) make possible a new, practical, effective and productive 'economy' of power relations.

From the start, it is important to remember that disciplinary mechanisms constitute merely one set of possible procedures of power, and hence it would be wrong to assume that they exhaust modern relations of power (Foucault 1984a: 380). ~~In fact, for~~ Foucault, "power as such does not exist" (SP: 217,219): "there is no Power, but power relationships which are being born incessantly, as both effect and condition of other processes" (Foucault 1989: 187; Deleuze 1988: 27). Power is heterogeneous, in that "it is always born of something other than itself" (Foucault 1989: 186), and is interwoven with all social relations (such as production, technology, warfare, communication, ethnicity, kinship, family, friendship, the body, gender, sexuality and knowledge). Relations of power "are the immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities, and disequilibriums which occur in the latter [social relations *per se*], and conversely they are the internal conditions of these differentiations" which may be determined by law, status, economic appropriation, processes of production, language, culture, knowledge or competence (HS: 94; 1980a: 142; SP: 223; 1989: 188).

As both condition and effect of social division and inequality, power relations or "intersecting relations of force" (Foucault 1980d: 15) are not reducible to any one particular process, relationship or institution but exist "between every point of a social body" (Foucault 1980a: 187):

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; [and] as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens or reverses them (HS: 92-3; see also 1980a: 189).

What we understand and accept as "'Power', insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the overall effect that emerges from all these mobilities", this "moving substrate" (HS: 93; DP: 26) of "dispersed, heteromorphous, localised" (Foucault 1980a: 142) force relations in ceaseless struggle. Power relations are "nothing

other than the instant photograph of multiple struggles continuously in transformation", a perpetually changing series of clashes which pervade all social relations (Foucault 1989: 188). It is for these reasons that one needs to be nominalistic and heuristic about power: neither an institution, a structure nor a strength with which we are endowed, "it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (HS: 93).

Power relations are thus in effect omnipresent, "co-extensive with the social body" (Foucault 1980a: 142) and "ubiquitous" (Foucault 1977a: 213; 1980a: 189). "[E]very human relation is to some degree a power relation" (Foucault 1988a: 168; 1987b: 122): "it [power] is produced ... in every relation from one point to another"; it is "everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (HS: 93).

The significance of this last statement must not be overlooked, for many an over-hasty reading of Foucault has concluded that power is literally in everything, or everything is saturated with power. Power may come from everywhere - but it is not everything: for example, while there are numerous means by which power relations are brought into being (such as threat of arms, effects of the word, economic disparities, control, surveillance, knowledge or technology) (SP: 223), and though power is woven, to some degree, into every relation (such as an individual's or a group's ability to manipulate things or to influence the production or transmission of information), power is not reducible to any of these means or relations. Power relations as "relations between individuals (or between groups)" must be differentiated both from power as "capacity" (to "modify, use, consume, or destroy things", to work and to transform reality) and from power as relationships of communication (SP: 217). No doubt an individual's capacity to transform nature - itself an "inexhaustibly rich source of power" (OT: 71) - can have tremendous effects upon other individuals, and "[n]o doubt communicating is always a certain way of acting upon another person or persons", which as we shall see is central to Foucault's definition of power, but power relations are reducible to neither physiological capabilities or labour-power nor to the production and circulation of meaning (SP: 217).



Nevertheless, power relations as relations between individuals, as capacity and as communication do overlap and reciprocally support each other: the application of one's objective capacities in the modification or use of an object implies relationships of communication (previously acquired information or shared work) as well as power relations (in the form of obligatory tasks, traditional gestures, apprenticeships or the distribution of labour); and relationships of communication imply finalised activities and, by modifying the information available to partners, extend or alter power relations (SP: 218). Indeed, formalised processes of enskilling, of pedagogically inculcating certain capacities, skills or abilities into individuals, often function by transforming an existing force of the body into "an 'aptitude'" or "a 'capacity'" which in this form can act as a built-in relay for relations of power (DP: 138). Moreover, while the coordination of these three aspects is not constant or uniform, "there are also 'blocks' in which the adjustment of abilities, the resources of communication, and power relations constitute regulated and concerted systems" (SP: 218). For example, an educational institution constitutes "a block of capacity-communication-power":

The activity which ensures apprenticeship and the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behavior is developed there by means of a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differentiation marks of the 'value' of each person and of the levels of knowledge) and by the means of a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy) (SP: 218-9).

Such "blocks" or "disciplines" may be articulated in different ways, at different times giving pre-eminence to power relations (as in monasteries and prisons), to finalised, technical, productive activities (as in workshops and hospitals), to relationships of communication (as in apprenticeships and educational institutions), or even to all three at once (as in military discipline) (SP: 219).

The omnipresence of power relations and their tendency to combine and become systematised and institutionalised must be tempered by the fact that power is also "rooted deep in the social nexus" (SP: 222, 224). It is both analytically and tactically important to



emphasise that "power comes from below" (HS: 94; 1980a: 159; DPS: 233): analytical, in that power relations are not primarily located in a state, a legislature or a sovereign individual, but are to be found suffused throughout the social body; and tactical, in that power relations are not reducible to an oppression possessed and exercised from on high, but are entangled in freedom and struggle. Power is not a site, a fortress or a rogue to be uncloaked in his lair; it is a relation, a current, a resource, a strategy, an experience and an ordeal. If there is 'a system' to be opposed, then that system is neither an incumbency nor a position but a local network of relations by and through which power is exercised in our societies. More Nietzschean than liberal, Marxist or anarchist in inspiration, this idea of power from below (despite its presence in Hobbes), that "[s]overeignty always is formed from the bottom up, based on the will of those who are afraid" (Foucault, quoted in Pasquino 1993: 81), suggests that power relations are as dependent upon the fear and resistance they may arouse within, as upon the willing or induced compliance of, the subjects of these relations.

These microscopic and everyday power relations are both relatively autonomous from (DPS: 235; 1980a: 188), and the infinitesimal elements of, the broader, more visible strategies of rulers, institutions and groups which are usually assumed to exhaust the category of relations of power (DPS: 235; HS: 93):

The panoptic modality of power - at the elementary, technical, merely physical level at which it is situated - is not under the immediate dependence or a direct extension of the great juridico-political structures of a society; it is nonetheless not absolutely independent (DP: 221-22).

Thus power relations can be conceived of as subterranean (though only to the extent that they are not superterranean or confined to the lofty reaches of kings and states), a kind of non-primordial, commonplace 'soup of the day' whose ingredients might include, but are certainly not limited to, force, violence, passion and chance (Foucault 1980d: 17), "the concrete, changing soil in which the sovereign's power is grounded, the conditions which make it possible for it to function" (Foucault 1980a: 187, 188, 122; HS: 93; 1981f: 9).

## ***II Power relations, states of domination and freedom***

It is on the basis of this seed-bed of mutually supportive and interconnected local power relations that "general conditions of domination" (Foucault 1980a: 142) such as capitalism, patriarchy and racism may ultimately blossom. These vast global strategies are commonly "embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies" (HS: 92-3) and, "accompanied by numerous phenomena of inertia, displacement and resistance", adapt, reinforce and transform the local relations of power upon which they depend.

[H]ence one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with 'dominators' on one side and 'dominated' on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies (Foucault 1980a: 142; HS: 94, 99).

Local and global relations of power thus mutually determine each other, or as Charles Taylor points out, "there is endless relation [*Sic.*] of reciprocal conditioning between global and micro-contexts" (Taylor 1985a: 168). Moreover, what is assumed to be a binary structure is in fact *trinary*: much like that order (in *The Order of Things*) deemed intermediate between the structures that regulate and the discourses which rationalise what we do (OT: xx), Foucault's "micro-physics of power" operate at a level sandwiched "between these great [global and institutionalised] functionings and the bodies themselves with their materiality and their forces" (DP: 26).

It is important to insist upon this multilevelled and relational operation of power, lest one erroneously conclude, as does Taylor, from the idea of the 'multiform production of relations of domination', that "power is a system of domination which controls everything and which leaves no room for freedom" (Foucault 1987b: 124). On the contrary, for Foucault, "if there are relations of power throughout every social field it is because there is freedom everywhere" (Foucault 1987b: 123); and "people ... are much freer than they feel"

(Foucault 1988b: 10). Admittedly, his "grand baroque style", combining "splendor and precision" (Blanchot 1990: 64), was self-consciously aimed at bringing about specific 'effects of truth', and this dramatic style of writing also exacerbated an undeniable tendency at times to conflate power relations with domination or repression: he once clearly stated that "techniques of production, techniques of signification or communication, ... techniques of domination" (Foucault & Sennett 1982: 10; Foucault 1993a: 203) as well as technologies of the self are all "associated with a certain type of domination" because

[e]ach implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes (Foucault 1988b: 18).

In addition, what he initially identified as 'a technology of domination' became, on the same page, first 'a technology of power' and then once again 'a technology of domination' (Foucault 1988b: 18). Nevertheless, it can be shown that, in the bulk of Foucault's work, states of domination are conceived of as very particular and distinct phenomena which effectively rise and fall, are maintained or transformed and ultimately depend upon mobile, dispersed and heterogeneous relations of power which themselves are as often productive as repressive, and, moreover, inconceivable without the existence of freedom and the possibility of resistance. At stake here is the difference between Foucault's reconceptualisation of relations of power as productive and strategic, and prevailing theories of power as sovereignty.

Foucault readily admitted that in his inaugural lecture, "The Order of Discourse", he provided "an inadequate solution" to the problem of "articulating the data of discourse with the mechanisms of power" in that he accepted "the traditional conception of power as an essentially judicial mechanism" (Foucault 1980a: 183), that is, a conception of power as repression (Foucault 1984a: 60). Critics have pointed out that Foucault's first major publication, *Madness and Civilization*, also "follows the romantic convention that sees the exercise of power as repression, which is wicked" (Hacking 1986a: 30). Furthermore,

Foucault revealed that, until his visit to Attica, he had conceived of exclusion purely as abstract, functional and constitutive of society:

Through what system of exclusion, by eliminating whom, by creating what division, through what game of negation and rejection can society begin to function?  
(Foucault 1974b: 156)

Thereafter, however, he came to the conclusion that prisons were too complex, costly, carefully administered and frequently justified not to also possess positive functions (Foucault 1974b: 156). He defended his early formulations of power relations as to some extent warranted, given that, in contrast to the positive power exercised over sexuality, a "purely negative conception of power" was appropriate for analysing the exclusionary power over madness (Foucault 1980a: 184). However, he accepted that these formulations had limited validity, since, for example, in the nineteenth century even "the technology of madness changed from negative to positive, from being binary to being complex and multiform" (Foucault 1980a: 185).

Foucault's views on power relations began to coalesce in *Discipline and Punish*, but it was only with the publication of the introductory first volume of *The History of Sexuality* that they can be said to have really solidified. Habermas argues that it was at this point that Foucault replaced "the model of domination based on repression (developed in the tradition of enlightenment by Marx and Freud) by a plurality of power struggles [*à la* Nietzsche]" (Habermas 1987: 127). The first rule that Foucault had set for himself in his study of the prison, a rule applicable to any attempt to reconceptualise power relations as such, was to go beyond the tenacious and predominant conception of power relations as negative and repressive:

Do not concentrate the study of the punitive mechanisms on their 'repressive' effects alone, on their 'punishment' aspects alone, but situate them in a whole series of their possible positive effects, even if these seem marginal at first sight (DP: 23).

Similar to the way in which Gramsci declared that Lenin's strategy of directly seizing control of the autocratic Russian state was unsuitable for dealing with the far more complex hegemony of bourgeois democracies (Anderson 1976/77: 20, 29), Foucault suggested that if power relations were only repressive they would be much easier to dismantle (Foucault 1979e: 89; DP: 305): at the very least one could, in the best traditions of political philosophy, simply contrast them to freedom and calculate their limits.

This insight that relations of power are positive and productive phenomena, an idea which we shall consider in greater detail below, formed the basis for Foucault's analytical distinction between relations of power (or what he also, tellingly, referred to as "strategic games between liberties") and states of domination (or what theories of sovereignty have ordinarily understood by power) (Foucault 1987b: 130). The former are "variable", "changeable, reversible and unstable" and allow "different partners a strategy which alters them" (Foucault 1987b: 114,123). States of domination, on the other hand, are "firmly set and congealed"; they occur when an individual or group 'blocks a field of relations of power', "renders them impassive and invariable" and prevents "all reversibility of movement" (Foucault 1987b: 114). Strategic relations of power are thus to be distinguished from states of domination, not absolutely, but in the *weaker* sense that while all relations of power assume social inequalities, few inequalities are so fixed as to be beyond challenge or change. Laclau elaborates:

[A]ll objectivity necessarily presupposes the repression of that which is excluded by its establishment. To talk of repression immediately suggests all kinds of violent images. But this is not necessarily the case. By 'repression' we simply mean the external suppression of a decision, conduct or belief, and the imposition of alternatives which are not in line with them. An act of conversion thus means the repression of previous beliefs (1990: 31),

but neither the act nor the repression are necessarily absolute or irreversible. In addition, Foucault emphasised that states of domination themselves need to be rethought as globalised extrusions of unstable local and strategic relations of power: "not the domination of the King in his central position ... but that of his subjects in their mutual



relations: not the uniform edifice of sovereignty, but the multiple forms of subjugation that have a place and function within the social organism" (DPS: 232).

These multiple and mutual forms of subjugation are premised on the existence of subjects capable of utilising, applying, altering and reversing them, that is, subjects assumed to be free actors. Power relations thus depend on and are not to be contrasted against freedom. It follows from this that the commonplace "violence-ideology opposition" (DP: 28; 1979d: 62), in terms of which power relations function either through coercion and constraint or through the ideological manufacture of consent, is inadequate. Free subjects may consent to violence directed against themselves or others, or forcefully seek to impose consensus; this can be inferred even from Hobbes' account of power in which sovereignty is traced back to the contractual relationship between mother and child:

Between the child's consent (which does not take the form of an expressed wish or a contract) and the mother's sovereignty, which has the goal of preserving life, and the consent of the vanquished in the twilight of their defeat there is no substantial difference (Foucault, quoted in Pasquino 1993: 87 n.24).

Thus, "though consensus and violence are the instruments or the results, they do not constitute the principle or the basic nature of power" (SP: 220) - "power is not a function of consent", even though "consent may be a condition for the existence or the maintenance of power" (SP: 219-220), but nor is the character of power mere violence.

Asked whether he would accept an Arendtian distinction between power as domination and power as consensus, Foucault responded that it might be worthwhile to retain this distinction as a 'critical idea'; however, "[t]he farthest I would go is to say that perhaps one must not be for consensuality, but one must be against nonconsensuality" (Foucault 1984a: 379). As will be seen below, Arendt's distinction between power as the capacity of a group "to act in concert", and violence as an instrument or tool "for the purpose of multiplying natural strength" (Arendt 1969: 44-6), corresponds to Foucault's own distinction between power and violence; yet Arendt would not appear to endorse



Foucault's view of power as a set of force relations which often violently if productively structure the actions of free beings, nor would Foucault agree that tools of violence, and not relations of power as such, predominate in the manufacture and augmentation of human productive capacities.

Whereas violence acts *directly* upon *bodies or things*, and can seek only to minimise resistance (SP: 220), power relations not only depend upon the recognition of "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) ... as a person who acts", but also make possible "a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions" (SP: 220; see also Deleuze 1988: 70). To this extent, violence attempts to suppress the other but power relations perpetually reproduce both the same and the other. Where such a field of possibilities does not exist, that is, "where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains" (SP: 221), that is, "a man who is chained up and beaten is subject to force being exerted over him. Not power" (Foucault 1981e: 253). This corresponds with Lukes' view that "in a world characterised by total structural determinism, imposing uniquely determining constraints upon action, there would be no place for power" (Lukes 1977: 7). It also illustrates Hoy's (1986: 132-3) point that Foucault is not deterministic about relations of power: "The technology of power does not causally determine particular actions; only makes them probable". "The characteristic feature of power is that some men can more or less entirely determine other men's conduct - but never exhaustively or coercively" (Foucault 1981e: 253).

Power relations instead operate *indirectly*, consisting of *actions which modify the actions of others*: "what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions" (SP: 220). Power, in constituting the conditions of possibility of action, is nevertheless not an ingredient of every action: for example, a *direct* action upon a person, an action, direct or indirect, upon a body or a thing, and an action, direct or indirect, upon a person incapable of action (or unfree), is not power. However, by treating subjects as active in themselves,

power relations display one of their most salient characteristics: "[p]ower is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (SP: 221). Contrary to our conventional wisdom which conceives of power relations mainly in terms of domination and repression, power relations and freedom are not mutually exclusive:

[F]reedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power (at the same time its precondition, since freedom must exist for power to be exerted, and also its permanent support, since without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination) (SP: 221; 1982a: 225; 1987b: 123).

It is because people act, in never entirely predictable ways amidst circumstances never completely predetermined, that they can be said to act freely, even when acting in strict accordance with one or other constitutive discursive practice.

Slavery, force, coercion and violence may well be the conditions, instruments or results of relations of power, but power is not reducible to any relation which preempts any possibility of resistance, refusal or escape, that is, which denies even the most restricted of free choices.

But if he can be induced to speak, when his ultimate recourse could have been to hold his tongue, preferring death, then he has been caused to behave in a certain way. His freedom has been subjected to power. He has been submitted to government. If an individual can remain free, however little his freedom may be, power can subject him to government. There is no power without potential refusal or revolt (Foucault 1981e: 253)

The relationship between power relations and freedom is thus not a question of power restricting or invading the freedom of individuals - "there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its [power's] network" (Foucault 1980a: 142) - but of power relations governing freedom and provoking resistance by enjoining free subjects to govern themselves. As will be argued more fully in the next chapter, both freedom of thought and choice, implying sovereignty, and freedom of action, implying agency, are simultaneously the conditions for and the effects of relations of power. Power in this sense is like

hypnosis, in that patients must willingly co-operate with the hypnotist and, allowing themselves to be subjected to the treatment, are both implicated in the resulting relation of power *and* constitute a condition of possibility (or determinant) of that relation. Similarly, one cannot criticise without knowledge of, and thus a degree of disciplinary submission to, that which one criticises (even if one then proceeds to critically transform that which one knows), and one cannot play a game without knowing and accepting the rules (even if one then proceeds to play the game precisely in order to stretch or modify the rules).

Finally, it might even be argued that states of domination in a pure sense, as described above - where relations of power are fixed and irreversible, and where freedom is entirely proscribed and resistance is impossible - either do not exist or are exceptionally rare. Tyranny often requires and indeed calls forth resistance; henchmen, sycophants, those who are indifferent and those who are afraid make it difficult to clearly identify potential sources of resistance; and twentieth century tyrannies like fascism, Stalinism and apartheid mobilised significant masses of supporters who in turn enjoyed varying degrees of freedom. Foucault goes so far as to suggest that domination is *both* "a general structure of power" *and at the same time* "a strategic situation more or less taken for granted and consolidated by means of a long-term confrontation between adversaries" (SP: 226). This formulation suggests that one way in which one might begin to combat the image that conjures itself up so easily in the mind, of power as negative and repressive, plain domination which admits of no weakness, would be to attempt to show (on a different occasion) how global states of domination such as capitalism, patriarchy and racism were and are, at least to some extent, *productive responses to perceived strategic threats*.

In this vein, apartheid could be seen as a colonial settler-inspired establishment and then defence of power and privilege against real and perceived threats of African hegemony; and patriarchy might be better understood as an ongoing and always contested male struggle to keep women in subordinate positions. Similarly, capitalism could be conceived of as a fragile global edifice fashioned out of countless anarchical acts by a bourgeoisie tossed about upon the turbulent waters occasioned by new disciplinary imperatives,

technological innovation, land enclosures and a rapid increase in 'masterless men', with the ex-peasant and ex-artisanal working class fighting a rearguard but losing battle against industrialisation. Western colonialism, too, could be described as the drive on the part of Europeans to suppress the recognition that their assumed God-given uniqueness was no more than an insignificant moment amidst a universe of cultural otherness. Of course, the strategic threats which prompted these strategic responses must themselves be treated as reactions to prior phases of these perpetual struggles.

To conclude this section, then, states of domination, far from exhausting the nature of power relations, are both the products of, and, at least in a weak sense, remain characterised by, persisting struggles which may either reinforce or resist ever-mutating configurations of power relations.

[W]hat makes the domination of a group, a caste, or a class, together with the resistance and revolts which that domination comes up against, a central phenomenon in the history of societies is that they manifest in a massive and universalizing form, at the level of the whole social body, the locking together of power relations with relations of strategy and the results proceeding from their interaction (SP: 226).

Thus, notwithstanding circumstances where "the relations of power are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical and the margin of liberty is extremely limited" (Foucault 1987b: 123), or where "the practice of liberty does not exist or exists only unilaterally or is extremely confined and limited" (Foucault 1987b: 114), freedom is still present and resistance is still possible even if existing strategies appear unlikely to reverse the situation (as in the case of the Victorian wife who stoically capitalises financially and domestically on her husband's philandering, or the gay or women's liberation movements which take up and use for their own purposes mainstream myths about homosexuality).

### ***III Power relations and resistance***



In the same way that relations of power are not reducible to domination, they cannot simply be contrasted against resistance. The existence of a range of possible responses to actions which act upon our actions, and the dependence of such actions upon the possibility of such free responses, suggests that a Manichean division between evil power and good resistance, between the dominant and the dominated, is far too crude an instrument for accounting for what is always "a perpetual battle" (DP: 26). Nevertheless, it is an indication of the Enlightenment-tinted lenses through which Foucault's work has often been appraised that his conception of power relations as omnipresent is criticised for failing to leave open a space where power's other and opposition - here we shall call it resistance, though in other contexts it might be called freedom, or truth - can rally itself and set limits to power's depredations.

It is not difficult to detect the basic presuppositions of sovereignty underlying this criticism: first, a 'progressive' space outside of and standing against 'reactionary' power; second, the taken-for-granted dichotomies of power-resistance, power-freedom and power-truth - a measure of how ingrained in Western 'secular' culture is the Christian notion that "the truth shall make thee free" (John 8:32), or in more recent terminology, that enlightenment enables emancipation; and third, the idea that this other of power is both necessary and desirable in order both to hold in check what is supposed to be inherently negative and repressive and to make possible a Utopia beyond power. This modern humanist version of what has been called 'self-estrangement theory' (Fay 1987: 16; see also Mészáros 1970: 28) and which posits that human beings are not only alienated from themselves but responsible for and capable of transcending this situation, thus consists in reproaching Foucault for supposedly rendering "tyrannical power" "irresistible[,] ... unopposable" (Said 1986: 151) and inescapable, and "resistance incomprehensible and futile" (Lloyd 1993: 438; Dews 1987: 88-94). The irony of investing Foucault's work with assumptions pertinent to self-estrangement theory is that they do in fact apply: thanks to his own loose and vague comments about 'resistance', Foucault was himself partly responsible for effectively misrepresenting himself; but at the same time he was responsible for offering his audience, in the form of tools fashioned

within his own *oeuvre*, means by which they might engage with processes by which they represent themselves to themselves.

'Resistance' is a concept common to both liberalism and Marxism, albeit tending towards individualist voluntarism in the former and collectivist activism in the latter. In each, according to Foucault, the concept is too closely tied to the juridico-political conception of power as sovereignty - in much the same way that the concept of 'repression' is problematic (DPS: 242). Again in each, it conjures up modernist images of barricades and batons, of implacable enemies and ever-loyal allies, of dominators and dominated, and fails to adequately capture the permanent instability which characterises the immanent and constitutive fracturing of relations of power by confrontations, struggles and strategies. Power relations are not always imperial, and that which opposes itself to or resists an exercise of power is not always heroic: at one moment either may comport themselves in exemplary ways, in the next prove themselves base. Foucauldian aphorisms such as "where there is power, there is resistance" (HS: 95) are far too glibly quoted and too hastily interpreted as a licence to surreptitiously reintroduce an untrammelled unitary *agent* of resistance *against* power (Deacon & Parker 1995: 118). Yet Foucault took pains to insist that 'resistance' is not something externally opposed to power as a centralised, homogenous *locus* but an 'energy' built into power as a dispersed and unstable *set of relations*: as he continued in the same sentence, "and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (HS: 95).

As in much of Foucault's work, stark dichotomies fall apart to reveal intimate connections: rather than narrowly conceiving of power and resistance as fixed and antithetical nodes, we must shift our focus to the relations between the poles:

Power should be studied not on the basis of the primary *terms* of the power-relation, but on the basis of that relation itself, insofar as it determines the elements on which it bears (Foucault 1980d: 15; emphasis in the original).



Certainly, "it is not against power that struggles are fundamentally born" (Foucault 1989: 187); instead,

we must reposition the power relationships within the struggles and not suppose that power might exist on one side, and that on the other side lies that upon which power would exert itself; nor can we suppose that the struggle develops between power and non-power (Foucault 1989: 188).

Resistance is not an external struggle *against* power, but an internal and dyadic *exercise* of power relations, over others as much as over ourselves, and it follows from this that power relations are complexly manifested by and "sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated" (DP: 27). The very presence of an adversary has often "supplied the necessary legitimization of the rule" (Bauman 1987: 135), and power "exerts pressure upon [those who are dominated], just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them" (DP: 27). Take for example the ongoing and contradictory contestations of power inequalities within ostensibly marginalised social relations: in (butch and femme) lesbian relations, the dominant (male) role may constitute the other (female) as dependent and nurturing, but in acting as provider may fall into the trap of (traditional female) self-sacrifice; alternatively, the subordinate (female) role, in playing out a certain dependency, may learn and master the power to orchestrate that dependency and thus reconstitute the power relationship in a different form (Martin 1992: 113). In a more global sense, "[d]estroying the hierarchies on which sexual or racial discrimination is based will, at some point, always require the construction of other exclusions for collective identities to be able to emerge" (Laclau 1990: 33).

Proactive or reactive exercises of power include the functioning of those discourses and forms of knowledge which at different times may either or both support or criticise a practice, an institution or a state of affairs. In complex and unstable ways, elements or the whole of a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power relations and a hindrance or point of resistance, just as the lack of discourse or silence may either shelter or render more tolerant a particular exercise of power (HS: 101). For example, in the past

sodomy was treated both with extreme severity (punishment by fire) and with tolerance (in the existence of societies of men within the military, currently frowned upon but still accepted within the US Army). Moreover, the emergence of homosexual discourses brought about both a plethora of new social controls and made it possible for homosexuality to begin to speak and to demand recognition and legitimation on its own behalf, often in the same medical vocabulary which had once disqualified it (HS: 101). Movements of 'sexual liberation' *simultaneously* make the apparatus of sexuality in which we find ourselves "function to the limit" *and* 'surmount' it, by defiantly inventing their own types of existence even while taking this apparatus as their starting point (Foucault 1977b: 155; 1980a: 219-20). When the suffragettes demanded the extension of men's rights to women, their struggles for equality were in part premised on subjecting themselves to new rules deemed to be universal and hence liberating. In another example, the proletariat took up and used for its own purposes and to support its own struggles the morality imposed on it by the bourgeoisie (though often in a contradictory manner, in that it embraced bourgeois morality to distinguish itself from 'common' criminals, and hence both protected itself from extreme forms of bourgeois repression and gave legitimacy to this repression) (Foucault 1974b: 161).

To the modern bourgeois order, where "alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 455), the last named also contributed the model of that suitably utilitarian device which best exemplifies the complicit functioning of resistance and power in the form of "a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally ...: supervisors, perpetually supervised" (DP: 176-7). The Panopticon is "a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised", regardless of the fact that "everyone doesn't occupy the same position ... [and] certain positions preponderate and permit an effect of supremacy to be produced" (Foucault 1980a: 156, 90, 200-201; HS: 93-94). Conjured into existence, as it were, by a bumbling bourgeois sorcerer's apprentice, the Panopticon is "an invention that even its inventor is incapable of controlling" (Michelle Perrot, in Foucault 1980a: 157); efficient, economical and self-

sustaining, it is a mechanism in perpetual motion, requiring neither fuel nor operator and directed as much at those who manage it as at those who are to be managed. Educators, warders, psychiatrists, nurses, all superordinate functionaries of disciplinary institutions are as much the targets of data-gathering, supervising and normalising power techniques as their subordinate counterparts, learners, inmates and patients.

Indeed, contrary to the conventional wisdom of power as sovereignty, dominant groups were historically perhaps the *first* targets for governance. New technologies of sexuality were applied first to the bourgeoisie, since its "subtle procedures ... could only have been accessible to small groups of people" (HS: 120). This entailed "the self-affirmation of one class rather than the enslavement of another" (HS: 123): the working classes were subjected primarily to the deployment of alliances, and only thereafter to already tried-and-tested mechanisms of sexualisation such as birth control, the nuclear family and campaigns against perversions (HS: 122). Similarly, women's consciousness-raising groups first emerged on a limited scale amongst 'the converted', middle-class white liberals who had been active in the civil rights and New Left movements and as a result (not that they would have cared to admit it) were more implicated in capitalist and racist states of domination than working-class, black or socialist women (Weiler 1991: 457). In another example, child-centred pedagogies appeared first amongst liberal educators and progressive movements like those of Montessori and Dewey, while this century's increasing emphasis on critical reflection by teachers upon their pedagogical practices derived from and were directed initially and primarily at middle-class Western educators. Thus, while what appears from one reading to be modernity's progressive extension of rights and freedoms to more and more groups and entities (workers, women, blacks, minorities, pupils, children, those with special needs, underdeveloped countries), is from a Foucauldian point of view a process of the constant proliferation of power relations first amongst dominant groups and thereafter their infiltration into the remotest reaches of social life, along avenues surveyed and charted by science and philosophy.

In its ideal form,

this architectural apparatus [the Panopticon] should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, ... the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers

to the extent that they are aware of their permanent visibility regardless of the presence of an observer (DP: 201). Unlike the traditional fortress-like 'houses of security' of previous centuries, panoptic power does not impose itself upon its objects as if from the outside:

The efficiency of power, its constraining force have, in a sense, passed over to the other side - to the side of its surface of application. He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection,

and to this extent power becomes less corporal (Foucault 1986a: 202-3). The Panopticon even provides for its own supervision, aside from the fact that its operations will necessarily be "democratically controlled" (DP: 207): "the director may spy on all the employees that he has under his orders ... and it will even be possible [for an unannounced inspector] to observe the director himself" (DP: 204, 250), apart from the fact that, "enclosed as he is in the middle of this architectural mechanism, ... the director's own fate [is] entirely bound up with it" to the extent that he would be the first victim of an epidemic or a revolt (DP: 204).

Resistances, then, are not merely reactions, ultimately passive, and "doomed to perpetual defeat" - resistances "are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite" (HS: 96).

[T]here are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being in the same place as power; hence, like



power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies (Foucault 1980a: 142).

There is no single, central source of resistance, but "a plurality of resistances .... distributed in irregular fashion .... at varying densities" (HS: 96). Resistance is a characteristic of all struggles: it is utilised by superior and subordinate alike and is thus often indistinguishable from that which is more commonly called power. As Alcibiades put it to the Athenians on the occasion of the expedition to Sicily during the Peloponnesian War, "[o]ne does not only defend oneself against a superior power when one is attacked; one takes measures in advance to prevent the attack from materializing" (Thucydides 1971: 379). Such measures taken in advance may be justified as forms of resistance; they are, nevertheless, an example of an exercise of power, albeit by a nominally subordinate group.

The dependence of relations of power upon free beings capable of resisting and not merely acquiescing suggests that Foucault is as nominalistic about freedom and resistance as he is about power relations. Like Power with a capital P, resistance as such does not exist; or, better, resistance is merely an effect of ceaseless clashes between a multitude of forces. It is in these terms that Foucault's concept of the "plebs" ought to be understood.

Developed in the context of remarks on the Gulag, the concept of the 'plebs' - "the permanent, ever silent target for apparatuses of power" - refers neither to a victim nor an agent; in fact, the 'plebs' is not

the permanent ground of history, the final objective of all subjections, the ever smouldering centre of all revolts. The plebs is no doubt not a real sociological entity (Foucault 1980a: 137),

and hence it ought not to be confused with "a neo-populism that substantiates the 'plebs' as an entity, or a neo-liberalism that sanctifies its basic rights" (Foucault 1980a: 138).

Nevertheless, at the heart of power relations "there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom" (SP: 225); there is

always something in the social body, in classes, groups and individuals themselves which in some sense escapes relations of power, something which is by no means a more or less docile or reactive primal matter, but rather a centrifugal movement, an inverse energy, a discharge (Foucault 1980a: 138).

Far from constituting some natural element against which power happens to strike, the 'plebs' is an intensity, a concentration or force which presents itself only in the presence of power relations; indeed, it is produced by relations of power as both their ever recalcitrant other and their ever malleable target. The 'plebs' is

not so much what stands outside relations of power as their limit, their underside, their counter-stroke, that which responds to every advance of power by a movement of disengagement. Hence it forms the motivation for every new development of networks of power (Foucault 1980a: 138).

Baudrillard, too, supports this understanding of *the other of power which is also in power*:

There is something in power that resists as well, and we see no difference here between those who enforce it and those who submit to it: this distinction has become meaningless, not because the roles are interchangeable but because power is *in its form reversible*, because on the one side and the other something holds out against the unilateral exercise and the infinite expansion of power (Baudrillard 1987: 42; emphasis in the original).

Leaving aside Foucault's reservations about the implicit populism of Baudrillard's plebian 'silent majorities' (M.Ryan 1988: 569), the two theorists concur to the extent that power is conceived as inherent in *the relation between* things or beings and not *in* one or other thing or being.



#### ***IV The inevitability of struggle and the irreducibility of revolt***

To understand power in this relational way also suggests that there is little point in asking, with Habermas (1987: 283-4), Dews (1987: 88-94) or Fraser (1989: 27), why we ought or ought not to struggle against or resist one or other exercise of power. The question is pointless because we do not struggle against power but within relations of power which always involve struggle; one may be able to explain why workers do or do not resist exploitation, since that depends on the status of their struggle amidst other struggles in a specific historical context, but one cannot claim that they should or shouldn't struggle. But if we really beg the question, the short answer would be that struggle is not necessarily preferable to submission, for the latter can have just as significant power-effects as the former. Like freedom and domination, struggle and submission are not necessarily opposed, nor even mutually exclusive terms; they are bound together as elements of "a contest with more than one round" (OT: 385).

While Fraser thinks that what Foucault needs are "normative criteria for distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable forms of power" (Fraser 1989: 33; see also Calhoun 1995: 119, and Lloyd 1993: 438), she herself fails to offer criteria by which such distinctions may be made (Bernstein 1991: 149). She appears willing to accept that certain 'constraining' forms of power (her terminology) may be productive and hence acceptable - such as norms of grammar which make meaningful communication possible; rules of the road which make road-usage viable, safe and efficient; rules of logic and validity which govern the formation of knowledge-claims; and rules of decorum and accreditation which valorise some speakers and not others - but balks at other, unspecified forms of power which involve 'overt or covert coercion' and yet are equally productive (Fraser 1989: 32). Fraser's lack of specificity here allows one to question her distinction between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable by imagining forms of power which could range from outright wars of conquest (yet justifiable in the name of God, or freedom) through torture and vivisection (which may nevertheless produce truth and promote science) to the

enforcement of the rights of some to the detriment of others (as do various forms of affirmative action).

More specifically, it is not that some forms of power are acceptable and others are not; any and all forms of power may at different times and in different contexts be acceptable or unacceptable: for example, until recently in the history of the West, the ownership of slaves, the burning of heretics, the torture of witnesses and the denial of rights to women, children and the lower classes was taken to be acceptable; again, until recently, usury, homosexual relationships and premarital sex were deemed to be unacceptable. Power relations are neither good nor bad: the use of force is encouraged in cases as far apart as capital crimes and compulsory education; seemingly non-violent relationships of power, such as peer pressure, are often frowned upon, and so too are power relationships to which the victim may have consented in some way, such as date-rape, not to mention cases where freedom of choice may be denied, as in euthanasia (an example of the hegemony of bio-power over the right to die).

Hence, let us not blame 'power' for seeking always to govern, always to condition the field of possible actions of others, for this is simply what 'power' does, ubiquitously. Nor should we blame those who wield (or, alternatively, resist) 'power', for this is simply what 'power' does with one. Rather, we must understand that it is not only that an exercise of power may seek submission but that an act of submission may also provoke and attract an exercise of power; resistance or the 'plebs' constitute a form of power as much as they stand opposed to power. "I am not blaming those who are resolved to rule [the Athenians], only those who show an even greater readiness to submit [some Sicilians]" - thus spake Hermocrates the Sicilian to his warring countrymen, warning of the dangers of Athenian intervention (Thucydides 1971: 264).

Along with resistance and the 'plebs', Foucault also made reference to "revolt" as an equally "irreducible" concept. A revolt

is necessarily a tearing that breaks the thread of history and its long chains of reasons so that a man can genuinely give preference to the risk of death over the certitude of having to obey.

Thus another reason why it is neither impossible nor useless to resist is that there is no power relation capable of making revolt impossible - "Warsaw will always have the ghetto which revolted and those insurgents who filled its sewers" (Foucault 1981b: 5).

There are revolts and that is a fact. It is through revolt that subjectivity (not that of great men but that of whomever) introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life (Foucault 1981b: 8).

There are echoes here of the English Marxist historian E.P. Thompson, for whom it is through "experience" (or social being's impingement upon social consciousness) that "structure is transmuted into process, and the subject re-enters into history" (Thompson 1979: 362-63). Foucault's account, however, tends to blur the structure-agency dichotomy, in that the experience of revolt occupies a field in which subjectivity is as much an effect as it is an historical datum.

However, the irreducibility of revolt offers no guarantee that a revolutionary struggle or a discourse promoting such a struggle will be immune to being categorised, colonised, recuperated and pacified. In fact, the rehabilitation of discourse is an everyday reality, "a part of cultural play" (Foucault, in Raulot 1983: 204). Criticisms and alternatives are always internal to hegemonic discourses (they are their condition of possibility, just as hegemonies are always fractured by deviance); and subjugated or alternative knowledges, those which differ from and call into question what we take for granted, are often "no sooner brought to light, ... no sooner accredited and put into circulation, than they run the risk of re-codification, re-colonisation" (Foucault 1980a: 86; 1987c: 206). Neither bad nor good, this is a normal phenomenon which must be taken into account.

The moment a kind of thought is constituted, fixed or identified within a cultural tradition, it is quite normal that this cultural tradition should take hold of it, make

what it wants of it and have it say what it did not mean, by implying that this is merely another form of what it was actually trying to say (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 204).

An example of such recuperation is the concerted two hundred year old attempt, albeit only partially successful, to colonise and repatriate the theory and practice of revolution (Foucault 1981b: 6), to make people accustomed to it "as interior to a history that is regarded as both rational and controllable", and in the process legitimising it, distinguishing its good forms from its bad, fixing its conditions, objectives and means, and defining the profession of revolutionary (Foucault 1981b: 6). This modern rationalisation of revolt - *where power relations produce a knowledge which is also a knowledge of power relations* - is quite evident in the case of guerrilla warfare, an ancient strategy distinguished from its modern version (apart from the latter's application to revolutionary anti-colonial efforts) by the emergence of "a fully fledged doctrine claiming universal validity" (Navias & Moreman, in Freedman 1994: 311).

Baudrillard has extended Foucault's insight into the scientific taming of revolt by arguing that "[i]n a certain way, psychoanalysis puts an end to the unconscious and desire, just as Marxism put an end to the class struggle, because it hypostatizes them and buries them in their theoretical project" (Baudrillard 1987: 13); indeed, Baudrillard sees Foucault's own work as 'recuperative', suggesting that Foucault is able to provide such incisive analyses of power relations and of sexuality "only because power is dead" and because sexuality is "in the process of disappearing" (Baudrillard 1987: 11-13). Baudrillard's suggestion, that Foucault's reconceptualisation of relations of power is itself implicated in struggles around political theory and practice, cannot be easily dismissed, for Foucault had been grappling with this problem for years (in fact, it might be said that his entire corpus, as an attempt to turn the Enlightenment against itself, was an extended commentary on this problem). The problem had surfaced, as has been shown, in the manner in which Foucault at first treated power relations simply as negative and repressive (instead of also being positive and productive) and in his initial tendency to conceive of madness as an 'essential innocence' victimised (rather than constructed) by an imperious reason. It also emerged in the

context of his research into 'ordinary' (as opposed to exemplary) individuals, such as the murderer Pierre Riviere and the hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin, who appeared as aberrations within what the Enlightenment saw as the smooth continuity of scientific and social progress.

In these latter instances, however, Foucault offered a novel account of the process and effects of the manner in which the power of Western reason recuperates its others. In analysing "The Life of Infamous Men", Foucault's "dream would have been to restore their intensity in an analysis", but "there was a risk that they might not pass into the order of reasons" intact (Foucault 1979e: 78), precisely because reason had ignored or excluded them in the first instance: for example, the case of Pierre Riviere had not been acknowledged, until Foucault, as a 'notable crime', despite its unusually full documentation (Foucault 1978a: viii). It followed that the least unsatisfactory procedure was to leave these "lightning-existences" in the same form, assemble them, cite them and accompany them with some preliminary remarks (Foucault 1979e: 77-78). Thus:

In order that something of this should come across even to us, it was nevertheless necessary that a beam of light should, at least for a moment, illuminate them. A light which comes from somewhere else. What rescues them from the darkness of night ... is an encounter with power (Foucault 1979e: 79).

This 'encounter with power' refers both to the powers which someone like Riviere encountered and succumbed to in his actual life, *as well as* to the power relations associated with Foucault's subsequent excavation of his life.

This power which ... spied on them, which pursued them, ... which marked them with a blow of its claws, is also the power which instigated the few words which are left for us of those lives: whether because someone wished to address themselves to power in order to denounce, to complain, to solicit, to beg, or because power desired to intervene, and then judged and sentenced in a few words (Foucault 1979e: 79).



So that it is doubtless impossible ever to recapture them in themselves ...; they can now only be located when seized in the declamations, the tactical partialities, the imperative falsehoods which the power games and the relations with power presuppose (Foucault 1979e: 80).

The implication is clear: to bring to light that which has literally been extinguished is, paradoxically, to repeat both its challenge and its silencing. This "most intense point of lives ... is ... where they clash with power, struggle with it, endeavour to utilise its forces or to escape its traps" (Foucault 1979e: 80); and in this chance encounter, through this "throw of the dice", they are ironically once again able to manifest their rage against the power relations which brought them down (Foucault 1979e: 81). Thus, much if not all of what we know of Riviere and other 'infamous men' is what relations of power and their associated knowledges tell us about them, just as all that we know of madness is from the point of view of reason and all that we know of the Enlightenment is how it conceived and conceives of itself. Yet it remains possible to know, and draw fruitful and even subversive implications from, *how* power relations have suppressed and manufactured, *how* reason has rationalised and normalised, and *how* the Enlightenment has spread across the face of the globe.

A third reason why struggle and resistance are possible and likely, even if not necessary, is deducible from the fact that all the great systems of domination that have left their mark on Western history have done so correlative in part to the degree to which they provoked resistance. Athenian and Roman imperialism, European colonialism, the *ancien régime*, fascism and socialism: we remember them as much for the terrible glory of their passing as for their triumphs and atrocities. Foucault's "initial response" to the question, 'how is struggle possible?', is instructive: "The movement of May [1968] suggests ... [that] the individuals who were subjected to the educational system, to the most constraining forms of conservatism and repetition, fought a revolutionary battle" (Foucault 1977a: 223). A comparable example of how systems of domination, no matter how imposing, cannot avoid provoking resistance can be found in the history of Bantu Education in South



Africa, where students, who had been subjected to a deliberately inferior and oppressive curriculum, rekindled the struggle against, and played an important role in destabilising, the apartheid regime.

One can also, from Foucault's ethic of self-transformation, adduce reasons why, at the very least, one ought not to remain (permanently) passive in the face of power relations:

The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. ... What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end (Foucault 1988b: 9).

In other words, there is no ultimate end or direction to history and change; if there were, the only point to bringing about change would not be to transform oneself, or to become different, or for the sake of change itself, but merely to realise that preordained end, which is the same as establishing an order which ought never again to be changed. In Foucault's universe, it is entirely feasible to call for change for its own sake, without specifying the direction or goal of change. As Taylor points out, there *is*, and Foucault does have, "a *value* reason for refusing the Enlightenment valuation" (Taylor 1985a: 156); but his value-laden criticism need not be bolstered by an alternative valuation (though, no doubt, his criticism is made possible not only by an awareness of alternative value systems in history - Greek; Chinese; Catholic; Islamic - but also by the fact that none of these systems, including the Enlightenment, is internally homogeneous); it is sufficient to ask why it is that we value certain things (like mainstream Enlightenment conceptions of knowledge and power) so much so that we take them for granted.

Nor is one rendered incapable of criticising existing power relations merely because one cannot stand outside of them: "we can also certainly regret what is bad for us now without knowing either that things were better before or that proposed ways to mend things will not actually produce other injustices" (Hoy 1986: 144). One does not have to believe in a past Golden Age or a future Utopia, or in the essential innocence or

perfectibility of human beings, or situate one's actions in the context of the search for a mythical Holy Grail, in order for one not to like, and refuse to accept, contemporary forms of subjection, or in order to decry specific power relations, examine their operation, expose their effects and question their justifications. It is only by assuming ideal selves and ends that it becomes meaningful for subjects to seek to realise themselves or attain certain ends; shorn of these assumptions, the political choices and goals of particular subjects become no more and no less than products of the changing histories in which they are immersed.

In fact, it may be that Foucault is capable of criticising power relations *because* he accepts his immersion in them. Baudrillard noted that "Foucault's discourse ... is *also* a discourse of power" (Baudrillard 1987: 9; emphasis in the original); indeed, "Foucault's discourse is a mirror of the powers it describes" (Baudrillard 1987: 10). But, just like resistance to power is not inexorably frustrated through being formed at the point where relations of power are exercised but is all the more real and effective for this, so too does Foucault's account both reflect and refract modern relations of power of both sovereign and disciplinary varieties. Asked, during his debate with Chomsky, why he was so interested in politics, Foucault responded with his own, personal, 'reason of state': "if I were to answer you very simply, I would say this: *why* shouldn't I be interested? .... The essence of our life consists, after all, of the political functioning of the society in which we find ourselves" (Foucault, in Elders 1974: 167-8; emphasis in the original). No doubt the emphasis here ought to have been on 'shouldn't', in the sense that the ubiquity of relations of power in the modern world and their formative role in constituting subjects makes it well-nigh impossible for one not to be affected by them - or for these relations to persist or change independently of human action.

Against those who, like Edward Said, lament what they see as "Foucault's unmodulated minimization of resistance" and consequently accuse him of pessimism and fatalism (Said 1986: 154), it might be relevant to point out that Foucault's pedigree in this matter is immaculate: it was Kant who immersed us in the paradox of finding ourselves internal to

that which we seek to know, resist or change. As Hacking has argued, "[t]hose who criticize Foucault for not giving us a place to stand might start their critique with Kant" (Hacking 1986b: 239). More to the point, though, to claim that "a society without power relations can only be an abstraction" (SP: 222-3; 1987b: 129; Laclau 1990: 33) does not entail that a particular relation of power is either necessary or repressive, when it could as well be contingent and benign (Hoy 1986: 144). To suggest that power relations will always be with us is only fatalist from the perspective of modern liberationist activism:

Should it be said that one is always 'inside' power, there is no escaping it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is subject to the law in any case? Or that, history being the ruse of reason, power is the ruse of history, always emerging the winner? This would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations (HS: 95; see also 1980a: 141-42).

Hence, "[w]e can never be ensnared by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy" (Foucault 1977b: 160).

As Hoy points out: "Fatalism will result only if one believes dogmatically that one's knowledge of the nature of power is itself not conditioned by power relations" (Hoy 1986: 144). "There is no disillusion without illusion" (Spivak 1987: 123); we despair only because we still harbour unreasonable hopes; we decry what we see as 'political pessimism' only because we still believe in Utopia.

Optimism, pessimism, nihilism, and the like are all concepts that make sense only within the idea of a transcendental or enduring subject (Hacking 1986a: 39-40),

and, as we shall see in Chapter Five, no such conception of the subject is to be found within Foucault's work. Finally, to accuse Foucault of pessimism or fatalism is to assume that power *is* everything - that it is an absolute, undeniable truth that power relations are

inescapable - thus presuming that Foucault's view of power relations is itself somehow objective or external to these relations.

It follows that Habermas is wrong to implicitly associate Foucault's conception of power relations with the pessimism of Weber's (1992: 181) 'iron cage', where repression supposedly reigns supreme and from which there is no escape (Habermas 1987: 4, 56). (Indeed, Weber's metaphor has been rather overworked, especially as it comes from one who believed that the vocation of the politician - and for Foucault, the essence of our lives is political - is, always and necessarily, "to take a stand, to be passionate", in short, to "*fight*" - Weber 1970: 95; emphasis in the original.) Modern societies may be 'disciplinary' but are not 'disciplined' - their others (traditional societies as well as internal rural margins, global blocs, organisations and corporations as well as internal excluded minorities, the poor, women and new social movements) deny them the possibility of ever fully constituting themselves in the form of 'total', disciplined, societies (even if at the same time these others spur them on, in vain pursuit of this totalitarian nightmare, to maintain their coherence in the face of their fragility). Though, on the one hand, the modern tendency is undoubtedly towards uniformisation, the totally disciplined society is as mythical as utopian harmony (the mistake of Adorno and Horkheimer (1979) was to believe that the impossibility of the latter meant the triumph of the former). This is because, on the other hand, social differences are irreducible: difference is precariously grounded upon the shifting sands of constituted social identities (the mistake of all imperialists as well as the architects of apartheid was to believe that differences could be fixed). Modern society is neither an iron cage nor liable to disintegrate, but a shifting and unstable matrix of relations of power and knowledge which generate free and active subjects.

Power is not omnipotent or omniscient - quite the contrary! .... If it is true that so many power relationships have been developed, so many systems of control, so many forms of surveillance, it is precisely because power was always impotent (Foucault 1989: 183-4).

Were such a thing as power with a capital 'P' to exist outside of the (admittedly power-laden) human sciences, it would have to be understood not as "a deterministic divine will, but as a perpetual bumbler, preparing the ground for the insurrections against him" (Butler 1990: 28).

Modern mechanisms of power, whether one focuses on prisons or schools, markets or states, have, despite their pervasiveness, been ineffective even in their own terms. In fact, it is this very failure that justifies the need for yet more administration and for the further refinement of technologies of power: the more failures occur, the more the authorities hire experts, invest additional resources, build more facilities, produce new analyses and offer alternative solutions, which in turn increases the probability of failures while simultaneously obscuring the authorities' complicity - and the cycle repeats itself. Thus the less discipline succeeds, the more it becomes necessary (Smart 1985: 106; Gordon 1980: 255).

The spread of normalization operates through the creation of abnormalities which it then must treat and reform. By identifying the anomalies scientifically, the technologies of bio-power are in a perfect position to supervise and administer them (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 195-6).

Consider, for example, the positive functions served by the failure of that institution so central to modernity: the prison. At the very least, the prison serves to differentiate and regulate illegalities, limiting some, using others (DP: 272). "For the observation that prison fails to eliminate crime, one should perhaps substitute the hypothesis that prison has succeeded extremely well in producing delinquency ..." (DP: 277), a controlled illegality which can be supervised, used against crime *per se* (informers) but also politically (*agents provocateurs*) and economically (strike-breakers) and as "an agent for the illegality of the dominant groups" through the extraction of profit from prostitution, arms and drugs trafficking and the illegal sale of alcohol (DP: 279-80), not to mention white-collar crime as such.



To suggest that "a society without power relations can only be an abstraction" (SP: 222-3), does not imply that this or that specific relation of power will never perish or be transformed, and thus need not lead to indifference or feelings of impotence. Short of a world without power relations, it becomes increasingly urgent that modern forms of political action cease to aspire to Armageddon and begin to focus on how to persistently undermine existing, and prevent the formation of future, states of domination. Foucault's very argument is in fact a weapon and a stake in the near-permanent civil war which power relations engender. Not only is power an "essentially contested" concept (Lukes 1974: 9), but it is involved in its own definition: to say something different about power (say, that power is productive) is in itself an effect of power relations *and* a resistance to (or redefinition of) power relations (defined, for example, as repressive). As Dreyfus and Rabinow argue, when Foucault "shows that the practices of our culture has produced both objectification and subjectification, he has already loosened the grip, the seeming naturalness and necessity these practices have" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 203). It follows, too, that, as 'effects of power', Foucault's analyses and arguments themselves (not to mention those of his sympathisers and not least his opponents) stimulate the production of knowledge: it "makes all the more politically necessary the analysis of power relations in a given society, their historical formation, the source of their strength or fragility, the conditions which are necessary to transform some or abolish others" (SP: 223).

An historical analysis of Western political rationalities, as outlined in Chapter Three, is thus necessary not in order to tame power relations, but to expose them. Indeed, "[t]he failure of the major political theories nowadays must lead not to a non-political way of thinking but to an investigation of what has been our political way of thinking during this century" (Foucault 1988b: 161). This 'political way of thinking' is quite different to that of the previous century:

If the workers' misery - this subexistence - caused the political thinking of the 19th century to revolve around the economy, then fascism and Stalinism - these

superpowers - induce political anxiety in our current societies (Foucault 1977b: 158).

As is clear from the history of Marxism, the conception of the political (and of the 'superstructure' generally) has over time become an increasingly central analytical focus, in spite of a continued insistence on the primacy of the economic (Laclau & Mouffe 1985), and it is precisely this once-attenuated conception of the political that Foucault identified as the "missing term" between a Marxist theory of the bourgeois state and the hope of its future withering away, namely, "the analysis, criticism, destruction, and overthrow of the power mechanism itself" (Foucault 1976b: 459). Foremost amongst such Marxist theories of the state has been the work of Nicos Poulantzas, whose own analytical trajectory explicitly included an examination of fascism (Poulantzas 1979). The difficulties of accounting for fascism and Stalinism in terms of classical Marxist theory, and the urgent need to do so, is thus one indication of how these two "pathological forms" or "diseases of power" (SP: 209) have left their mark on the twentieth century's 'political way of thinking'; another more mundane reason why fascism and Stalinism have induced an examination of the *political* (instead of the economic) is simply that both fascism and Stalinism emphasised direct state control of society, both being built around charismatic leaders made possible by the spread of disciplinary forms of government.

## ***V Transgressing the law***

Let us return to what Foucault had to say about 'the strictly relational character of power relationships' and their 'dependence on a multiplicity of points of resistance', and try to understand exactly what he meant by this. To start with, this is to suggest that one takes "the forms of resistance against different forms of power [or "the antagonism of strategies"] as a starting-point", resistances and antagonisms which take the form of "opposition to the power of men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, of medicine over the population, of administration over the ways people live" (SP: 211). Fraser suggests that this involves a kind of "politics of everyday life":

For if power is instantiated in mundane social practices and relations, then efforts to dismantle or transform the regime must address those practices and relations (Fraser 1989: 26).

By starting not from those places or institutions in which power is commonly said to be located, but from the infinitely varied everyday responses to the workings of such alleged power-possessing locales, one might become more aware of the interweaving of those forces which act upon and react to our actions and counteractions.

Consider, for example, an action which transgresses a law: whereas theories of sovereignty would examine the action and the law as separate entities before judging either that a transgression did take place and ought to be punished, or that the law had not been transgressed, what was far more interesting for Foucault was the effect and dependence of action and law upon each other.

The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows (Foucault 1977a: 34).

The limit and transgression are thus inseparable in their opposition: "Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal" (SP: 225). On the one hand, the limit calls transgression into being and gives it its form:

Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses (Foucault 1977a: 33-34).

In similar vein, limitations placed upon actions do not merely prohibit but may also provoke reactions:

The law is the outside that envelops conduct, ... opening around it a space of uneasiness, of dissatisfaction, of multiplied zeal.

And of transgression (Foucault 1990b: 34).

On the other hand, "it is not possible to threaten the existence of something without simultaneously affirming it" (Laclau 1990: 27). Transgression reaffirms the limit even as it surpasses it, for

transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes (perhaps, to be more exact, to recognize itself for the first time, to experience its positive truth in its downward fall ...) (Foucault 1977a: 34).

Indeed, one cannot know or experience the limits of the law without overstepping them: "How can one see its invisibility unless it has been turned into its opposite, punishment, which, after all, is only the law overstepped, irritated, beside itself?" (Foucault 1990b: 34-5).

However, if punishment could be provoked merely by violating the law, the violator would be in control of the law itself, and would, in effect, become the law. Yet the extent to which transgression seeks to avoid becoming law is the extent to which it ceases to transgress and ends up buttressing it:

That is why transgression endeavors to overstep prohibition in an attempt to attract the law to itself; ...; it obstinately advances into the opening of an invisibility over which it will never triumph; insanely, it endeavors to make the law appear in order to be able to venerate it and dazzle it with its own luminous face; all it ends up doing is reinforcing the law in its weakness ... (Foucault 1990b: 35).

Anyone who attempts to oppose the law in order to found a new order, to organize a second police force, to institute a new state, will only encounter the silent and infinitely accommodating welcome of the law (Foucault 1990b: 38).

[T]o imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system (Foucault 1977a: 230).

It is in this sense of the intimate embrace between the law and transgression that power relations can be said to produce resistance, and that resistance can provoke power. In a similarly intimate fashion, the power relations which shore up a reactionary state are the same relations which make possible a revolutionary people, in the sense that resistance is internal to power relations:

the state consists in the codification of a whole number of power relations which render its functioning possible, and ... revolution is a different type of codification of the same relations (Foucault 1984a: 64).

Thus states and revolutions are inextricably intertwined, not just because successful revolutionaries often have little choice but to re-establish state apparatuses but because relations of power presuppose corresponding points of resistance. "[S]omewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships", argued Foucault, "it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible (HS: 96). 'Codification', here, implies that "[e]ven in the most radical and democratic projects, social transformation ... means building a new power, not radically eliminating it" (Laclau 1990: 33).

Foucault tied all this together with a striking simile worthy of a successor of Nietzsche:

Transgression, then, is not related to the limit as black is to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside .... Rather, their relationship takes the form of a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity ... (Foucault 1977a: 35; see also 1971a: 112).



Resistance is like 'a flash of lightning in the night' of power relations; it is like the sound that shatters the silence that forever enfolds it. Theories of power as sovereignty conceive of resistance as aiming to overthrow or defend against power, and of power as seeking to put down resistance and quell opposition. Foucault's understanding of power relations as an "antagonism of strategies" does not so much reject or deny power as sovereignty as point to the interconnections between, and nuances of, the contending forces; here, every strategy is locked into a perpetual spiral of action and reaction, to the extent that the effect of an exercise of power could be as well to strengthen instead of weaken its target, and an act of resistance may, instead of warding off power, bring it even more quickly into play. The Allied demand for the unconditional surrender of Axis forces during World War II, an act of power made ironically at the moment of their greatest weakness, provides an example of such unintended or unexpected consequences. On the one hand, the demand, in the context of subsequent Allied victories, weakened the resolve of a failing Italy which entered into secret negotiations for an armistice, and the collapse of Italy in turn hastened the end of the war in Europe and forced Germany to sue for peace in May 1945. On the other hand, the demand stiffened Japanese resistance and kamikaze attacks in the Pacific, which in turn were used to justify the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Even when clearly antagonistic strategies collide the outcome is seldom preordained: the transformation of the clash between apartheid and anti-apartheid forces into an extraordinarily peacefully negotiated settlement is a case in point (but for an alternative point of view, see: de Kadt 1997).

To conclude this section, it is worthwhile returning to our starting point, namely, the accusation that Foucault, in supposedly conceiving of power relations as little more than domination, leaves no room for resistance, struggle or transformation. Such accusations commonly cite Foucault's (1977a) article on "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", which is filled with polemical formulations. For example:

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 (Foucault 1977a: 151).

Again: history is about "various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations" (Foucault 1977a: 148). Formulations such as these are also not confined to this particular text: "We have known for a long time", recounts Foucault, "that humanity does not start out from freedom but from limitation and the line not to be crossed" (Foucault 1995: 293).

What Foucault's critics routinely ignore, however, is the very next paragraph in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", which immediately broaches the issue of resistance, or better, the strategic relationship of forces engaged in struggle:

The nature of these rules allows violence to be inflicted on violence and the resurgence of new forces that are sufficiently strong to dominate those in power. Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose. The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules (Foucault 1977a: 151).

Despite lurching thus from "domination to domination", rules continue to be violently formulated, applied and modified, and rulers continue to be violently opposed, overthrown and replaced. "What is most dangerous in violence is its rationality" (Foucault 1980e: 4): violence does not dispense with rules but makes them all the more necessary; indeed, the existence of rules makes it possible for states of domination to be both established and contested. Such rule-governed contestation in turn allows for current rulers to be played and defeated at their own game, much as administrative unification and bureaucratic rationalisation under the *ancien régime* made the French Revolution possible, and similar to the way in which most Eastern European communist regimes were toppled from within by the 'velvet revolutions' of 1989.

The question to be asked is thus not, 'How can we resist (power), given that resistance is already power?'. Instead, the question is, 'To what extent can a particular relation of power prevail, to the extent that it calls forth and depends on particular forms of resistance?'. The rules of the game, the structures that govern society, the relations of power that constitute subjects and produce knowledge - all these depend upon the degree to which the rules are transgressed, the structures undermined, the relations of power imbued with freedom and resistance. The rules of the game do not fix or determine what can or cannot be done; they merely specify the extreme outer limits of illegality, the point at which an action is deemed to be transgressive. As Deleuze puts it: "Law administers illegalisms: some it allows ...; others it tolerates ...; others again it forbids ..." (Deleuze 1988: 29). Contrary to both popular belief and received wisdom, social life is not essentially lawful or rule-governed but lamentably marred by occasional outbreaks of violence or illegality. Rather, "the deepest root of violence and its permanence come out of the form of rationality we use" (Foucault 1980e: 4); transgression exudes from every social pore, and thereafter is more or less rationalised and regulated. It is thus insufficient merely "to denounce violence or to criticise an institution"; "[w]hat has to be questioned is the form of rationality at stake" (Foucault 1981e: 254). Asking this question "is the only way to avoid other institutions, with the same objectives and the same effects, from taking their stead" (Foucault 1981e: 254; in Elders 1974: 172). The point is not to peer up in awe at the king, but to expose and explore the multiple, everyday and seemingly innocuous fractures upon which the king relies; it is a question of expanding and exploiting the realms of illegality and otherness, not seeking to tackle the law and rationality head on.

Power relations, for Foucault, are thus not reducible to a one-sided domination, for even states of domination, in the strong sense, are rule-governed. Resistance and struggle arise, become generalised and find their unity in and through the interstices of even such apparently fixed and irreversible relations of power: "The generality of the struggle specifically derives from the system of power itself, from all the forms in which power is

exercised and applied" (Foucault 1977a: 217); "the system it [the struggle] opposes, as well as the power exercised through the system, supplies its unity" (Foucault 1977a: 230). And this system of power, like all systems, is never complete in that it depends upon the freedoms it attempts to exclude and the resistances it tries to suppress; it is thus inappropriate to describe these resistances as being 'co-opted into the system', and far more accurate to treat them as mechanisms which, starting from the realities of subjection, or normalisation, or commodification, "attempt to control [these realities] socially, not to wage a merely defensive struggle against an apparently self-regulating and inexorable structure" (Laclau 1990: 52). In every case, power relations and resistance do not stand opposed to each other but are intertwined: the lightning of transgression and resistance splits and illuminates the darkness of the (lawlike but often not lawful) relations of power upon which it depends.

## ***VI Power relations as war or strategy***

Foucault concludes *Discipline and Punish* with a call to reconceptualise power relations in terms of war or strategy rather than domination and repression:

what ultimately presides over all these [disciplinary] mechanisms is not the unitary functioning of an apparatus or an institution, but the necessity of combat and the rules of strategy [...] ... consequently, the notions of institutions of repression, rejection, exclusion, marginalization, are not adequate to describe, at the very centre of the carceral city, the formation of the insidious leniencies, unavowable petty cruelties, small acts of cunning, calculated methods, techniques, 'sciences' that permit the fabrication of the disciplinary individual. In this central and centralized humanity ... we must hear the distant roar of battle (DP: 308).

To understand power relations in this way, as a continuous confrontation of small-scale forces or local strategies with particular as opposed to universal objectives, "a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or a conquest of a territory" (DP: 26), is to allow one to describe it, using a term which has recently become current, as an "agonism": a combat, a competition or "a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal

incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation" (SP: 222; Gray 1995: 68).

In fact, in this perpetual war there are far more than just two sides:

This is just a hypothesis, but I would say it's all against all. ... Who fights against whom? We all fight each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights something else (Foucault 1980a: 208).

Consequently the basic model for politics is not competing interest groups nor conflicting classes but is literally a war of all against all, where all are suffused by the will to power which Hobbes considered to be the "generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death" (Hobbes, quoted in Berki 1977: 134; Hobbes 1962: 80), and where the protagonists consist of, or themselves contain, fragile and transitory coalitions composed of "individuals, or even sub-individuals" (Foucault 1980a: 208). Unlike Hobbes' naturalist and proto-liberal vision, however, there is no ultimately sovereign power which calculates threats and risks posed by others and seeks, through Jeffersonian mechanisms such as the separation of powers and other checks and balances, to avoid war - or better, to constitutionalise it (Foucault 1980d: 18; Pasquino 1993: 80-1). Nor are there any written or unwritten moral rules capable in the last instance of neutrally arbitrating between antagonists: "One makes war to win, not because it is just" (Foucault, in Elders 1974: 182). From Foucault's perspective, this "total war" does not exhaust itself in its contradictions, renounce violence and end by submitting to civil laws:

On the contrary, the law is a calculated and relentless pleasure, delight in the promised blood, which permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes of violence (Foucault 1977a: 151).



This is not to say that anything goes in this world of war, or that there are no rules; rather, the rules themselves are forged in combat and, like a blacksmith's creations, may prove to be well-tempered and long-lasting or brittle and short-lived.

In contrast, therefore, to the liberal and Marxist schema's which conceive of power as sovereignty, Foucault proposed that analysing power "in terms of *struggle, conflict* and *war* ... would ... confront the original hypothesis, according to which power is essentially repression, with a second hypothesis to the effect that power is war, a war continued by other means" (Foucault 1980a: 90; emphasis in the original). Although not an original formulation - consider Mao Zedong's aphorism that "[p]olitics is bloodless war, while war is the politics of bloodshed" (in Freedman 1994: 320) - Foucault made great play of thus reversing von Clausewitz's dictum that "[w]ar is ... a continuation of political activity by other means" (cited in Freedman 1994: 207). He elaborates:

It may be that war as strategy is a continuation of politics. But it must not be forgotten that 'politics' has been conceived as a continuation, if not exactly and directly of war, at least of the military model as a fundamental means of preventing civil disorder.

This idea of politics as war has both a theoretical and an empirical basis. Theoretically, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, broadly contemporaneous with the work of Hobbes, a belief manifested itself in England which presupposed the inadequacy of the judicial model of sovereignty, conceived of politics as war and accorded primacy to a theory of history as a struggle between classes or races (Foucault 1981c: 238). The influence of this discourse has been widespread and amply evident in socialism, Marxism, Darwinism and fascism (Foucault 1980d: 19), not to mention in Nietzsche and in Foucault's own work. In part, perhaps, this discourse on war was itself an effect of the increasing appropriation by Europe's centralising states of the institutions and practices of war and their subordination to the technical and professional control of a specific military apparatus; in this way "a society entirely permeated by war-relations was gradually replaced by a State equipped with military institutions" (Foucault 1980d: 16).

Empirically, the army amassed by each of the emerging nation-states of eighteenth century Europe "guaranteed civil peace no doubt because it was a real force, an ever-threatening sword, but also because it was a technique and a body of knowledge that could project their schema over the whole social body" (DP: 168). Politics between these states was often resolved by military strategy; simultaneously, the eradication of internal dissension and the maintenance of civil peace was a matter of military tactics, albeit carried out increasingly by the multiplying micro-powers of disciplinary society (DP: 168). Thus, at this moment when the Enlightenment was inventing the disciplines which underpinned its discovery of civil liberties (DP: 222), the knowledge-effects of relations of power became as important in subjecting an individual or a population as the power-effects of knowledge: as Kant put it with reference to Frederick the Great, only a ruler who is both enlightened *and* "has at hand a well-disciplined and numerous army to guarantee public security" may profitably dare to encourage his subjects to criticise and question (Kant 1996: 56).

The functions and the types of objectives pursued by the modern state and its apparatuses, with their twin trajectories of totalisation and individualisation, are doubtless of major significance for any contemporary understanding of politics and power relations. So too are the acts, desires and interests of those who wish to maintain their privileges, accumulate profit, operate statutory authority or exercise a trade (SP: 223). Yet relations of power are much too widespread and complex to be reduced to or explained by any set of apparatuses or institutions, let alone their plans, objectives or intentions.

[T]here is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives .... [but] ... let us not look for the headquarters that presides over its rationality ... the rationality of power is formed by ... tactics which, becoming connected to one another, attracting and propagating one another, but finding their base of support and their condition elsewhere, end by forming comprehensive systems (HS: 95; 1989: 284).

Differently put,

although it is true that its [disciplinary power's] pyramidal organization gives it a 'head', it is the apparatus as a whole that produces 'power' and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field (DP: 177).

Foucault's analysis, without denying that power relations often appear to radiate out to the rest of society from either a Hobbesian Leviathan or a Rousseauesque general will, sought to isolate not the source of power relations but the network of interlocking strategies which in themselves are neither authoritarian nor contractarian. At the centre of the 'carceral city', he suggested,

there is, not the 'centre of power', not a network of forces, but a multiple network of diverse elements - walls, space, institution, rules, discourse; ... the model of the carceral city is not, therefore, the body of the king, with the powers that emanate from it, nor the contractual meeting of wills from which a body that was both individual and collective was born, but a strategic distribution of elements of different natures and levels (DP: 307).

Whatever else the events of May 1968 may have signified, they demonstrated that power relations are not centralised in a single state apparatus, but are localised even in apparently revolutionary parties and trade unions (such as the Parti Communiste Français and the Confédération Générale de Travail) (Kritzman 1988: x-xi). While these "power relations do indeed 'serve'" the 'interests' of formidable groups and institutions, this is "not at all because they are 'in the service of' an economic interest taken as primary [as Marxism claims], rather because they are capable of being utilised in strategies" (Foucault 1980a: 142).

Thus, rather than examining a unitary power as it manifests itself in the centre as state or sovereign or law, we should investigate strategic relations of power which, in "their multiplicity, their differences, their specificity, their reversibility" (Foucault 1980d: 15), are often treated as marginal to and on the margins of those great centralised systems to which theories of sovereignty pay homage (DPS: 233). Their multiplicity: "they define

innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion of the power relations" (DP: 27). Their differences: relations of power differ in terms of their effects, their objectives, how they come into being and how they are institutionalised and rationalised (SP: 223-4; 1989: 188). Their specificity: though there are continuities between global states of domination and local tactics of power, they are neither analogous nor homologous; the latter enjoy "a specificity of mechanism and modality" (DP: 27; cited in Davidson 1995: 276). Their reversibility: given their multiplicity and their dependence upon freedom, relations of power allow for modifications in the manner in which subjects act upon and react to the actions of themselves and others. For example, liberal welfare state institutions, through the privatisation of risk and insurance, and the supplementation or replacement of social work with private counselling, self-help manuals and telephone help lines, implanted into citizens norms originally handled by state apparatuses, and made possible "precisely the 'reversibility' of relations of authority - what starts off as a norm to be implanted into citizens can be repossessed as a demand which citizens can make of authority" (Rose 1993: 296).

In reconceptualising power relations as war or strategy, Foucault not only made reference to, but appears to have been quite strongly influenced by, his studies (in 1975 and 1976) of that seventeenth century discourse on war which was convinced that "laws were born in the midst of expeditions, conquests, the burning of cities" (Foucault 1980d: 16; Pasquino 1993: 80). No doubt his early and abiding interest in Nietzsche's view of history as a perpetual struggle of forces against each other, adverse circumstances and themselves (Foucault 1977a: 149) had a lot to do with it. However, he also expressed reservations about the 'war-repression' schema and suggested that it be reconsidered (Foucault 1980a: 92). For one thing, the concept of repression is problematic in that it is a juridical one which both refers to sovereignty and derives from the disciplinary realms of the human sciences (DPS: 242). For another, power relations can be coded or strategically integrated in the form of 'war' *or* in the form of 'politics' - but only partly, never totally (HS: 93). Thirdly, before we conclude, overhastily, that war is "a primary and

fundamental state of things" and "the nucleus of political institutions", we should first ask: "how and when did the belief arise that it is war that functions in power relations, that an uninterrupted combat 'works' (*travaille*) peace, and that civil order is fundamentally a battle-order?" (Foucault 1980d: 16).

Foucault appears to be suggesting, consistent with his notion of 'power-knowledge', that conceptions of power are themselves stakes in power struggles (AK: 120), and that any attempt to reconceptualise power has repercussions at the levels of both politics and theory. His own efforts are no exception; in this respect, however, despite his cautionary tone, among his last words on the issue was to answer the following question in the affirmative: if we conceptualise power relations "in terms of relations of force, must we then decipher it following the general form of war?" (Foucault 1980d: 15). *The History of Sexuality*, originally conceived of as a six-volume project whose whole point lay in "a re-elaboration of the theory of power" (Foucault 1980a: 187), reinforced what had been proposed in *Discipline and Punish*: a "strategical model" of power relations, drawing on essential notions of force and war in Western societies (HS: 102).

The great strength of Foucault's reconceptualisation of power relations in terms of struggle, combat, war and strategy is that it is also able to account for those characteristics attributed to power by theories of sovereignty, that it is negative, repressive, centralised and homogeneous. Power relations conceived of as "a form of unspoken warfare", inscribed in social institutions, economic inequalities, language and individual bodies (Foucault 1980a: 90; HS: 93; 1980d: 16), allow for the existence of concentrations of power and epic confrontations. It recognises the existence of clearly demarcated front lines, where enclosures force peasants off the land, patriarchy imposes glass ceilings or unions withhold their labour; it acknowledges that behind these lines some might find safe 'rear areas' (such as the domestic sphere for a male captain of industry) - areas which others (feminists) might see as occupied territories. There are, thus, strategic objectives (aims), astute generals (intentions), overwhelming victories and unconditional surrenders (irreversible effects of defeat and domination). But more often than not relations of power



are characterised by slight adjustments to the balance of forces, modifications in one's strategic position, mobile defenses, weak probes, tactical withdrawals and limited gains, interspersed with the occasional heroic resistance or cunningly-executed ambush. One side seldom overwhelms or totally defeats the opponent (not even when one's demand is for 'unconditional surrender', as the economic resurgence of the defeated powers in World War II makes clear). Instead, one 'inflicts a reverse' upon them; one 'pins them down'; one forces a withdrawal; one beats off a counter-attack; one goes over to the offensive (or defensive); one mobilises, encircles, feints, outflanks, cuts supply lines, reconnoitres, deceives, surprises, out-manoevres or retreats. In short, one battle is unlikely to win the war: just as there are 'orders of battle', so permanent provocation is the 'order' of the day.

Most importantly, the war is continuous; strategies continue to be formulated, even by the vanquished, in response to other strategies, taking into account the state of the war as a whole and the alignment of forces. And even this total war is seldom zero-sum: "it does not obey the law of all or nothing" (DP: 27; Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 58; Poulantzas 1980: 132); one seldom 'wins' or 'loses' outright, one 'gains' or 'takes losses'. Power as war is far more like a continuous series of overlapping border clashes, perhaps interspersed with 'surgical strikes', rather than an all-out assault upon the enemy capital; it is limited, not *blitzkrieg*, controlled but no less devastating: the production of destruction. Since 1945 at least, war has ceased to be announced by formal declarations of war and prosecuted almost exclusively by regular troops in clearly demarcated zones. Instead, wars have no fronts, are fought by half-trained guerrillas, last for decades, cause huge civilian casualties and force mass migrations of refugees. But perhaps the best model for this notion of power as limited war is the Gulf War, in which a numerically superior Iraqi army was first contained, then rendered incapable of resistance and finally forced to surrender *en masse* by Western (though primarily United States) airpower and electronic counter-measures backed up by technologically advanced land and naval forces; and yet leaving the vanquished foe with its territory intact and its government uncontested, thus allowing for

the continuation of the struggle by other (economic and diplomatic) means (see also Gray 1997).

Conventional understandings of power tend to conflate strategy and tactics, indeed, even subordinate local tactics to the grand strategies of global forms of domination. For example, the local, tactical struggles of working women against the additional burden of unpaid domestic labour, of nationalist movements against colonial rule or blacks against racial discrimination, and even of striking workers against scab labour, were rarely considered by Marxist theorists as more than either marginal, subordinate or reducible to the global class struggle of proletarians against capital. Foucault, on the other hand, while not denying the importance of global strategies, emphasised the importance of everyday tactical engagements upon which broader struggles depend, to the extent that local successes or failures are not merely temporary and secondary hiccups but may well sound the death-knell for one or other primary global strategy:

one must conceive of the double conditioning of a strategy by the specificity of possible tactics, and of tactics by the strategic envelope that makes them work (HS: 100).

For example, it has been argued that the dramatic transformation of warfare during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars was less a result of revolutionary passion, the character of a nation or the military genius of a Napoleon or a Wellington, than of a number of small, relatively inconsequential tactical - or disciplinary - innovations (columnar or 'impulse' movement, more effective use of combined arms, the proximity of reserves, divisional organisation, multiple axes of operation, greater flexibility and timing) upon higher-level strategic actions (Nosworthy 1995: 86-99; cf. Finer 1975: 149-150). More recently, with the Cold War, "[t]he principle underlying the tactics of battle - that one has to be capable of killing in order to go on living - [became] ... the principle that defines the strategy of states" (HS: 137). As the great Prussian practitioner of the art of war, Von Moltke, put it, "[s]trategy leads the movement of the army for the *intended* battle; the form of its execution is determined by tactics" (*Doctrines of War*, in Freedman

1994: 22; emphasis in the original): whereas power as sovereignty assumes the pre-eminence of intended strategy, power as war recognises the mutually conditioning effects of unintended tactical consequences upon strategic planning.

It follows that one must be aware that Foucault's use of the term 'strategy' was often indistinguishable from what one might instead call 'tactics', in that in his work 'strategy' is usually characterised as local, dispersed, mobile and productive. Three meanings of the term 'strategy' - as means to an end, as game-plan, and as means destined to win a struggle -

come together in situations of confrontation - war or games - where the objective is to act upon an adversary in such a manner as to render the struggle impossible for him. So strategy is defined by the choice of winning solutions (SP: 225).

As "strategic games" (Foucault 1987b: 129; 1988a: 168), "[e]very power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle" or confrontation, in which the two forces do not lose their specific nature but where "each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal" (SP: 225). Power relations thus constantly fluctuate between open confrontations marked by "the free play of antagonistic reactions" between governors and governed, and periods of relative stability in which the conduct of erstwhile adversaries can be governed "in a fairly constant manner and with reasonable certainty" (SP: 225). A proliferation of struggles does not mean that power relations are inactive, have ceased to exist or are being worsted, but through their existence and prosecution constitute among the most essential components of power. Likewise, long periods of stable government underpinned by widespread consent do not indicate the taming of power relations, but only a contingently successful strategy. Strategies of power are always potentially unstable: at best, they equilibrate; at worst, they evolve into states of domination; more often, however, they combine with seemingly unrelated practices through which individuals govern themselves and others: "power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government" (SP: 221).

## ***VII Strategies of governance***

'Governance', 'government', 'governmentality' or 'governmental technologies' are terms which Foucault used interchangeably to describe the point where relations of power and states of domination intersect with what he called 'technologies of the self', especially "the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, ... the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination" (Foucault 1993a: 203; 1988b: 19).

[G]overning people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself (Foucault 1993a: 204).

Moreover, as we shall see in the following chapter, to exercise power over others by governing them is a process in which these others not only willingly participate but also produce knowledge of themselves: "the government of men demands on the part of each who is directed, beyond acts of obedience or submission, certain 'acts of truth', ... the manifestation, in enunciation, of who one is" (Foucault, quoted in Keenan 1982: 37). For example, the modern legal system demands more than a mere admission of guilt; it also requires "confession, self-examination, explanation of oneself, revelation of what one is" (Foucault 1988a: 126). The strategic games that criminals are called upon to play are as important as their crimes and punishments.

Government or governmentality - which refers broadly to "the way in which you govern your wife, your children, as well as the way you govern an institution" (Foucault 1987b: 130) - can be defined as

the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other. It is free individuals who try to control, to determine, to delimit the liberty of others and, in order to do that, they dispose of certain instruments to govern others (Foucault 1987b: 130-31).

Government is "the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick [and of oneself]" (SP: 221). Indeed, power *is* "conduct" - it both conducts or leads, and is a conduct or form of behaviour: "To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others" (SP: 221). The objectives of government are little different from the objectives of warfare: to impose, as much as possible, one's own style upon the game so as to derive maximum advantage from it. To speak thus of power relations as war, strategies of governance or rules of conduct is also to give the lie to those theories of sovereignty that reduce power relations to physical violence or domination; in fact, it is to suggest that war itself is less about naked coercion than is commonly assumed: "In war the moral is to the physical force as three to one" (Napoleon, quoted in Napier 1851: 89), and "those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without fighting" (Sun Tzu 1963: 79). Even that most fearsome of military tactics, the cavalry or bayonet charge, depended on the psychological preparedness and discipline of the attackers, and was commonly preceded by a hearty cheer intended to embolden and impel them (Nosworthy 1995: 241; see also Weber 1970: 265-57).

Foucault's comments on the strategies and tactics of governing oneself and others also have implications for conceptions of the state in terms of sovereignty. For Foucault, what is important nowadays "is not so much the State-domination of society, but the 'governmentalisation' of the State" (Foucault 1979a: 20). This governmentalisation is paradoxical in that modern politics is about governmentalisation to the extent that governmentalisation has allowed the State to survive (and is thus another reason for the persistence of conventional theories of political philosophy despite their inadequacy in explaining the modern functioning of relations of power): "it is the tactics of government



which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the State and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the State can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality" (Foucault 1979a: 21).

The concept of governance thus allows for useful contrasts to be drawn between prevailing conceptions of power, as sovereignty, and the disciplinary relations of power that Foucault believed practically and efficaciously underpin and colonise these conceptions. Power as sovereignty conceives of both power and knowledge in the form of a *tree*, maturing over time: primarily vertical and hierarchical, with roots and branches, top and bottom, dominant and dominated; where every subject knows its place in a relatively fixed if historically mutating order of things; and where discourses and texts are grouped into specialised disciplines and fields and ranged in order of importance. Power as governance conceives of both power and knowledge in the form of a *web*, "a fine, differentiated, continuous network" - institutionally-supported, knowledge-producing and discipline-effecting relays - "that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (Foucault 1979e: 89; 1986c: 22): simultaneously vertical and horizontal, hierarchical and lateral, with nodes and interstices in multiple, complex and contested interconnection such that what is dominant or subordinate is not always clearly apparent even if always potentially present; where different and shifting locations may be occupied by diverse subjects; and where discourses and texts refer constantly to other texts across genre distinctions. Power conceived in this way as a web of strategic or war-like relations is appropriate for our rapidly evolving "epoch of simultaneity" (Foucault 1986c: 22), the age of information and virtual reality in which what only recently was a global village is now being produced as a global body, in all senses of the word (body politic; body of knowledge; body corporate; and, not least, the physical body). The next chapter scrutinises the productivity of relations of power in terms of knowledge and subjectivity.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE PRODUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

### *1 The productivity of power relations*

Conceiving of power relations as strategies of government through 'mutual subjugation' and 'permanent provocation' makes it easier to understand one of their most prominent features: their productivity in relation to knowledge and subjects. This gives additional substance to Foucault's claim that power relations do not merely distort truth or repress people.

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse (Foucault 1980a: 119).

As Habermas phrases it nicely, "[Foucauldian] discourses emerge and pop like glittering bubbles from a swamp of anonymous processes of subjugation" (Habermas 1987: 268). Yet it must be borne in mind that subjugation, for Foucault, is a complex and multiform series of internal and external relationships, and is not reducible to domination or coercion:

How simple and easy it would be, no doubt, to dismantle power, if it only worked to supervise, to spy upon, to sneak up on, to prohibit and to punish; but it incites, instigates, produces; it isn't simply eye and ear; it brings about speech and action.

Doubtless this machinery has been important for the constitution of new knowledges (Foucault 1979e: 89).

Power relations do not simply take the form of prohibition and punishment but are "positive and multiple"; they are different, not uniform; flowing, not a unity; mobile, not a

system; and, most significantly, productive - "what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic" (Foucault 1983c: xiii; 1980a: 142).

The productivity of power relations are tied to their propensity to provoke, oblige, entice, gratify and discipline. Power

incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action (SP: 220).

Power relations produce responses, or instigate reactions, which are relational and thus internal to them, not least because the operation of power presupposes free subjects faced with several possible ways of behaving or comporting themselves. To speak of the productivity of power relations also allows one to conceive of power outside of binary oppositions or, at the very least, as simultaneously negative and positive: power relations may inhibit the possibility of some actions *and* increase the possibility of others.

Foucault's use of the term 'production' in relation to power relations draws upon but goes well beyond the Marxist emphasis upon explaining power relations by deriving them from social relations of production. As he puts it, "techniques of power are invented to meet the demands of production. I mean production here in the broad sense - it can be a matter of the 'production' of destruction, as with the army" (Foucault 1980a: 161). To reiterate: "not only 'production' in the strict sense, but also the production of knowledge and skills in the school, the production of health in the hospitals, the production of destructive force in the army" (DP: 219), and not least the manufacture of those being educated, healed or destroyed (Foucault, quoted in Macey 1993: 288). The productivity of power relations are evident in diverse fields, examples of all of which can be found in Foucault's own *oeuvre*, ranging from the production of knowledge and wealth through the production of madness and the manufacture of delinquency to the generation of sexuality and the

production of subjects. Here we shall focus particularly on the production of knowledge and of subjects.

## ***II The production of knowledge***

Foucault's account of the role of power relations in the production of knowledge stands both within and against a tradition which stretches at least as far back as Destutt de Tracy's institute for the study of ideas, established just after the French Revolution. Since that time, the relationship between power relations and knowledge has been the subject of numerous investigations most commonly grouped around the concept of 'ideology'. For some, such as Karl Mannheim (1954), ideology referred simply and neutrally to any set of beliefs or ideas. For others, particularly Marxists, who until Foucault made up what is by far the dominant tendency, ideology has pejorative connotations, referring to 'phantoms' or ideas which, while credible "sublimates of their material life-process", are often blatant mystifications in which "men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 164). Althusser took this further by radically distinguishing between science and ideology, and defined ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1971: 153). In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas, too, distinguished "between cognitive processes that reflect an ideologically defined perspective and thought processes that can be regarded as embodying a '*critique of ideology*'" (de Kadt 1975: 23; emphasis in the original).

These kinds of analyses of ideology are premised on what, for Foucault, is an Enlightenment humanist prejudice that insists that truth, or science, or critique, are in essence disinterested or non-ideological, and that unchecked power-interests will inevitably tend to distort them:

It has been a tradition for humanism to assume that once someone gains power he ceases to know;

that

only those who keep their distance from power ... can discover the truth (Foucault 1980a: 51);

and that

knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests (DP: 27).

Arguing that the concept of ideology is patently unable to deal with the relationship between power relations and knowledge, Foucault tackled this prejudice point by point: those in power know well enough; only those who, willingly or unwillingly, allow power to play across their bodies and souls can produce truth, and thus knowledge develops only within the bounds and at the behest of power.

In the first place, argued Foucault, 'ideology', at least in the dominant, Marxist tradition, stands opposed to 'truth' (Foucault 1980a: 118). Here, whereas truth, and especially 'science', are seen as power-free, 'ideology' is that knowledge which has been distorted by power:

[The concept of ideology] has been used to explain errors or illusions, or to analyze presentations - in short, everything that impedes the formation of true discourse. It has also been used to show the relation between what goes on in people's heads and their place in the conditions of production. In sum, the economics of untruth. My problem [on the other hand] is the politics of truth (Foucault 1977b: 157).

This aspect of the concept of ideology has prompted Marxists like Lukacs to argue that only the proletariat, to the extent that it becomes conscious of its historical mission as interpreted by the science of Marxism, is capable of truly understanding the nature and



depredations of capitalism, while the bourgeoisie has lost any such awareness that it may have had as a once-revolutionary class. On the contrary, argued Foucault, the bourgeoisie is not stupid; rather, "one has to reckon with its strokes of genius, and among these is precisely the fact of its managing to construct machines of power allowing circuits of profit" (Foucault 1980a: 160). Rather than attempting to account for the production of knowledge in terms of 'science' and 'ideology', we must conceive of it instead in terms of 'truth' and 'power' (Foucault 1984a: 74).

Secondly, and again in the Marxist tradition, ideology as 'the economics of untruth' tends to be treated as secondary relative to an infrastructure (Foucault 1980a: 118): the conditions of production are taken to determine what people think, and since those conditions are understood to be alienating and exploitative, it follows that the consciousness of people will be distorted, illusory or downright false. Truth, on the other hand, is supposedly the preserve of those whose location on the margins of centres of power (subject to alienation in the sphere of production or experiencing dissonance through exposure to the science of Marxism) gives them insights into the nature of the system. Much of Foucault's work, however, argued that forms of knowledge are to a large degree the fabricated effects of complex relations of power (which may indeed include but are not confined to an 'infrastructure'). Contrary to the conventional humanist wisdom, it is not *truth* but *power* which limits power: "it is the power over self which will regulate the power over others", reducing the ever-present potential for domination to "a minimum" (Foucault 1987b: 129, 119). This idea that it is precisely those who are undisciplined, swayed by appetite or interest, who are most likely to abuse power, can be traced back to Stoicism and was central to the long-standing (until recently) Western antipathy to democracy. It also has echoes in recent fiction such as Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*. For the character Malcolm, a mathematician who subscribes to chaos theory, the discipline and sacrifice required in order to learn how to kill with one's bare hands also matures one to the point where this power to kill won't be used unwisely: "[t]he discipline of getting the power changes you so that you won't abuse it" (Crichton 1991: 306). In contrast, the power of modern science, such as the knowledge and

capacity to build weapons of mass destruction, can be purchased or otherwise attained without discipline, and hence is far more dangerous.

Thirdly, Foucault argues that the concept of ideology necessarily makes reference to the modern theory of the subject as a conscious agent (Foucault 1980a: 118):

what troubles me with these analyses which prioritise ideology is that there is always presupposed a human subject on the lines of the model provided by classical philosophy, endowed with a consciousness which power is then thought to seize upon (Foucault 1980a: 58).

He continued:

What I wanted to show [in *The History of Sexuality*] is how power relations can materially penetrate the body in depth, without depending even on the mediation of the subject's own representations. If power takes hold on the body, it isn't through its having first to be interiorised in people's consciousnesses (Foucault 1980a: 186).

Theories of ideology are completely oblivious to the presence of power relations in and around the truths they ironically seek to defend *against* power, and thus persist in targeting those they assume to have been duped rather than those, including those engaged in ideology-critique, who take for granted the power of science.

The problem is not changing people's consciousness - or what's in their heads - but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.

It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power), but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time (Foucault 1984a: 74-5).

Hence, power relations do not operate through ideologies that 'misrepresent' reality or 'mystify' our consciousnesses; on the contrary, common beliefs such that we are politically

duped or sexually repressed are themselves products of the manner in which we have been subjected - as sovereign, self-conscious and free individuals - through relations of power, and it is precisely this production of soothsaying subjects that must be questioned (see also Chapter 2, Section I).

What is especially instructive is Foucault's treatment of "the discourse ... constituted by the *Ideologues*" as itself a technology of power:

This discourse provided, in effect, by means of the theory of interests, representations and signs, by the series and geneses that it reconstituted, a sort of general recipe for the exercise of power over men: the 'mind' as a surface of inscription for power, with semiology as its tool; the submission of bodies through the control of ideas; the analysis of representations as a principle in a politics of bodies that was much more effective than the ritual anatomy of torture and execution. The thought of the *Ideologues* was not only a theory of the individual and society; it developed as a technology of subtle, effective, economic powers, in opposition to the sumptuous expenditure of the power of the sovereign (DP: 102; see also Bauman 1987: 99).

It follows from this that the theory and concept of 'ideology' itself constitutes an ideology, or better, constitutes a discourse which operates as a technology of power disguised as an ideology pretending to be a science. Any theory, regardless of whether it implicitly sees itself as drawing upon the negative Marxist or the 'neutral' liberal concept of ideology, which claims to scientifically investigate the real and apparent interests of individuals and groups and the extent to which these interests command representation, immediately finds itself caught up in the paradoxical but effective consequences of its own mode of theorisation. The manner in which the sciences of craniometrics and IQ testing both built on and extended Western cultural assumptions and racist practices of eugenics (Gould 1981; HS: 148-9), are other prime examples of the way in which knowledge, produced through relations of power, itself serves to extend relations of power.

None of this is to suggest that Foucault denied the existence of ideologies, or denied that knowledge is a target of political investment. Indeed, in his work he occasionally made

direct use of the concept of ideology (see 1984a: 71-2; DP: 194), and also used it indirectly to explain how the effective, practical operation of power may be masked by formal political or juridical mechanisms (in Elders 1974: 171; DP: 222; see also Rabinow 1984: 6, and Chapter Three above). It is to suggest, however, that it is insufficient to focus on mental or cognitive functions, consciousness or representations when it is precisely these functions, states and simulations that have been made possible and constituted by power relations. The instruments, procedures, objectives, status and forms of institutionalisation of knowledge, argued Foucault consistently, are inseparably connected to relations of power:

[Relations of power consist of] the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge - methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control (DPS: 237).

Lest it be said, again, that this is to eviscerate truth, the production of knowledge through power relations is in fact an indication not of the omniscience of power relations but of their inadequacy: "If power relationships have produced forms of investigation, of analysis, of models of knowledge, etc., it is precisely ... because the power ... was blind, because it was in a state of impasse" (Foucault 1989: 183-4).

In this regard, statistics, or the science of the state, is often mentioned by Foucault as a prime example of a form of knowledge which was an indispensable requirement for governing the large, expanding and shifting populations of modern states (Foucault 1981e: 245; 1979d: 63), but beyond that, the emergence of the human sciences as a whole - "the formation of clinical medicine, psychiatry, child psychology, educational psychology, the rationalization of labour" (DP: 224), not to mention sociology and historiography (Foucault 1979d: 65-66) - was premised on particular disciplinary relations of power. (Indeed, Foucault may have been one of the first to analyse in some detail the production of knowledge through power, but even in this he was only being a good Kantian: "a lesser degree of civil freedom gives intellectual freedom enough room to expand to its fullest

extent" - Kant 1996: 57). Even the great, ambiguous and never-resolved mid-century debates within most of these disciplines over whether or not they should model themselves on the natural sciences - positivism versus hermeneutics, explanation versus *verstehen*, or, at another level, structuralism versus humanism - were merely a series of extrusions on the branches of modern discipline (Foucault 1989: 4-5; OT: 348-49, 356). However, there is nothing fixed or immutable about the outcome of such power-induced processes of producing knowledge: "certain forms of power ... of the same type [can] give rise to bodies of knowledge that [are] extremely different both in their object and their structure", in that the hospital which gave rise to psychiatric confinement made possible the formation of both a psychiatric knowledge and an anatomico-pathological knowledge (Foucault 1988a: 265). Nor are these forms of knowledge simply reducible to relations of power, and thus somehow irredeemably tainted: even ideology is not exclusive of scientificity (AK: 186), and the fact that knowledge cannot be divorced from power relations "in no way impairs the scientific validity" of the knowledge in question but is a necessary feature of thought (Foucault 1987b: 127).

While Foucault and Habermas converged in seeing in psychoanalytic knowledge certain critical possibilities, they diverged radically with respect to the implications thereof. Habermas argues that the psychoanalytic conversation between doctor and patient offers a model through which individuals can critically liberate themselves from particular illusions (Habermas 1987: 299-300), while Foucault thought that, in some ways, psychoanalysis called into question precisely this modern obsession with liberating alienated man (OT: 376; 1971a: 277-78). Indeed, Habermas' argument, that psychoanalysis and other anti-positivist,

hermeneutical and critical approaches ... were tailored in their forms of knowledge to possibilities of application *other* than manipulation of self and others (1987: 272-73; emphasis in the original),

appears to ignore several recent criticisms which brand these approaches as just as totalitarian as positivism. For example, an uncritical faith in the "unforced force" of a



universal reason tends to conceal real inequalities between and amongst professionals (such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, priests, social workers and psychologists, intellectuals alike) and their clients (patients, learners, clients, congregations, the poor, the needy and the disturbed - the laity in general) (Spivak 1992: 14) and to embroil emancipatory discourses in paradox, such as those inherent in their aversion to technocratic manipulation and their impulse to intervene strategically on behalf of the oppressed (Touraine 1988: 157), or in some subjects 'making' others autonomous without directing them (Ellsworth 1989: 308).

Taylor, too, suggests that Foucault read "the rise of humanitarianism exclusively in terms of the new technologies of control" and thus missed the "ambivalence" of the new disciplines which have not only fed a system of control but

have also taken the form of genuine self-disciplines which have made possible new kinds of collective action characterized by more egalitarian forms of participation (Taylor 1985a: 165; see also Habermas 1987: 290, 292).

With this idea of disciplinary "ambivalence", Taylor comes closer than Habermas to Foucault's belief in the close affinity of knowledge with relations of power: "collective disciplines can function in both ways, as structures of domination, and as bases for equal collective action. And they can also slide over time from one to the other" (Taylor 1985a: 166).

However, the example that Taylor gives of such a 'slide' undercuts his own argument by revealing a one-sidedness and a tendency to reduce power relations to domination. To say that "[t]he threatened degeneracy of modern mass democracies is a *slide* from one of these directions to the other" (Taylor 1985a: 166; emphasis in the original), is only a partially valid example: it is in fact an example of a slide from democracy and freedom to tyranny and control, *not* vice-versa, *not* from any one of these directions to any other but from a *particular* direction to another. Taylor does not even consider that this 'slide' could be *from* domination *to* freedom, which is exactly what Foucault is suggesting when he re-

interprets modern humanist claims that our societies are more civilised than they were in the past to refer to the relative success of the civilising forces of normalisation in subjecting us to freedom. In the same vein, for Laclau, "bureaucracy - the opposite of democracy - is the historical condition for it" (Laclau 1990: 54). Taylor does not imagine this possibility because, for him as also, arguably, for Habermas, power equals domination against which freedom stands opposed (whereas, for Foucault, power equals subjection of which freedom is an integral part). In other words, what Taylor is really suggesting here is that these 'ambivalent new disciplines' are primarily orientated towards freedom, and that it is an anomaly to be deprecated when they turn out not to be so inclined.

In response to a criticism by Connolly that he misreads and obscures Foucault's arguments, Taylor offers the shift from nineteenth-century manhood to twentieth-century universal suffrage as another example of humanitarian progress which Foucault's approach to truth cannot accommodate. He suggests that this change in how we conceive of human subjects could be read as a "relative gain in freedom .... [and in] truth", "a less distorted or more defensible application of the very ethos of citizen self-rule itself" (Taylor 1985b: 382). Contrary to Taylor's argument, no one, not least Foucault, is stopping him or anyone else from *interpreting*, and even acting upon, this change in terms of progress; rather, Foucault wishes to preclude the common and usually uncritical claim that this change is qualitatively for the better rather than for worse. For on what grounds is it guaranteed that now that women have the vote, they are better off with than without it, especially if one takes into account Foucault's argument that new relations of power will have accompanied this change? To suggest that this change constituted a 'more defensible application of citizen self-rule' flies in the face not only of early modern history and the extent to which the conditions for democracy and development in the West were created "by bloody repression and forced cultural assimilation, by projects of centralizing political power and state building ..., and by ... military conflicts within as well as between states" (Calhoun 1995: 234; see also Latouche 1993: 88), but as Taylor himself points out, even that oft-cited benchmark of democracy - ancient Athens - was premised on the exclusion of slaves, women and foreigners. Women are neither better or worse off with the vote

than without; they are different beings in a different context and subjected to different relations of power which do not rule out strategic gains or losses but which, in themselves if not in specific historical contexts, are undecidable.

Hence, when Taylor argues that "[w]e will never see what is going on if we think of the disciplines as having their exclusive historical and social significance in forms of domination" (Taylor 1985a: 166), he is silently assuming that 'what is going on' involves disciplines which are ostensibly ambivalent but actually orientated towards freedom, equality, participation and progress. He also argues:

That the aspiration to express one's true nature can *become* a mechanism of control is indeed true, and Foucault can offer insights on this. But just as in the case of bureaucratization above, you incapacitate yourself to understand this *becoming* if you conceive it from the beginning as essentially *being* control (Taylor 1985a: 167).

In this formulation, by definition, "the aspiration to express one's true nature" is "from the beginning" *not* control, different from and opposed to control; it is, in short, freedom. Control and domination may impinge upon this freedom, may, in Habermas' words, 'foreshorten and distort' it (Habermas 1987: 311), but there is only the remotest possibility of freedom actually becoming control since there are so many mechanisms available in order to counteract it. Taylor's Enlightenment understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge, control and freedom, prevents him from considering the possibility that 'one's true nature', while not reducible to 'control', may nevertheless be a fabrication.

For Foucault, relations of power not only produce but depend upon the production of knowledge; they cannot be established, consolidated or implemented "without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of ... a certain economy of discourses of truth" (DPS: 229; HS: 98):

We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth (DPS: 229-30).

On the one hand, abundant examples of the ways in which "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge" (Foucault 1980a: 52) can be found in Foucault's own analyses of the coercions and constraints productively exercised over madness, illness, crime and sexuality. Foucault took every opportunity to restate and reinforce this fundamental insight of his work:

Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power (Foucault 1984a: 72-3).

However, while Foucault understandably rejected those intellectual self-conceptions inscribed in Western culture such that truth is somehow free, pure and the product of genius, it is important to trim the polemical edges off some of his arguments in this regard. The quotation above ought not to be interpreted as suggesting that the free, the eremitic or the self-liberated have no access to truth whatsoever. On the contrary, what is important is the discipline involved in seeking the truth, and the manner in which subjects are incited to form their ways of being (Rajchman 1991: 60): truth is the product of constraint, including those actions freely directed against oneself such as self-denial, self-regulation or self-formation.

In this vein, Bauman has argued that, for millennia (and uninterruptedly, Gramsci (1971: 7) would have added), those in search of truth have legitimated their roles and justified their differences from the rest of society in three ways: by subjecting themselves to various *ordeals* (such as living an ascetic existence; self-immolation; monastic humility; or enduring the protracted miseries of student life); by treating themselves and their craft as unique, needing to be protected as *taboo* and kept free from contamination (thus emphasising purification rites, sexual abstinence, bohemian difference, value-neutrality, transcendental reduction or practical institutional isolation); or by laying stress on the

degree to which their dedication to the pursuit of the truth is manifested in physical or mental *possession* or a professional attitude.

Ordeal, purification and possession; these three seminal and, arguably, permanent constituents of the legitimation of priestly authority have one feature in common. They all proclaim, and explain, the separation of the priesthood from the laity. They put whatever wisdom or skill the priests may own beyond the reach of all those who are not priests. They elevate the priestly ways, by the same token downgrading the paths of the laity. And they present the resultant relationship of domination as one of service and self-sacrifice (Bauman 1987: 13).

Throughout history, knowledge and power relations have supported each other; and from the moment that the division of labour elevated intellectuals above the laity, their pronouncements were not only endowed with the mantle of truth but could be employed in legitimating this division itself. Thus, not only do power relations create knowledge, but, on the other hand, "and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault 1980a: 52; DP: 27; Morris & Patton 1979: 62), as discourses arrogate to themselves the mantle of science or revealed truth. In this process, they disqualify other forms of knowledge; regulate, train, examine and grade individuals and classify things; licence or restrict who can speak and about what; and codify mechanisms which allow one to distinguish between true and false statements, accord value to certain techniques of knowledge-production and enhance the status of those who say what is true (Foucault 1980a: 85; Muller & Cloete 1986: 19; Fraser 1989: 20).

### ***III The production of subjectivity***

As we have seen, a conception of power as strategic relations of governance and resistance by free subjects stands in stark contrast to conventional accounts of power as a property or a possession intentionally wielded by a agent. The relational format of power means that power can only be exercised (DP: 26, 177; HS: 94; 1981e: 253): indeed, "[e]verywhere that power exists, it is being exercised" (Foucault 1977a: 213), or, conversely, "power exists only when it is put into action" (SP: 219). Note that, as argued



above in Chapter Four, the opposite of this does not also hold true: every exercise, every action, does not necessarily involve power relations. However, the exercise of power cannot be attributed to the spontaneous actions of either individuals or groups: "power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective" (HS: 94) - "[p]eople know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does" (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 187). Hence, "power is not built up out of 'wills' (individual or collective), nor is it derivable from interests" (Foucault 1980a: 188), and the intentions of or objectives pursued "by those who act upon the actions of others" (SP: 223), whether an individual, a group, an institution or a state apparatus, are invested in the practical and effective exercise of power. However, to say that power is nonsubjective does not mean that it is "subjectless", as Habermas (1987: 274) interprets Foucault, since subjects are the indispensable vehicles and targets of power relations.

Similarly, power relations may be about *action*, but they are not about *agents* in the conventional sense of a transparently self-aware and creative being; at most, power relations involve agents who have been constituted as such, as subjects acting on other subjects amidst a complex web of relations wherein, moreover, neither set of subjects can be characterised simply as the 'victims' (Hacking 1986b: 235). The role of power relations as conditions, and not obstacles, for freedom and agency and the production of subjectivity will be discussed later in this chapter. For the moment, it is worth noting that this view of relations of power is analogous to the way in which modern physics conceives of the material universe:

At the subatomic level the interrelations and interactions between the parts of the whole are more fundamental than the parts themselves. There is motion but there are, ultimately, no moving objects; there is activity but there are no actors; there are no dancers, there is only the dance (Capra 1983: 83).

Hence, we should not search for the perpetrators or the wielders of power, for what is important is not who they are, how they appear or where they may be located, but "how it

is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc." (HS: 233).

A theory of sovereignty such as that of Hobbes fails to pay attention to this aspect of power. Hobbes conceives of power in the form of a harsh Leviathan, a unitary body *constituted* out of a multiplicity of individual wills, and ignores the local productivity of relations of power and their role in the fragmentary *constitution* or subjection of bodies and individuals. Modern disciplinary power in fact

categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects

in the dual sense of "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (SP: 212, emphasis in the original).

Individuals are both the targets of power relations and the elements of their articulation: "the individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle" (DPS: 234; DP: 27).

Foucault made several references to the dual or ambiguous nature of the term 'subject', and in this regard his work paralleled that of fellow *normalien* and structuralist Marxist, Louis Althusser. In his celebrated essay on "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", Althusser noted the

ambiguity of the term *subject*. In the ordinary use of the term, subject in fact means: (1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission.... [T]he individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection ... (Althusser 1971: 169; emphasis in the original).

Similarly, Foucault argued that the individual at the heart of Western humanist thought (whether as natural hero or as *bête noire*), is not a natural essence but an 'artifact', "a reality fabricated" (DP: 194; see also 1976a: 170), a recent and fragile product of disciplinary mechanisms which were built upon Christian practices of confession and examination, and came into their own during the Enlightenment. Indeed, Western individualism, far from being a common human experience, is in fact "an eccentricity among cultures" (Morris 1972: 2), albeit an extremely useful and productive one.

The individual, an ambiguous being whose personal rights are nevertheless subjected to the laws of nature and society, is also only one among many "subjected sovereignties" invented by humanism (albeit perhaps the most important of these inventions): there are also

the soul (ruling the body, but subjected to God), consciousness (sovereign in a context of judgment, but subjected to the necessities of truth), ... [and] basic freedom (sovereign within, but accepting the demands of an outside world and 'aligned with destiny') (Foucault 1977a: 221).

Another example of such a "subjected sovereignty" can be seen in the system of private property: "the proprietor is fully in control of his goods; he can use or abuse them, but he must nevertheless submit to the laws that support his claim to property" (Foucault 1977a: 222).

As 'subjected sovereignties', individuals (as well as groups, for that matter) are neither purely determined creatures nor untrammelled agents. Both their freedom of choice, implying sovereignty, and their capacity to act, implying power relations, depend on a prior determination or authorisation by power relations; conversely, relations of power depend on the existence of individuals who are capable of free choice and action, and upon legitimating forms of knowledge. Human subjects are the ever-varied, ever-differing products of a network of relations which, presently, determines that they be free; they are the active chroniclers of an historical narrative in which, goaded by power relations and

prompted by truth, they play the lead roles. The implications of this Foucauldian conception of the subject for what might be called the 'master dichotomy' of modernity, that between structure and agency, will be discussed further below.

Hence, rather than asking of ideal subjects the Hobbesian question of what they have yielded up of themselves, their powers or their freedoms in order to be subjected (that is, in order to join in a social contract), "one should inquire how the relations of subjection are able to fabricate subjects" (Foucault 1980d: 15) who, as such, have been "*condemned to be free ...*" (Laclau 1990: 44; emphasis in the original). Such an inquiry cannot limit itself to the professed interests, rights and responsibilities of those involved, but rather must examine

the way in which it [discipline] is imposed, the mechanisms it brings into play, the non-reversible subordination of one group of people by another, the 'surplus' power that is always fixed on the same side, the inequality of position of the different 'partners' in relation to the common regulation (DP: 223).

What is required is not an analysis of the state but a "political 'anatomy'" of the 'body politic' (DP: 28), a 'political anatomy' which is at the same time a 'mechanics of power' (DP: 138), both a 'theoretical' analysis and a technological 'practice', simultaneously a knowledge facilitating subjection and a subjection producing knowledge. We have already referred to the discourse surrounding the concept of ideology as fitting this description. Liberalism is another example of a discourse with powerful reality-altering knowledge-effects. Liberalism is usually seen as a doctrine concerned with maximising individual liberties, the private sphere or the community of autonomous individuals - a given, 'natural' reality from which the nature of the state is then derived. Following Foucault, however, this sphere of individual liberty ought instead to be understood as artificial, a product of liberal governmental interventions in a population *already*, to some degree, rendered 'uniform, regular and calculable' (Nietzsche, cited in Hindess 1993: 303).

#### ***IV Power relations, knowledge and subjectivity***

In the preceding two sections, Foucault's notion of the productive capacity of relations of power has been considered analytically and separately in relation first to knowledge and then to human subjects. However, the creativity of power relations seldom occurs in isolation; it is much more likely that relations of power, forms of knowledge and human subjects standing in specific relationships to each other, overlap and come to constitute an integrated whole. That such complex compounds are the rule rather than the exception is lent support from within language, which makes reference not merely to a dual meaning of the term 'subject' but a trio of meanings: apart from referring to both a free Subject or agent and a subjected or subordinate being, 'subject' is also used when referring to a discipline or a body of knowledge. The relationship between the three senses of the term can be summed up as follows:

*Subject* These 'power-knowledge relations' are to be analysed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge (DP: 27-8).

Here, in keeping with his notion of the productivity of power relations, Foucault is suggesting that subjects (as authors) do not produce knowledge but are instead produced by relations of power which at the same time generate knowledge. Indeed, it may be more accurate to say that, for Foucault, individual subjects are the products of *both* power relations and knowledge (or 'power-knowledge'): "at the very centre of the carceral city, ... calculated methods, techniques, 'sciences' ... permit the fabrication of the disciplinary individual" (DP: 308).



As mentioned above, foremost amongst those forms of knowledge that extrude from processes whereby relations of power produce subjects, are the modern human sciences, phenomena which made their appearance only with the emergence and consolidation of the disciplines which manufactured 'Man'. The familiar writing techniques which accompanied the rise of the examination in the seventeenth century - notation, registration, filing and tabling - "were of decisive importance in the epistemological 'thaw' of the sciences of the individual" (DP: 191, 193, 226):

A meticulous observation of detail, and at the same time a political awareness of these small things, for the control and use of men ... [;] from such trifles, no doubt, the man of modern humanism was born (DP: 141).

'Man', the self-conscious, reflective and creative author of scientific knowledge and the empowered agent of progressive social transformation, is a recent product of a centuries-long process which can be traced back through various brands of Christianity and mysticism to at least Greek Stoicism (see Chapter Three).

While the human sciences are unique in having as their object a knowing subject, the natural sciences share their embeddedness in specifically social practices: "the sciences of man were born at the moment when the procedures of surveillance and record-taking of individuals were established", while the sciences of nature grew out of general practices of investigation modelled on the Inquisition or derived from late-eighteenth century travellers' tales (Foucault 1980a: 74), just as, in Greece, "mathematics were born from techniques of measurement" (DP: 226; AK: 189). The development of parts of modern science, both human and natural, have been directly premised on the requirements of the military: the military camp which organised space in order to facilitate observation provided a model for many panoptic technologies (DP: 171; Smart 1985: 86); and the discipline of engineering emerged out of techniques of fortification construction and siege warfare, with which mathematics was also closely associated (Aries 1962: 197-199). The young Kant was employed to teach mathematics, geography and fortification to Prussian officers in Königsberg. It was also no mere coincidence that the empirical sciences that

sought to order the things of the world began to develop at the same time as "the western world was beginning the economic and political conquest of this same world" (DP: 226). Social coercion, economic development and scientific progress went hand-in-hand: for example, it has been argued that "participation in five major wars between 1689 and 1783 was a major stimulus for English industry and trade at a crucial early stage in the world's first industrial revolution" (Beckett, in Freedman 1994: 255). In similar vein, the scientific and technological advances that refine mechanisms of war are also the benchmarks of civilisation, as a Japanese diplomat remarked to his European counterpart at the 1899 Hague Conference for Peace and Disarmament: "We show ourselves at least your equals in scientific butchery, and at once we are admitted to your council tables as civilized men" (quoted by Best, in Freedman 1994: 268).

'Man', as a recent invention of the human sciences, is also likened to "a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (OT: 387). That is to say, it is possible that recent developments in the human sciences themselves - notably, the 'linguistic turn' - may have signed the death warrant of that very figure reflectively awakened, less than three centuries ago, to the realisation of its own presence in the present. Beginning as early as Marx's historical focus on modes of production and continuing with Nietzsche's genealogy and Freud's explanation of identity in terms of the unconscious, "in their development the sciences of man lead to the disappearance of man rather than to his apotheosis" (Foucault 1989: 7, 50; AK: 13; Hall 1992b: 288). When the Enlightenment flung off the self-imposed chains of religion and tradition, and the following century incarnated god in humanity, Western philosophy dreamed the eschatological hope of using the new-found knowledge of Man to liberate him from his alienation and make him "master of himself", self-determining, "an object of knowledge so that man could become subject of his own liberty and of his own existence" (Foucault 1989: 38, 36). No wonder so much contemporary thought resists even contemplating the possibility that God's replacement, the supposed master of all meaning, is an even more imaginary creature. Ironically, the primary challenge faced by God's assassins comes not from his earth-bound minions but from the dense babble of

voices unleashed by his murder; in the face of their homicidal paranoia, Foucault gaily retorted:

it is quite possible that you have killed God under the weight of all that you have said; but don't think that you will make, from all that you are saying, a man who lives longer than he (Foucault 1978b: 26; AK: 211).

Of course, Foucault was only repeating what had originally been stated by the man who, like Mark Antony who came only to bury Caesar, believed that Man was not worth praising (*Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene II): "[i]t may be that mankind will eventually perish from this passion for knowledge" (Nietzsche, quoted in Foucault 1977a: 163), will disintegrate under the impact of "the signs that were born in him" (Foucault 1989: 6-7).

## **V The 'death' of the subject**

Thus has it come to pass that the linguistic turn, which took the Western will to truth one step further to search for truths deemed inherent within language, threatens the very existence of 'Man'. For Foucault, this philosophical development constituted either a revival of some of the concerns of the Classical age, or an omen "announcing that man is disappearing" (Foucault 1989: 6; OT: 383).

Le 'je' a explosé (voyez la littérature moderne) - c'est la découverte du 'il y a'. Il y a un *on*. D'une certaine façon on en revient au point de vue du XVII siècle, avec cette différence: non pas mettre l'homme à la place de Dieu, mais une pensée anonyme, du savoir sans sujet, du théorique sans identité (Foucault 1966: 15).

The 'I' has exploded (witness modern literature) - it is the discovery of 'it is'. It is a *one*. In a certain manner one has returned to the point of view of the XVII century, with this difference: putting not man in the place of God, but an anonymous thought, knowledge without a subject, theory without identity (My translation - RD).

This formulation of the 'death of the subject', of an I that vanishes without trace in the vastness of language, has been a familiar refrain in both structuralist and postmodern theory. Yet, in relation to Foucault's work, to speak in absolute terms of Man's demise is something of a misnomer. It would be far more accurate to phrase the matter historically, and to conceive of the self-present, self-reflective modern subject as the latest in a series of historical fabrications assembled by a unique, constantly mutating and ancient will to truth.

"[I]dentity and subjectivity", for Foucault, are not "deep and ... natural" but are "determined by political and social factors" (Foucault 1980e: 4). "[T]here is no sovereign, founding subject" (Foucault 1988a: 50-1); rather, "the individual is no more than a pale form which arises for a moment from a great stock that is both stubborn and repetitive. Individuals - the pseudopodia of sexuality, quickly retracted" (Foucault, quoted in Macey 1993: 256). In the first place, this pale

form is not above all or always identical to itself. You do not have towards yourself the same kind of relationships when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes and votes or speaks up in a meeting, and when you try to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship (Foucault 1987b: 121).

And while these different forms of the subject are historically interrelated, not least because they are all deemed to bear truth in some way, "in each case, we play, we establish with one's self some different form of relationship" (Foucault 1987b: 121).

Thus, the subject has no fixed identity, nor does it create and manipulate discourses or possess power; it assumes different identities and functions within different discourses and relations of power (Foucault 1978b: 13).

Identity, it has been argued, is a "political construction which takes place against the background of a range of sedimented practices" (Laclau 1990: 35; Martin 1992: 102; Calhoun 1995: 212), a claim which both echoes and refines Marx's famous caveat regarding a naive voluntarist politics which ignores that "the tradition of all the dead

generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 300).

Each one person is captured by a plurality of categorizations, each of which works over, to reconfigure, the other categorizations. At the same time the dominant categorizations encounter and negotiate with historical residues, as well as emergent formations, which may be simply alternative or actively oppositional. Thus identities are not just plural (an idea typical of postmodern indifference). They are historical complexes of textured difference (Pollock 1992: 163-4).

It is these 'historical complexes of textured difference' which not only engender that familiar 'gut feeling' that subjects have single, coherent identities but literally construct various comforting, but ultimately fantastic, subjective narratives and performances (Hall 1992b: 277). From this subjectivity peculiar to modernity in which "the human being begins to exist within his organism, inside the shell of his head, inside the armature of his limbs" (OT: 318), from this kind of "psychological subjectivity that the psychoanalysts deal with", we are invited to liberate ourselves:

We are prisoners of certain conceptions about ourselves and our behavior. We have to liberate our own subjectivity, our own relation to ourselves (Foucault 1980e: 4).

While Foucault might well be interpreted here as suggesting that we have some inherent subjectivity which needs to be set free, it is much more consistent with his corpus to understand this 'liberation' as one which renders hollow all injunctions that we are in need of liberation, one which liberates us from the belief that we stand in need of liberation. Freedom is not a state, it is an activity, an insistent and unrelenting struggle: "I do not think that there is anything that is functionally - by its very nature - absolutely liberating. Liberty is a *practice* [...] .... 'liberty' is what must be exercised" (Foucault 1984a: 245; emphasis in the original).

Stuart Hall offers a useful way of thinking about a subjective identity which is never fixed:



[R]ather than speaking of identity as a finished thing, we should speak of *identification*, and see it as an ongoing process. Identity arises, not so much from the fullness of identity which is already inside us as individuals, but from a *lack* of wholeness which is 'filled' from *outside us*, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by *others* (Hall 1992b: 287; emphasis in the original).

In his existence man appears as "immediately interwoven with others" (OT: 351): that is, the ongoing constitution of the subject, "the entire process of subjectivation, of assuming different subject-positions" (Zizek 1990: 253), always takes place intersubjectively, through and in relation to others (including one's self), who may either be objects for oneself or subjects for whom one is an object. As Hegel pointed out in his discussion of the dialectic between Lord and Bondsman, "self-consciousness ... exists only in being acknowledged" (Hegel 1977: 111); or as Taylor puts it, "[o]ne is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (Taylor 1989: 35).

The ego of which we speak is absolutely impossible to distinguish from the imaginary captivations which constitute it from head to toe, in its genesis as in its status, in its function as in its actuality, by another and for another" (Lacan, quoted in Dews 1987: 57).

One's 'intuitive' sense of oneself as a self-present, coherent and autonomous agent thus paradoxically depends upon being recognised as such by another (Mahoney & Yngvesson 1992: 60).

Lacking a fixed identity, buffeted to and fro by forces which shape it inside and out, the subject has nevertheless not vanished from Foucault's work: it is "motionless yet still quivering" (OT: 239). The subject is not dead; it has only been decentred. In *The Order of Things* Foucault posed the subject as a problem to be investigated, particularly any approach "which gives absolute priority to the observing subject", but explicitly did "not wish to deny the validity of intellectual biographies" (OT: xiii-xiv). As Blanchot points out, in Foucault's work:

The subject does not disappear; rather its excessively determined unity is put in question. What arouses interest and inquiry is its disappearance (that is, the new manner of being that disappearance is), or rather its dispersal, which does not annihilate it but offers us, out of it, no more than a plurality of positions and a discontinuity of functions (Blanchot 1990: 76).

"[N]ot one but split, not sovereign but dependent, not an absolute origin but a function ceaselessly modified" (Foucault 1989: 61), Foucault's *conception* of the subject is remarkably similar to the *concrete* position of women and other marginalised strata of society. Trapped within a body and a society that are not singular but multiple, many women find themselves simultaneously in exile and dependent; Kristeva (1986: 297) goes so far as to suggest that the very basis for the reproduction of a supposedly unitary human species, pregnancy, is "an institutionalized form of psychosis". His failure to specifically address gender issues aside, Foucault, while clearly critical of the idea of an authoritative, authorial and autonomous modern subject, argued nevertheless that "the subject should not be entirely abandoned. It should be reconsidered, not to restore the theme of an originating subject, but to seize its functions, its intervention in discourse, and its system of dependencies" (Foucault 1977a: 137; see also AK: 200).

The subject is a determined being, often a self-determined one, which exercises and experiences relations of power (and can thus literally be 'empowered') and which produces knowledge. Immersed in these processes, the subject is constituted as much physically and corporally as linguistically and theoretically:

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 (Foucault 1977a: 148).

The body is subject to regimens of diet, exercise, health, hygiene, fashion, worship, ethics and sexuality, "it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws" (Foucault 1977a: 153). Power

relations have an immediate hold upon the body: "they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (DP: 26). Consider the physical manifestations of the effects of relations of power upon the body in the stance, bearing and conduct of the unemployed, the indigent, the homeless or the mad - slack jaws, vacant expressions, dull eyes, unkempt hair and clothing - as much as in the firm, confident stride of the company executive, in the inhibitions that the child lacks as much as in the rigours of adult self-subjection.

The gender-differential effects of power relations upon the body are also apparent in gesture, posture and comportment, in the socially reinforced differences between the ways in which men and women sit or walk, display or adorn themselves (Bartky 1988: 66-70). The human subject has always been a cyborg, malleable and manipulable: it is not just the extent to which machines (artificial limbs, organs and implants, contact lenses, hair implants and pace makers) are beginning to be - literally - built into our bodies, but the supposedly 'natural' human body is itself the fabricated effect of numerous, often ancient, but always contested and mutating, technologies of power and knowledge, from circumcision, ritual mutilation and footbinding to bodybuilding, liposuction and plastic surgery. In addition, as a biological organism the body is constantly in flux, constantly reproducing itself, and is thus far from being the fixed, stable entity that Enlightenment philosophy assumed: the pancreas replaces most of its cells every twenty-four hours, the stomach lining is renewed every three days, white blood cells are replaced every ten days and all protein in the brain is replaced in less than a month (Capra 1983: 293).

The subjected sovereignty of the soul, too, is a product of the exercise of power relations upon the body. "[B]orn ... out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint" (DP: 29), the soul is not

an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished - and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects, over madmen, children at home and at school, the

colonized, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives (DP: 29).

Produced as much around as on and within the body, the soul constitutes a kind of personal space which structures human subjectivity or supposedly innate 'personality' itself: conformist or non-conformist in attitude, introverted or extroverted in action, or shy or bold in gaze. Upon this soul "have been built scientific techniques and discourses, and the moral claims of humanism" (DP: 30). Foucault warned that one must avoid confusing humanism and Enlightenment: the latter is a set of historical events, and an ethos, which for Foucault remains pertinent (Foucault 1984a: 43-5), but the former, a set of historical themes, has been "used by Marxists, liberals, Nazis, Catholics" alike and prescriptively "presents a certain form of our ethics as a universal model for any kind of freedom" (Foucault 1988b: 15; see also 1984a: 374).

Despite the leniency, restraint and moderation associated with it, humanism itself is a product of effects of power relations, "the return effects of punishment" in the form of the pain and guilt felt by the punishing authority (DP: 91). It was the logic of bio-power, of ensuring, sustaining, administering and multiplying the lives of rational subjects worthy of respect, and not humanitarian feelings, which demanded 'humane' and 'civilising' alterations in the way we moderns treat others (HS: 138).

[I]t is the economy of power that they [all normalizing vehicles of power, but judges in particular] exercise, and not that of their scruples or their humanism, that makes them pass 'therapeutic' sentences and recommend 'rehabilitating' periods of imprisonment (DP: 304).

Far from being opposed to or distanced from relations of power, humanism extends some relations of power by restraining others: "humanism is everything in Western civilization that restricts *the desire for power*" (Foucault 1977a: 221; emphasis in the original). When humanism exhorts us to liberate the body by freeing the soul (by overcoming our neuroses, or becoming conscious of our alienation, or otherwise realising our true nature), this is

more than just a pipe-dream; it further enmeshes the body in relations of power: "The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body" (DP: 30).

Thus, bedecked with a fabricated soul and a mutable body,

the subject .... is constituted in real practices - historically analyzable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across symbolic systems while using them (Foucault 1984a: 369).

A decade and a half prior to this, in *The Order of Things*, Foucault had noted (in relation to Freud) that

the double articulation of the history of individuals upon the unconscious of culture, and of the historicity of those cultures upon the unconscious of individuals, has opened up, without doubt, the most general problems that can be posed with regard to man (OT: 379).

Herein lies Foucault's response to the structure-agency dichotomy that has been so pivotal in modern thought, and which was mentioned in relation to Marxism at the end of Chapter Two. This 'double articulation' is the basis for a paradox in which necessity and contingency, determinism and freedom or structures and agents "intersect at right angles":

at any given instant, the structure proper to individual experience finds a certain number of possible choices (and of excluded possibilities) in the systems of the society; inversely, at each of their points of choice the social structures encounter a certain number of possible individuals (and others who are not) (OT: 380).

In terms of these restricted possibilities, these compelling choices, individual agents are subjected or subject themselves to social structures which, in turn, depend upon the free actions of a limited number of individuals.



[T]he subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty, as in Antiquity, on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment (Foucault 1988a: 50-1).

Thus, even bearing in mind that, for Foucault, subjection is both much more than externally imposed domination, and much less than a freely chosen role, his conception of the relation between structures and agents, or relations of power and human subjects, both falls within and sheds new light on the framework that Lukes identified as "the dialectic of power and structure" (Lukes 1977: 29).

Souls, bodies and individuality itself are not the natural carapaces of being but combative fields which envelop the subject. The practices of self through which "the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion" are not invented by the individual but are patterns "which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group" (Foucault 1987b: 122); nevertheless, "agents themselves transform their own identity in so far as they actualize certain structural potentialities and reject others" (Laclau 1990: 30). Modern identity can thus be characterised as "necessary drag" (Martin 1992: 103): a facade-like foundation, essential superficiality, a literal *persona*, or theatrical mask (Gurevich 1995: 90), which in this case conceals a vital nothingness. Contingency and necessity combine in these structured practices of liberty through which human beings actively determine themselves, and to this extent human beings are simultaneously free and determined: they freely engage in games of truth and plays of power which determine not only what they should do (though not always what they do do), but who and what they are.

Hence, to accuse Foucault of at best promoting some kind of subjectless politics or at worst denying politics altogether could not be further from the truth. Such an accusation is reminiscent of the claim that a rational critique of reason is impossible (see Chapter One) for, as Butler has pointed out, "to claim that politics requires a stable subject is to claim that there can be no *political* opposition to that claim" (Butler 1991: 150). Butler

goes on to suggest that it is insufficient simply to locate free subjects contextually and historically: subjects are not merely situated but *constituted* by the positions they appear to defend (include) or attack (exclude), and while they are able to "replay and resignify" these positions, they do not instrumentally preside over them (Butler 1991: 155).

The subject is constituted through an exclusion and differentiation, perhaps a repression, that is subsequently concealed, covered over, by the effect of autonomy (Butler 1991: 157).

To speak of autonomy as an effect, however, is by no means to diminish its value, for

to claim that the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency (Butler 1991: 157).

Similarly for Laclau & Mouffe, "[a]utonomy, far from being incompatible with hegemony, is a form of hegemonic construction" (1985: 140; emphasis in the original). A ramification of this is that struggles against (or, indeed, in support of) specific exercises of power or states of domination are not ruled out but are instead redoubled in strength: subjects and their actions are always already political, so much so that, as products of power relations (or "an accomplishment regulated ... in advance"), subjects are the permanent possibility of destabilising and reworking power relations themselves (Butler 1991: 158).

Consequently, political analysis should begin by explaining the constitution of, rather than assuming, the practices of freedom and capacity for resistance ascribed to, and in general the particular stylised forms of existence of, the individualised subject, this "walking shadow" or "poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more" (*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene V). Modern individual subjects may be multiple, unstable and fabricated, and many modern lives may reach their apogee only at the point where, in an all too "brief flash of sound and fury" (Foucault 1979e: 80; cf. *Macbeth*, Act V, Scene

V), they exercise power or have it exercised over them, but this does not absolve one from accounting for the failure of subjects to disintegrate entirely or, alternatively, specifying the reasons for their continued, if fragile, coherence. Prominent within such an account, which will include relations of power, forms of knowledge, institutional mechanisms and sedimented 'tradition', will be specific

technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1988b: 18; 1984a: 355).

Humanism in all its various guises would insist that, whatever state of being one attempts to achieve, it must not only be consistent with reason but emphasise the importance of toleration and respect for the rights of other rational individuals in any political or ethical undertaking. Against the intolerance of an approach which circumscribes freedom by prescribing tolerance and limiting rights, Foucault believed that "there are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future", and correspondingly many more ways in which subjects can freely determine themselves, than can be imagined in a dogmatic humanism (Foucault 1988b: 15).

## ***VI A subject called 'Foucault'***

Last but not least, Foucault's own work, politics and ethics must be considered in the light of his reconceptualisation of the subject in relation to power and knowledge. In the first place, his work cannot be divorced from its implication in the human scientific forces that structure the present. Foucault explicitly situated his work in the context of the "five brief, impassioned, jubilant, enigmatic years" (Foucault 1983c: xi) after 1968, which witnessed the proliferation of local struggles directed specifically at mental illness, prisons, justice, medicine, work, education and sexuality. These struggles constituted an "*insurrection of subjugated knowledges*" (Foucault 1980a: 81; emphasis in the original; 1987c: 202) to the

extent that they were indissociable from "local, regional and discontinuous theories" which derived from them (Foucault 1977a: 215). Believing these struggles to "stand at the threshold of our discovery of the manner in which power is exercised" (Foucault 1977a: 215), Foucault noted that despite the specificity of their targets they were similar in several respects, each being "antiauthority", "transversal" (multisectoral and multinational), "immediate" and "anarchistic" (SP: 212; in Macey 1993: 268). Most importantly, they displayed a common hostility to the totalitarian predilections of hegemonic scientific, judicial, technological and governmental knowledges: the modern "*régime du savoir*" which is characterised on the one hand by a totalising "economic and ideological state violence which ignore[s] who we are individually", and on the other hand by an individualising "scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is" (SP: 212).

As we showed in Chapter Three, a unique and very specific "[p]olitical rationality has grown and imposed itself all throughout the history of Western societies"; firstly in the form of pastoral power, then reason of state, "[i]ts inevitable effects are both individualisation and totalisation" (Foucault 1981e: 254). The last four hundred years in particular have seen

the increasing intervention of the state in the life of individuals, the increasing importance of life problems for political power, and the development of possible fields for social and human sciences insofar as they take into account those problems of individual behaviour inside the population and the relations between a living population and its environment (Foucault 1988b: 160-61; see also 162).

Given the fact that individualisation and totalisation are the effects of this particular political rationality, it follows that an individualist discourse like liberalism, or a collectivist one like Marxism, far from contesting political rationality, assists its growth and the dissemination of its effects:



Opposing the individual and his interests to it [political rationality, particularly the modern state] is just as hazardous as opposing it with the community and its requirements (Foucault 1981e: 254; 1988b: 162).

"The individual is the product of power" (Foucault 1983c: xiv), and thus to employ stark Manichaen oppositions which idealise the individual and denigrate its totalised or totalising other (Foucault 1988a: 168; Calhoun 1995: 218), or to claim that the rights of individuals have been "amputated, repressed, [or] altered by our social order" (DP: 217), is not to challenge but to expedite modern political rationality.

On this basis, Foucault suggested that if struggles against forms of ethnic, social and religious domination prevailed in feudal societies, and struggles against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce dominated the nineteenth century, then today, though previous struggles had far from disappeared, the main struggle is "against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission" (SP: 212). Locating his work alongside these struggles and the knowledges they produced, Foucault argued that the modern form of subjection of individuals must be challenged by "putting into question ... the anthropological status, the status of the subject, and the privileges of man" (Foucault 1989: 55), and by asserting the right to be different while simultaneously resisting the "government of individualization" which separates people and ties them to identities in a constraining way (SP: 212).

Thus, "[w]hat is needed is to 'de-individualize' by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations" (Foucault 1983c: xiv), "to refuse what we are .... [,] to imagine and build up what we could be .... [and to] promote new forms of subjectivity" (SP: 216).

It is up to us to defend ourselves so well that the institutions will be forced to reform themselves .... In the expression 'defend oneself', the reflexive pronoun is crucial. The point is to inscribe the life, the existence, the subjectivity and the very reality of the individual within the practice of the law,



a law "over which governments wish to have a monopoly, a monopoly which we must wrest away from them, gradually and day by day" (Foucault, in Macey 1993: 418, 438). While eminently liberal in tone, these struggles by individuals against corrupt institutions also convey resonances of Gandhian passive resistance, in the sense that individuals are not exhorted to attack injustice but to defend themselves so well from attack that their opponents will find themselves compelled to relent. Nevertheless, it must constantly be taken into account that even these 'defensive' struggles must paradoxically rely "for support on the very thing it [totalitarian bio-powers and -knowledges] invested, that is, on life and man as a living being" (HS: 144), for they assert "[t]he 'right' to life, to one's body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or 'alienations', the 'right' to rediscover what one is and all that one can be" (HS: 145). On the one hand, therefore, there remains a space for theoretical and practical resistance to a rights-based political rationality to invoke "unbreakable law and unbridgeable rights" (Foucault 1981b: 8).

On the other hand, the implication of such struggles in that which they oppose, and of their critiques in that which they call into question, far from leading to quietistic indifference or a "nihilistic relativism incapable of furnishing norms", is rather "the very precondition of a politically engaged critique" (Butler 199: 153). "Each investigation", each theoretical challenge, each process of producing knowledge "must therefore be a *political act*" (Foucault, in Macey 1993: 268; emphasis in the original). Theoretical analysis is nothing less than a political practice, not merely a justification or rationalisation of such practice:

Do not use thought to ground a political practice in Truth; nor political action to discredit, as mere speculation, a line of thought. Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action (Foucault 1983c: xiv).

Here Foucault, rather unusually, appears to go so far as to translate his mostly cautionary critique of power conceived of as sovereignty into a positive recommendation. Taking as

given that power relations produce, and are extended by, forms of knowledge, it follows that one ought to contemplate, undertake and assess political actions to the extent that they 'intensify' thought - such as forcefully stating or challenging an issue, or concentrating attention, or arousing ardour - and that one ought to engage in analysis and critique to the extent to which this 'multiplies' possibilities for political interventions - by opening up new angles for engagement, inventing new weapons or reconfiguring the terrain.

Foucault's intense theoretical concerns materialised in practice in other ways, too. He defined the teaching of the philosophy department that he briefly headed at Vincennes as twofold: "one that is basically devoted to the political analysis of society and one that is devoted to the analysis of the scientific fact and to the analysis of a certain number of scientific domains. These two regions, politics and science, seemed ... most fruitful" (Foucault, quoted in Macey 1993: 231). Similarly, Etienne Balibar recalls Foucault speaking of aiming to recruit for the new department both 'specialists in power' and 'specialists in knowledge' (Macey 1993: 225).

Nevertheless, Foucault's own political activities on behalf of the Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP) can be seen as much as totalising and individualising human scientific interventions as attempts to challenge the authority of such interventions, in the sense that he implicitly acknowledged that any attempt to alter the treatment of prisoners required the accumulation of knowledge about prison living conditions (Macey 1993: 262). Nor could the GIP or its members escape the ramifications of the Enlightenment insistence that subjects are constituted in and through a process of speaking the truth: in meetings at Foucault's apartment, former prisoners attempted to outdo each other in constituting themselves as subjects capable of relating the most relevant and accurate experiences, such that "each badly wanted to be more of a prisoner than the others" (Daniel Defert, in Macey 1993: 268). Foucault's work, too, like the early modern discourse on war that so fascinated him, can be articulated to a variety of forms (traditional mythical ones like the yearning for a lost age, the search for a new kingdom, or the desire for millenarian

revenge, as well as more recognisably modern ones like anarchism, liberalism and Marxism) and is "capable of bearing equally well the nostalgia of declining aristocracies and the ardour of popular vengeance" (Foucault 1980d: 18), the New Right conservatism of the anti-Marxist 'moral majority' and the New Left radicalism of anti-Oedipal 'desiring machines'. For some, this is what is dangerous about Foucault's work; but for those who are willing to experiment with the political construction of new identities and alternative futures, it is a challenge.

Personally, Foucault revelled in the indeterminacy of his position, resisting any and all labels intended to individualise, categorise, capture and tame him and instead deliberately (dis)locating himself by seeking refuge amidst multiplicity, complexity and paradox, and attempting to transform himself into a 'non-point' consisting of an infinity of overlapping points. For instance, as mentioned above, while there is some substance to the argument that Foucault's personal conception of politics was a liberal one, especially in the light of his assertion that, as an intellectual, he would prefer to 'respect everyone's freedom' and let them "draw their own conclusions" (Foucault 1988b: 146), he also refused to give in to demands to 'prophesy', to say what he thought ought to be done. And for all of Foucault's "proto-anarchist" posturing (Hall 1986: 48), not to mention mistaken interpretations by critics like Rorty and Walzer (Rorty 1986: 47; Walzer 1986: 61), he also derided that doctrine as a "naive, archaic ideology" which romanticises the oppressed (Foucault 1984a: 71-2).

One epithet which Foucault consistently and vigourously opposed was that of 'structuralist'. Given some of his utterances in interviews, it is somewhat surprising that Foucault went to such lengths to avoid this particular label, bearing in mind that it was a journalistic commonplace and even a form of praise in France during the Sixties to associate Foucault with Lévi-Strauss, Lacan and Barthes. For example, in an interview given after the publication of *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault distinguished Sartre's philosophy of meaning from the work of Lévi-Strauss and Lacan which, he argued, showed that

le 'sens' n'était probablement qu'une sorte d'effet de surface, un miroitement, une écume, et que ce qui nous traversait profondément, ce qui était avant nous, ce qui nous soutenait dans le temps et l'espace, c'était le *système* (Foucault 1966: 14; emphasis in the original).

'meaning' is probably no more than a surface-effect, a sheen or froth [upon depthless waters], and that that which fundamentally traverses us, that which precedes us, that which maintains us in time and space, is the *system* [My translation - RD]).

References such as these and others, such as the Lacanian-inspired structuralist definition of 'system' as "les structures, le système même du langage" (Foucault 1966: 14), not to mention the stark formulations in *The Order of Things* itself and the book's commendation by both Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, certainly fueled suspicions (or sustained hopes, depending on the reader) that Foucault was a 'structuralist'.

Foucault displayed a detailed awareness of the historical, philosophical and political importance of the structuralist movement (AK: 11), locating it "within the broad current of formal thought" (Foucault, in Raullet 1983: 196) which "spanned the entire twentieth century" (Foucault 1988a: 314) and, after visiting Hungary in 1967, suggesting that the local ban on discussing structuralism appeared to be linked to the hostile reception given to structuralist works in France, as if an attempt was being made to suppress an emerging non-Marxist culture on the left (Macey 1993: 179). Nevertheless, his constant and consistent refrain was: "Let me announce once and for all that I am not a structuralist" (Foucault 1993a: 202; OT: xiv; 1980a: 114; 1989: 25, 79-80; in Foucault & Sennett 1982: 9). Concluding his inaugural lecture, "The Order of Discourse", with a challenge to his detractors to say of the outline of his proposed oeuvre "that all this is structuralism" (Foucault 1984b: 133), he poured scorn on the concept: "Structuralism is a category that exists for others, for those who are not structuralists" (Foucault 1989: 39,60). His vehement rejection of the epithet 'structuralist' when applied to himself should perhaps be understood in the light of his desire to challenge the ways in which we have been and are

subjected. To be a structuralist during the 1960's was to fit into an identifiable intellectual current; to resist this definition without proposing an alternative was to attempt the impossible feat of standing outside of one's milieu. Foucault craved anonymity as much as he sought critical recognition; in the light of the flood of Foucauldian studies since his death, it might even be said that he has achieved this impossible junction.

Described also as Gaullist, Marxist, conservative and nihilist, Foucault rejected each label in favour of the collective and contradictory meaning of all the labels together (Foucault 1984a: 384). As Martin Jay has pointed out, locating Foucault within the framework of his own *oeuvre* requires that one admit the instability and inadequacy but also the contradictory truth of each of the rubrics under which he has been placed, or placed himself (Jay 1986: 176; see also Said 1988: 3). The French higher education system, uncertain about whether to categorise the young Foucault as a 'psychologist' or a 'historian of science', eventually opted for neither label and decided to call him a 'philosopher' (Macey 1993: 108-9). A second, trivial but germane, example of the difficulties in 'placing' Foucault, without any intervention on his part, can be found in Fons Elders' publication of the transcript of a televised debate between Foucault and Noam Chomsky in 1971: the captions under the photographs of the participants incorrectly indicate that Foucault is 'on the right' when he is, literally, 'on the left' in the photographs (Elders 1974: 160-1). Habermas writes of being impressed by "the tension, one that eludes familiar categories" between Foucault's scholarly reserve and his political vitality (Habermas 1986: 103-4). In another instance, Maurice Blanchot comments that he never met Foucault, "except one time, in the courtyard of the Sorbonne, during the events of May '68, perhaps in June or July (but I was later told he wasn't there) ..." (Blanchot 1990: 63).

However, there were several labels which Foucault himself suggested or allowed to attach to himself: his designation as 'philosopher' (rather than 'historian') by the French higher education bureaucracy, and also 'Nietzschean' and 'sceptic' (Foucault 1988a: 251-4) (but not 'scientist' nor 'artist' - Foucault 1980e: 4). There was also at least one label, his own



category of 'specific intellectual', with which he explicitly associated himself: "I work in a specific field and do not produce a theory of the world" (Foucault 1988a: 108), attempting instead "to *open up* problems that are as *concrete* and *general* as possible" (Foucault 1984a: 376; emphasis in the original). As a 'specific intellectual', Foucault's truth-claims are as embroiled in relations of power as any other human subject:

If I tell the truth about myself, as I am now doing, it is in part that I am constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exerted over me and which I exert over others (Foucault, in Raulet 1983: 207-8).

At the same time, the work of any intellectual *qua* intellectual is intended "always to do something ... [;] to change even the smallest part of our reality - people's ideas ..." (Foucault 1980e: 4). The results of these efforts, he hoped, would be "to produce some effects of truth which might be used for a possible battle, to be waged by those who wish to wage it, in forms yet to be found and in organizations yet to be defined" (Foucault 1989: 191).

It was mentioned above and in Chapter Four how Foucault's idea of politics as strategy was influenced by his studies of a seventeenth century discourse which treated war as the permanent foundation of power. His comments on this discourse are especially helpful in understanding how he conceived of his own work and his own political position.

The subject who speaks in this discourse cannot occupy the position of the jurist or the philosopher, i.e. the position of the universal subject. In this general struggle of which he speaks, he is necessarily on one side or the other: he is in the battle; he has adversaries; he is fighting for victory. No doubt he seeks to make right hold sway; but it is his own right - a singular right marked by a relation of conquest, of domination, or of seniority (Foucault 1980d: 17).

There are immediate resonances here with Foucault's account of the specific intellectual, who is implicated in the very structures he or she may be seeking to change, and of the relations of power which ground all truth claims. There can be no question of universality

or objectivity here: the protagonist is partisan, personally committed to success. This "political and historical discourse which lays claim to truth and right, but excludes itself explicitly from juridico-philosophical universality" (Foucault 1980d: 17) is not unlike that of Foucault himself, offering neither an alternative universal truth nor to mediate between adversaries but intending only "to apply a truth which would function like a weapon" (Foucault 1980d: 17). Again like Foucault, this discourse "explains things from the bottom", analysing history in terms of violence, passion and chance and pointing to "the blood that has dried on the codes of the law" (Foucault 1980d: 17-18).

Habermas took "the incisive observations of Foucault [on the role of intellectuals] ... as a self-critical rejection of exaggerated claims" (Habermas 1987: 57). Perhaps this is precisely where Foucault would have most wished to be: at the juncture of 'exaggerated claims' and 'incisive observations', where fiction meets fact, where the transcendental and the empirical join in unholy matrimony, nowhere and yet everywhere on the political checkerboard. Preferring always to be *elsewhere from* or *other than* where he was located by others, "a man always on the move" (Blanchot 1990: 68), Foucault's political identity was closely tied to his personal identity.

I dream of the intellectual who destroys evidence and generalities, the one who, in the inertias and constraints of the present time, locates and marks the weak points, the openings, the lines of force, who is incessantly on the move, doesn't know exactly where he is heading nor what he will think tomorrow for he is too attentive to the present (Foucault 1977b: 161).

While "very proud that some people think I'm a danger for the intellectual health of students" (Foucault 1988b: 13), Foucault refused to "offer himself as a model, to produce himself as a master" (Canguilhem 1995b: 286); as a specific rather than a universal intellectual, he did not see himself as leading, or advising the leadership of, a movement seeking radical social transformation, but was satisfied genealogically locating the fissures of modernity.

## VII *Reinventing the self*

Proclaiming that "the heroism of political identity has had its day", Foucault argued that "what one is has now become a question one poses, moment by moment, to the problems one encounters. Experiments with, rather than engagement in" (Foucault, quoted in Gordon 1993: 21). Identity is not given, an attribute on the basis of which one 'engages in' politics; rather, identity must be 'experimented with', with the consequence that politics becomes infinitely more fluid and inextricably intertwined with knowledge:

Where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge (Foucault 1977a: 163).

To sacrifice the subject of knowledge is to abandon, at the same time, the generalities of the human sciences, the scientist as knowing subject and the self-identical agent of history. The problematic identity of the self has moved to the centre of the political stage. The personal is not only political, for Foucault as for many new social movements, but the political is also personal: the exercise of power produces persons, and persons exercise power. Calhoun writes:

Not only is the personal increasingly politicized, ... politics is increasingly aestheticized. It turns on dramatic performances rather than instrumental struggles (Calhoun 1995: 231).

For Foucault, at issue in this 'aestheticised politics' of the present is the possibility of whether and the extent to which "the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (Foucault 1987a: 9).

To attempt to think differently was the objective both of Foucault's public practices and of his personal ethics. He was already a long way away from the traditional functions of an intellectual, bearing the truth like a banner. He also felt at some distance from the

university without which he could not function, believing that he was unable to be "a good academic" (though he has been quoted as saying that he could have been "a good monk" - Macey 1993: 415). He saw his *History of Sexuality* as an arduous "philosophical exercise" (Foucault 1987a: 9) aimed at self-transformation, at detaching himself from himself by writing "in order to have no face" (AK: 17), in order to constantly produce himself in new and different guises. Indeed, "[e]ach of my works is a part of my own biography" (Foucault 1988b: 11), "fragments from an autobiography"; "[m]y books have always been my personal problems with madness, with prisons, with sexuality" (Foucault, quoted in Macey 1993: xii). It follows that Foucault's genealogical approach is intended to render possible a new ethical sensibility in the same way as it is intended to produce effects of truth or disturb existing configurations of power (Connolly 1993: 372). "[F]or me intellectual work is related to what you could call aestheticism, meaning transforming yourself. ... [M]y problem is my own transformation" (Foucault 1988a: 14).

What can the ethics of an intellectual be ... if not this: to make oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself (which is the opposite of the attitude of conversion)? .... [T]his change does not take the form of a sudden illumination in which 'one's eyes are opened', nor of a permeability to all the movements at work in the present; I would like it to be an elaboration of self by self, a studious transformation, a slow, arduous process of change, guided by a constant concern for truth (Foucault 1988a: 263-4).

This 'detachment of oneself from oneself' so as "to become other than what one is" (Foucault 1988a: 330), this demanding "exercise of self upon self" (Foucault 1987b: 113) guided by truth, is what philosophy, for Foucault, is all about. And "if this is the relationship we have to truth, how must we behave?" (Foucault 1988a: 330). In other words, "instead of attempting to determine what we should do on the basis of what we essentially are, [Foucault] attempts by analyzing who we have been constituted to be, to ask what we might become" (Rajchman, quoted in Diamond & Quinby 1988). On the assumption that one's "main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning" (Foucault 1988b: 9), and given "the idea that the self is not

given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art" (Foucault 1984a: 350-1).

This Nietzschean impulse of self-transformation or self-elaboration vibrates throughout Foucault's work. Unlike "the search for a personal ethics" in Antiquity, or "obedience to a system of rules" under Christianity, modern technologies of the self consist of a "search for an aesthetics of existence" (Foucault 1988a: 49; 1987a: 11):

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 (Foucault 1987a: 10-11).

While this aesthetic ethical stylisation of oneself is a specifically modern phenomenon (and Foucault's interest therein must be read against the backdrop of the shift, in mid- to late-twentieth century Western politics, from welfarism to neo-liberal government and the increasing emphasis on self-help and autonomous lifestyles), it retains certain important affinities with ethical practices in Antiquity. Foucault found it particularly "interesting" (Foucault 1984a: 348) that, in contrast to Christian and much of modern ethics, Greek ethics was concerned neither with religious problems (such as that of the afterlife) nor connected to some authoritarian and institutionalised legal system (Foucault 1984a: 343): their themes of ethical and sexual austerity "did not coincide with the lines of demarcation that may have been traced by the great social, civil and religious interdictions" (Foucault 1987a: 22).

Instead,

the question of style was central to experience in antiquity - stylization of the relation to oneself, style of conduct, stylization of the relation to others (Foucault 1988a: 244).



Greek ethics did not concern itself with global prohibitions, not even those severe constraints to which women were subjected; rather, it addressed the free conduct of free men (Foucault 1987a: 22):

These themes of sexual austerity should be understood, not as an expression of, or commentary on, deep and essential prohibitions, but as the elaboration and stylization of an activity in the exercise of its power and the practice of its liberty (Foucault 1987a: 23).

The modern stylisation of the self, too, fuses together the free actions of individuals with the determining effects of relations of power and the imperious demand that we speak the truth; subjects, as the conduits and the detritus of strategic games of liberty, invent themselves anew in the space allowed them by the state of play. For example, gay machismo, and drag queens, are seen as two different attempts to "invent oneself, to make one's body the place of production of extraordinarily polymorphous pleasures" by detaching oneself from the virile masculinity of "*jouissance* in the ejaculatory sense" (Foucault, quoted in Macey 1993: 365; emphasis in the original).

However, it would be wrong to suggest that Foucault's 'aestheticised politics' is an option only for marginalised subjects like social deviants, nonconformists, prisoners, homosexuals and the mentally ill. Stylistic self-reinvention is not confined to the fringes of modern societies, but to a greater or lesser degree is a feature of all lives: the basketball player as much as his fans, the music or fashion buff as well as the rock star and supermodel, the royal princess as much as the press and the paparazzi. Indeed, in 1971 Foucault suggested that "it is possible that the rough outline of a future society is supplied by the recent experiences with drugs, sex, communes, other forms of consciousness, and other forms of individuality" (Foucault 1977a: 231). Most importantly for Foucault, modern individuals must "search for styles of existence as different from each other as possible", for to "search for a form of morality acceptable to everybody in the sense that everyone should submit to it", as in the positive construction of a 'gay' style (Foucault 1988a: 292) or a

'rock music' style (Foucault 1988a: 316), "strikes me as catastrophic" (Foucault 1988a: 254).

For Foucault, then, we form, style and modify ourselves, our thoughts and our behaviour, in relation to rules and routines proposed to or imposed on us by forces which subject us, through disciplinary or 'ascetic' (even when 'aesthetic') practices or technologies of the self.

There is no specific 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 (Foucault 1987a: 28).

He distinguished between four aspects of "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport à soi*, which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions" (Foucault 1984a: 352). First, the ethical substance (*aphrodisia* or aestheticism - the beautiful life - for the Greeks, and desire for Christians) was what one worked on or at: the strict observance of rules, fervour in resisting temptation, or the intensity of one's feelings for another (Foucault 1987a: 26-7; emphasis in the original). Second, the "mode of subjection (*mode du assujettissement*)" referred to established customary or institutional forces which dictated the framework within which individuals were to act upon themselves: for example, in terms of personal choice, divine law, natural law, or rationalism (Foucault 1984a: 353; emphasis in the original; 1987a: 27). The third aspect was "the self-forming activity (*pratique de soi*) or *l'ascétisme* - asceticism in a very broad sense" (Foucault 1984a: 355; emphasis in the original), or how we behave ethically, by, for example, acting in moderation, deciphering our identity, eradicating our desires or reproducing the species. The last aspect of one's relation to oneself was the telos underlying our ethical behaviour, depending on the kind of ethical being one aspired to become, such as self-disciplined, pure, immortal or free (Foucault 1984a: 355).

What kind of ethical self-transformation or 'work of art' did Foucault have in mind for himself? Perhaps surprisingly for someone apparently so austere and so taken with Greek Stoicism, it can be characterised simply as 'everything to excess'. In terms of this, everything that one does, whether privately or publicly, personally or politically, ought to be as intense as possible, pushed to the limit, taken to the extreme: in sexual relationships one ought to seek an "intensification of pleasure" (Foucault 1988a: 15); and "some drugs" might be worth taking as "the mediation to those incredibly intense joys that I am looking for" (Foucault 1988a: 12). There must be some substance in thus characterising Foucault: his critics and supporters are in unison here. Said (1986: 154) refers to the "extremism" of Foucault's work; Canguilhem (1995c: 289) speaks of Foucault's "undertaking without limits"; and Walzer thinks that Foucault ought to be positioned on the political checkerboard under 'infantile leftism', in that his work involved "an outrunning of the most radical argument in any political struggle" (Walzer 1986: 51). Dews argues that poststructuralism in general, and, by extension, Foucault's work in particular, is

a mode of thought that prides itself on a reckless integrity and consistency, and which is therefore willing to brave all consequences (Dews 1987: xvi).

Finally, Habermas chimes in by suggesting that for Foucault's mentor, Nietzsche, "[t]he aesthetic core of the will to power is the capacity of a sensibility that lets itself be affected in the greatest possible multiplicity of modes" (Habermas 1987: 124). Such a sensibility is clearly one which wishes to experience and experiment with all that life may have to offer.

Philosophically, Foucault wanted to become more like Jean Hyppolite who, he argued, had succeeded in displacing Hegelian philosophy five-fold, "leading to the extreme edge of Hegelian philosophy, and no doubt pushing it over on to the other side of its own limits" (Foucault 1984b: 134). For Foucault, Hyppolite's approach suggested that "philosophical thought maintains the discourse of the philosopher within the instance of an indefinite vibration", maintaining it always "in excess of" or "beyond" itself (Foucault, quoted in Macey 1993: 231). While realising the immense difficulties in attempting to go beyond the

limits of philosophy, and the price that one might have to pay for making the attempt, Foucault did not balk at the task. The key, he suggested, is not to be awed by the venerability of its ancient traditions, the splendour of its accomplishments or the genius of its practitioners; instead, one must develop "a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized before it", be determined "to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way" and display "a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental" (Foucault 1988a: 328). The key, in short, is irreverence:

To rid oneself of philosophy necessarily implies ... an offhandedness [or] ... an astonished and joyful stupidity (Foucault 1989: 118).

One must at the same time take care "of what exists and what might exist" (Foucault 1988a: 328), both playfully dismissing philosophy, by exhibiting a "lack of deference" (Foucault 1988a: 312) similar to that shown by Nietzsche, and displaying a "studied" or "studious casualness" (Foucault 1984b: 133) as one seeks to transform oneself in relation to it.

"As for what motivated me .... It was curiosity - ... the curiosity that ... enables one to get free of oneself. After all, what would be the value of 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 of himself?" (Foucault 1987a: 8-9) or "in the bewilderment of him who knows?" (Sheridan 1989: 46; his translation). The French word "*égarement*" ("bewilderment") can also be translated as "losing one's way", "error" or even "madness" (Sheridan 1989: 47); it follows from this that the point of philosophy, for Foucault, is not necessarily to seek clarity or confirmation but to 'bewilder' or 'derange' oneself, to achieve 'ecstasy' (literally, standing outside of oneself) or to go 'beserk' (and be 'beside oneself') (Taylor 1989: 119). Foucault's own work, in particular, was intended "not to dissipate oblivion" but "to *make* differences" (AK: 205;

emphasis in the original), to render our theories uncertain, our politics problematic, and ourselves indeterminate.

'To philosophise or not to philosophise' is not the question, for we must, necessarily, do both: freely subjecting ourselves to the forces that engulf us, we must be determined to be free. Foucault was much impressed by the political spiritualité evinced in Greek ethics, which, as he interpreted it, did not separate freedom, truth and power relations:

Liberty is ... in itself political. And then, it has a political model, in the measure where being free means not being a slave to one's self and to one's appetites, which supposes that one establishes over one's self a certain relation of domination, of mastery, which was called *arche* - power, authority (Foucault 1987b: 117).

One's personal comportment, one's invention, elaboration, stylisation, care for and transformation of self, which always involves standing in a certain relation of power and truth towards oneself and others, is, for Foucault as much as for the Greeks, "the concrete expression of liberty" (Foucault 1987b: 117). Whatever the effects of liberation, liberty is not necessarily one of them; to be liberated from colonialism, or capitalism, or patriarchy, may be "the political or historical condition for a practice of liberty", but in most cases this is "not sufficient to establish the practices of liberty" necessary for acceptable forms of existence (Foucault 1987b: 114). "The guarantee of freedom is freedom" (Foucault 1984a: 245), which may be assisted or impeded, but never guaranteed, by institutions, laws or resources (Foucault 1984a: 246). To exercise freedom, or to style oneself, is a political and philosophical ordeal, a permanent critical examination by which one essays to become other than what one is.

In this context it is appropriate and instructive that the Foucault who conceived of his books as elements of his biography was also the Foucault who set great store by that particular stylistic exercise known as the 'essay'.

The 'essay' - which should be understood as the assay or test by which, in the game of truth, one undergoes changes, and not as the simplistic appropriation of others for



the purpose of communication - is the living substance of philosophy, at least if we assume that philosophy is still what it was in times past, i.e., an 'ascesis', *askesis*, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought (Foucault 1987a: 9).

As an element caught up in the power-laden and truth-bearing games that we call social life, this thesis has attempted to take seriously Foucault's call to use his work as he used Nietzsche's, as an exercise and a transformation, even a displacement, of the author as much as of the *oeuvre*. In this thesis are intertwined power relations, truth and the subject - Enlightenment critique and criticism of Enlightenment, confession and examination, discipline and sovereignty: the disciplined (or written) inscription and transformation of Foucault (as much as myself), via the production and dissemination of the truth of myself (as much as Foucault).

Foucault's desire to literally (in the literal *and* figurative senses) bewilder himself, as a starting point for thinking and acting differently, is no more curious than the prevalence of paradox in that long and peculiar tradition - Western philosophy - which, armed with information technology, stands on the world-historical threshold of becoming global philosophy. Philosophical criticism, "the challenging of all phenomena of domination at whatever level or under whatever form they present themselves - political, economic, sexual, institutional and so on" (Foucault 1987b: 131), did not come of age in the Enlightenment or with Kant; that was merely its moment of adolescent revolt. Only now, at the end of the twentieth century, as philosophy recognises that it itself is not beyond challenge, might it be said to have attained maturity.

This critical function of philosophy, up to a certain point emerges right from the socratic [*Sic.*] imperative: 'Be concerned with yourself, i.e., ground yourself in liberty, through the mastery of self' (Foucault 1987b: 131).

Thus we arrive once again at our starting-point - the paradox of philosophy, as ancient as it is modern: practice liberty, free oneself (from passions, appetites, instincts, and from specific regimes of truth which are coupled to particular relations of power), by ordering

or acting upon oneself - determining oneself - in terms of particular technologies of the self aimed at modifying one's conduct or transforming oneself.

## CONCLUSION

If one were to assess the implications of Foucault's work for current understandings of theory, politics and human subjects solely on the basis of the arguments of his critics, then it would be fair to conclude that Foucault attempted, rather prematurely and surely unconvincingly, to write the historical obituary of progress, to eviscerate our taken-for-granted theories of power and political practices and to reduce subjects to effects of relations of power and knowledge. In these terms, the only lesson to be derived from Foucault's work is that to call the Enlightenment into question is to surrender to relativism, pessimism and nihilism. Habermas, Taylor, Walzer, Said, Rorty, Dews, and, to a lesser extent, Fraser and Bernstein, all draw, and express their dismay at, these consequences; most of all, they fear that Foucault's apparently pessimistic critique of what he saw as a despotic Western rationality was only a mask for a vigorous and compelling scepticism towards all things thought to be stable and eternal. As Hacking (1986a: 40) has suggested, their dissatisfaction with Foucault is at least partly "because he has given no surrogate for whatever it is that springs eternal in the human breast". Without a doubt, Foucault refused to offer us hope, let alone false hope, a placebo or fix to make us happy and oblivious; he refused to dispense the drugs of progress and paradise, or anything like what Nietzsche called 'metaphysical comfort' (Rorty 1986: 48).

Yet to fail to offer hope is not the same thing as to foster hopelessness. This thesis has attempted to show that to conclude thus would be both simplistic and over-hasty. In the first place, Foucault's 'pessimism' is also an 'activism', even a 'hyperactivism', which runs counter to the critics' fears of a passive and fatalistic acquiescence to the status quo. Indeed, he not only referred to himself as, in addition, a 'happy positivist', but even claimed to be optimistic (AK: 125; 1984b: 133; 1982c: 35)! How might one square up these apparently contradictory remarks? It has been the intent of this thesis to argue that, far from drowning us in shoreless seas of 'despotic Reason' or 'power', Foucault's work

should be seen as a warning, even an inquisition, but also an incitement and a production. It does not follow that his genealogy of the present, in 'telling it like it is', renders theory useless, power irresistible and subjects superfluous, for this would be to presume that the present is fixed and that genealogy has established, rather than fabricated, its truth. Instead, the chorus of dismay from those who believe our present to be salvageable suggests that genealogy has succeeded in rendering the present *unlike* anything familiar, *different* from anything we can imagine - and few commentators, whether sympathetic or critical, appear to be able to grasp the full implications of this admittedly iconoclastic attempt to salvage the present. Charles Taylor summed up the impact of Foucault on friend and foe alike when he wrote: "Foucault disconcerts" (Taylor 1985a: 152; see also Bernstein 1991: 142).

Deliberately, as will be made clear, this thesis draws eleven conclusions for theory, politics and human subjects from the work of Foucault. The *first conclusion* to be drawn is that, ironically, it is the central preoccupation of the Enlightenment according to Kant - the paradox of a philosophy which problematizes its present and itself - which is the nettle that must be grasped if we are to move beyond Enlightenment as orthodoxy. At the end of the twentieth century, we find ourselves at a point in our peculiar historical trajectory at which old certainties are beginning to fade as new vistas open up before us. No doubt we - the West in particular - have been in this kind of position before, and will be again. During the Enlightenment, the divine and the traditional came to be superseded by the scientific and the progressive. Now it is Enlightenment itself - less sanguine about progress and revolutionary change than at its birth - which has become second nature, a globalising orthodoxy all the more powerful in that it prides itself on being heterodox. Like all traditions encountered by modernity, the fate of the tradition of Enlightenment, too, is to be subjected to critique. Again like many of the traditions which modernity called into question - such as religion, culture and nation - the Enlightenment will undoubtedly survive and persist. What is at issue is whether, and how, the Enlightenment can be renewed and reconditioned; differently put: whether, and how, what prefabricated the present can be refabricated.

Not even Foucault's most trenchant critic, Habermas, would deny the need to problematize the Enlightenment. It is not an issue of whether one believes, as does Habermas, that the Enlightenment needs to be enlightened about its narrow-mindedness so that the 'misguided, interrupted and unfinished' process which is modern reason may yet be guided, continued and completed (Habermas 1987: 57, 392 n.4). Nor is it necessary for one to concur, with Foucault, that modern rationalities are not merely unenlightened but are so normal (and normalising) as to be perverse, such that it has become necessary, if Augean, to attempt to think ourselves out of the Enlightenment. Either way, the first challenge that confronts contemporary theory is to write a history of Enlightenment and how we have been enthralled by its truths and by the relations of power which accompanied them. Such a history may require, as both Taylor and Foucault have suggested, a re-examination of the origins of Western philosophy itself, as an historically mutating and institutionalised yearning and search for truth, as exclusionary as it is exclusive, centred around - even within - the human subject. It is here that Foucault's genealogical approach comes into its own, since it will be necessary, if not sufficient, to temper and if possible breach the diachronicity and coherence of conventional histories with a logic of synchronous and antagonistic strategies. This is not to suggest, though, that one ought to focus exclusively on discontinuity, or celebrate contingency, or extol difference; rather, it is a question of problematizing the superficiality of that which presents itself as profound, of warily exposing the transitory patterns which configure capricious chaos.

Nor is all this mere relativism, which refutes itself while refuting any possibility of critique, for this would be to ignore the fact that refutation assumes the critique it is accused of refuting. Rather, to historicise and criticise Enlightenment reason from within is part of learning how "to think and act in the 'in-between' interstices of forced reconciliations and radical dispersion" (Bernstein 1991: 9). To acknowledge that our present location within a social order was made possible if not determined by what called itself Enlightenment, and that the ancient legacies of logocentrism are internal to who we are, is to make it



possible to conceive of a critique, and a politics, which are both implicated and transgressive. It is to engage in the limited but nevertheless effective enterprise of rendering present and available for critical examination the accumulated historical residue of a series of often incompatible Western political rationalities. Indeed, in the best tradition of Enlightenment, the very means of exploring the effects of Enlightenment - genealogy - itself must be handled critically and reflectively. Itself inextricably entangled in the will to truth and power, Foucault's rational critique of reason seeks not to transcend but to scrutinise that which has made us what we are. Setting paradox against paradox, it exploits, in 'homeopathic' fashion, the contradictions of modernity. Only by rigorously yet irreverently exploring the effects, limits and dangers of this reason that we use, might we begin to know whether, and to what extent, it is possible to govern, to rationally exercise power over ourselves and others, without fear or domination; only in this way can we come to know what, if anything, we no longer require of reason in order to constitute ourselves as autonomous subjects.

To problematise the Enlightenment is to pose questions about current conceptions of theory, politics and human subjects. It is to suggest that Enlightenment has been bought at the huge, but not 'unreasonable', price of the free participation of all modern individuals (from patients, paupers and pupils to consumers and deviants) in their objectification and subjection to powerful, knowledgeable, and usually institutionally legitimated, others. Such a genealogical examination of the modern "rationalization of the management of the individual", of the interplay between that which orders human conduct - strategies of government and resistance - and that which rationalises (both justifying and making more efficient) such conduct - forms of knowledge and technological refinements - would make it possible to define what Foucault called a new kind of 'political *spiritualité*', to rethink issues of social (and self) transformation which are always bound up with issues of truth and power.

The recognition of how we have historically constituted ourselves - our unique configuration of scientifically sanctioned modes of soothsaying and subjection - is thus the

first step towards experimenting with the possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking what we are, do or think. Entirely warranted as it may be, that "the essential thing in a condemnation is not the quality of the evidence but the force of the one who presents the evidence" (Foucault 1989: 182), it cannot be forgotten that the force of the presentation is accentuated by the rigour of the investigation. Indispensable for genealogy as much as for any modern science is thus a studious examination of specific contemporary experiences (not only socially marginal ones like madness or transgression, or particular ones like sexuality, but especially our supposedly natural subjectivities and even the experience of freedom itself), in relation to each other as well as historically, for, as Bernstein notes with reference to the work of Rorty, MacIntyre and Kuhn, an appeal to history is not anecdotal but critical (Bernstein 1991: 23). Historical analysis as genealogy will no longer simply rationalise the present, but will be a weapon with which to challenge the modes by which human beings have been and are being made into known and knowing, governed and governing, and 'moralised and moralising', subjects.

Through his historical reinterpretations of how we moderns have constituted ourselves in the realms of reason, health, law, science, sexuality and subjectivity, Foucault deliberately aimed to 'fabricate' the present, to play its interpretive violence against itself so that, on the assumption that different descriptions distort differently, he would be able to inscribe effects of truth in the present and upon the real (as opposed to revealing the past or expressing a truth). This is this thesis' *second conclusion*: Foucault's 'truth-fabricating' and 'reality-constituting' approach has major implications for the nature, object and purpose of theory. Theory becomes a practice in its own right, problematising as much as enlightening, and dependent on the very social forces with which it concerns itself; its object, reality, is reconfigured as a terrain which coalesces under the impact of strategic maps, or theoretical practices, such that the object (things, others and their contexts) is always the object *for theory*, forged or fabricated; and its purpose is not to produce a programme for action but to mount a constructive challenge. A Foucauldian approach is one which seeks to deploy familiar images in a way which subverts their recognisability, by going along with a familiar manoeuvre in order to extend it beyond itself or play it at its

own game; which does not so much reveal truths or assume solid individual identities as reveal their fabrication; and which substitutes for the penetrating but blinkered scientific gaze an *oblique and informing glance*.

Thus, what we do with the Enlightenment depends to a large extent on what the Enlightenment has done with us. This 'we' has several references: it is simultaneously the all-inclusive 'we' of humanity, the exclusive 'we' of the Enlightened West, and the very specific 'we' of those who have arrogated to themselves the task of reflecting upon who 'we' are - the intellectuals. We who monopolise the use of the analytical tools bequeathed to us by the Enlightenment have also been accustomed to legislating how Enlightenment is to be cultivated. The *third conclusion* is that, once the nature, object and purpose of theory is rethought in this way, the traditional prophesying role of intellectuals, as well as their hope of arriving at complete and definitive knowledge of ourselves and our history, must of necessity be abandoned. Nonetheless, under these circumstances social transformation becomes simultaneously problematic, vital and possible. Alongside, rather than in the vanguard of, struggles by particular groups of the disaggregated masses, and in terms of their own specific practices, concrete problems and particular locales, intellectuals can question the self-evidence of modern political rationalities and assist in dismantling the coordinates of experience which constitute modern subjects, as much as they struggle within and against the relations of power (predominantly institutionalised in universities) that transform them into objects of and instruments for the production of knowledge.

Merely to pose the question of the possibility of transforming our modern forms of subjectivity is to bring into stark relief the power relations which compose the price we are paying for our freedom, our capacity for technological development and our ability to reason in the manner laid down by the Enlightenment. To problematise the Enlightenment, then, requires a reconceptualisation of power relations. For genealogical purposes, however, conventional theories of power, and most particularly Marxist theories, which focus on individual or collective but always sovereign agents and how

their possession of or suppression by power differentially affects their knowledge and their autonomy, are inadequate. While not denying the particular significance of the modern state in regulating relations of power, or of social classes, elites, governments, political parties and constitutions as forms in which power relations customarily manifest themselves, Foucault argued that to insist upon their salience is to neglect the complexity, multiplicity and specific effects of local power relations which, operating independently of and at a certain distance from these customary forms, often sustain, enlarge and maximise their effectiveness. Yet because notions of power as sovereignty prevail in modern society (mainly because they disguise, justify and normalise, and help regulate and energise, more ubiquitous relations of power), in order to avoid simply reproducing them Foucault sought instead to develop an 'analytics', as opposed to a 'theory', of power, by not saying *what power is* but instead showing *how it operates*, concretely and historically, in the form of strategic relations aimed at governing subjects. In short, what is required is an historical analysis of the broad 'body politic', from global political rationalities through local relations of power to individual human subjects.

The historical skeleton of such an 'analytics' of power, the rough periodisation of Western political rationalities which can be distilled from Foucault's *oeuvre*, must be fleshed out by a more abstract and imaginative attempt to reconceptualise power relations. This brings us to the *fourth conclusion*: Western political rationalities are characterised by the coexistence of relations of power with forms of knowledge; and these technologies for knowing and governing oneself and others are invariably tied to procedures of identity-constitution and knowledge-production through a rigorous and often mediated search for truth. From Plato and the Stoics and throughout Christianity to the present, the attainment of individual self-mastery and self-knowledge via the intervention of an external master has always been associated with hermeneutic techniques. While these pastoral technologies of the essay and the assay were initially confined to an elite, the Christian confessional, the Reformation's rejection of priestly mediation and the Renaissance's privileging of writing had begun to assemble what today we call 'the individual' long before Kantian man shrugged off the tutelage of others. Contemporaneous with



contractarian theories of sovereignty, and consequent upon rapid demographic and urban expansion, the effects of these mundane and pragmatic practices of pedagogically subjecting individuals and policing entire populations were amplified by the rise of the modern state which both shaped the resources available for intellectual pursuits, and became itself a central focus of these pursuits.

Via procedures of hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and the examination, modern subjects, their space segmented and their time apportioned, have come to be fabricated. Panoptic power relations added new dimensions to ancient individualising and totalising techniques: a 'descending' individualisation (the observed and self-regulating inmate: the pervert, the prodigy and the patient) and an 'ascending' totalisation (faceless and regulated overseers: bureaucracies and social movements). Focusing on emancipation in the present rather than salvation in the hereafter, this modern power over everyday life, which artificially divides human scientific knowledge into either an 'anatomy-politics of the human body' or a 'bio-politics of the population', is manifested in the political coexistence of destruction and reproduction, conflict and care, and death and life - the paradox of welfare states waging cold war. The human scientific sanction of the therapeutic practice of confession and the corroboration of truth through ordeal, also justified an exhaustive inquisition of secrets taken to be hidden from, but internal to, subjects, and breathed new life into the ancient relation between disciple and master. Ironically, the associated expansion in the number and function of the subjects and relays of modern relations of power occurred precisely when Kant was exhorting us to liberate ourselves from our subordination to tradition.

An historical analysis of the trajectory of Western political rationalities ought also to dispel the misconception that, for Foucault, modern societies are little more than disciplined "total institutions". Modern societies may be 'disciplinary' but are not 'disciplined' - their internal margins deny them the possibility of ever fully constituting themselves in the form of 'total', disciplined, societies (even if at the same time the existence of these margins spurs them on, in vain pursuit of this totalitarian nightmare, to maintain their coherence in



the face of their fragility). The Enlightenment may have made it possible to conceive of society in this way and to normalise subjects precisely by enlightening them, but modern political rationalities do not represent the way power 'really' works nor are they the latest in a series of relations of domination. Neither 'progressivist' (as if more and more power relations have been brought under the rule of law) nor 'regressivist' (as if power relations have increasingly distorted the rule of law), modern political rationalities are the product of gradual but discontinuous and contingent convergences of a multiplicity of local and comparatively minor, but infinitely productive and permanently contested, linkages, both new and ancient, between power and knowledge.

Foucault's view that "power comes from below" and that these local relations of power operate relatively autonomously from global concentrations of power is very similar to Marxist accounts of the state and liberal theories of popular sovereignty. Where Foucault parts company with these theories is the extent to which local relations of power are not merely distanced from states, sovereigns, institutions and organisations but make them possible. Power relations for Foucault constitute a kind of 'soup of the day', the ever-changing ground or condition of possibility of global forms of domination, commonly characterised by overlapping and reciprocally supporting institutionalised processes which regulate what their members do and how they relate to each other as well as how they communicate and what skills or capacities must be brought into play or inculcated. The *fifth conclusion* is that relations of power - ubiquitous, localised, self-organising, refractory and contested - can be genealogically redefined as the effects of, and the internal conditions for, countless historically and contextually determined divisions and inequalities.

Foucault's relational and multilevelled conception shifts one's focus away from power as a kind of scarce possession which is wielded over against freedom, to power relations which are ubiquitous and premised on the existence of free subjects capable of utilising or altering them (to the extent to which subjects may consent to violence directed against themselves or others, or seek to impose consensus, as much as they might resist such

violent impositions). Freedom, for Foucault, opens one up to forms of subjection: it is not a question of power one-sidedly restricting or invading the freedom of individuals but of power relations governing freedom and provoking resistance by enjoining free subjects to govern themselves. It follows that, and this is the *sixth conclusion*, relations of power, perpetually unstable, fractured and antagonistic, incorporate resistance as a dispersed and volatile energy, not as some external opposition as if power had a centralised, homogenous locus. This requires that we shift our focus to the relational nature of power and to the struggles which are born within the bounds of these relations. There can be no categorical answer to the question of whether or not we ought to struggle against or resist one or other exercise of power: relations of power are neither good nor bad, neither acceptable nor unacceptable, for to seek to govern or to structure the field of possible actions of others is an irreducible feature of social life. No matter how systematic or chaotic, necessary or contingent, repressive or benign, power relations cannot avoid provoking resistance; and resistance is a productive response to forms of government, not merely a defence against domination.

While all that we know of resistance is what relations of power and their associated knowledges tell us about it, just as all that we know of madness is from the point of view of reason and all that we know of the Enlightenment is how it conceives of itself, it remains possible to discover *how* relations of power have acted to suppress, manufacture and resist, *how* reason has rationalised and normalised, and *how* the theories and practices of Enlightenment have spread across the face of the globe. The *seventh conclusion* is that one is not rendered incapable of understanding, criticising, supporting or resisting modern political rationalities merely because one cannot stand outside of them; on the contrary, for Foucault, 'the essence of one's life consists of the political functioning of the society in which one finds oneself'. Laws call transgression into being and give it its form, and to that extent do not merely prohibit actions but also provoke and structure reactions. At the same time, transgression reaffirms and buttresses the laws even as it surpasses them; and one cannot know or experience the limits of the laws without overstepping them. The very process of developing an 'analytics' of power relations is therefore itself a political

act. Critical analysis must multiply possibilities for political intervention, by opening up new angles for engagement, and political actions ought to be contemplated and undertaken to the extent to which they intensify, concentrate or challenge critical analysis.

Foucault's reconceptualisation of power relations in the form of war, a perpetual battle or "agonism", rather than in either extreme of rational contract or rapacious conquest, consensus or coercion, captures the manner in which local power relations make global strategies of both domination and resistance possible. Reversing von Clausewitz, the *eighth conclusion* is that politics is the continuation of war by other means. In addition, the more or less willing participation by the governed in their government suggests that war itself is less about naked coercion, and more about moral, psychological and political force, than is commonly assumed. The reconceptualisation of power as war incorporates and goes beyond those characteristics commonly attributed to power by theories of sovereignty: it allows for concentrations and confrontations, stark oppositions and irreversible effects, objectives and intentions, but qualifies these by placing at least equal emphasis on the everyday tactical engagements upon which broader struggles depend, especially the unstable point of equilibrium - government - where relations of power, states of domination and 'technologies of the self' intersect. The rules which regulate this world of war, literally of all against all, are themselves forged in combat, including the totalising and individualising functions of state apparatuses, and the desires and interests of the participants. Thus, rather than just supplementing theories centred upon the state with a Foucauldian emphasis on everyday relations of power, the state must be rethought in terms of these multiple, various, specific and reversible strategic relations.

The *ninth conclusion* relates to the productivity of power relations in relation to knowledge and subjectivity, which in turn is tied to their tendency to provoke, oblige, entice, gratify and discipline. Against the one-sided Enlightenment focus on ideology, which insists that 'true' knowledge is in essence disinterested and that unchecked power will inevitably distort it, Foucault pointed out that knowledge not only induces effects of power but develops within the bounds of relations of power. In this sense, truth is always

'interested' or 'ideological', saturated with rather than distantly influenced by political forces, and a condition and effect of the material fabrication of human subjects. Ironically, theories of ideology exclude from investigation that 'general recipe' for the exercise of power over people: the technology of power which is science itself. Nevertheless, the fact that knowledge is an outgrowth of technologies of governance is an indication not of the omniscience of power relations and the evisceration of truth, but of the inadequacy of power and the price that must be paid for truth. Contra Taylor and Habermas, even critical theory *à la* the Frankfurt School can be as manipulative and totalitarian as the rest of the human sciences. One can only believe otherwise by reducing power to domination and contrasting it against freedom and truth, which is to fail to grasp the full import of Foucault's anti-humanist view that the forces of normalisation have subjected us to freedom and in the process fabricated what we now believe to be our true nature.

The *tenth conclusion* is that power relations also function to constitute human subjects. A Foucauldian conception of politics, far from being subjectless, *assumes that subjects are indispensable vehicles and targets of power*. To be a political subject in this sense, however, is to be *constituted as*, rather than 'naturally' being, an agent (in the conventional sense of a transparently self-aware and creative being). For Foucault, these are grounds for optimism, not pessimism:

You know, saying that we are much more recent than we believe is not a way of placing all the burden of our history on our shoulders. Rather it puts within the range of work which we can do to and for ourselves the greatest possible part of what is presented to us as inaccessible (Foucault 1982c: 35; see also Rajchman 1991: ix).

In other words, describing human beings as subjects does not deprive them of agency or the capacity to change; in fact, it makes them all the more active by extending their reach to include what was assumed to be so obviously necessary, so natural, so taken-for-granted that it was inaccessible: their subjectivity, their identity, their sexuality, their



bodies themselves; also their culture, their language, their philosophy, their history, their morality; their basic institutions, their political forms, their economic practices.

Hence the focus of investigation should fall not upon the intentions of those who 'possess' and 'wield' power, nor upon their 'victims', but upon how both 'sides' have been constituted, physically and psychically as well as socially and historically, *as* subjects, of themselves and others, through a multiplicity of power relations. The humanism so prevalent in theoretical analysis since even before the Enlightenment itself extends some relations of power by restraining other relations; by exhorting us to realise or liberate ourselves, it further enmeshes us in relations of power. To think of ourselves as fabricated in this way, and our humanist predilections as fabricating mechanisms, further suggests that a strategy of reinvention is more appropriate than a strategy of liberation for beings which lack any essence which might have required realisation. Like Doctor von Frankenstein, we modern subjects have created a monster; the only difference is that we are at once that monster and our only hope of salvation.

In these terms, our capacity to act autonomously is dependent on the manner in which we have been subjected. While modern individuals, their consciousness, souls and bodies as well as the freedom deemed intrinsic to them, are not natural essences but artifacts, ambiguous 'subjected sovereignties', their subjection through and implication in that which they oppose, is the precondition of their agency and criticism, which in turn is the permanent possibility of reworking practices of subjection. The *eleventh and last conclusion*, then, relates to the need to rethink the structures through which we have interpreted our world, our history and ourselves, if we wish to free ourselves from ourselves. Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (Marx, in McLellan 1977: 158), redirected a relatively self-confident nineteenth century reason, sure of its truths, along the path of *praxis*; one hundred and fifty years later, Foucault's work demands that a much less sanguine twentieth century reason actively rethink its own thought, its *historical a priori*.



In Foucault's work, the dichotomy between continuous, causal structures, and free, conscious agents, blurs and metamorphosises into contingent conditions of possibility and multiple and contradictory forms of subjection. Necessity and contingency, determinism and freedom or structures and agents "intersect at right angles" in the form of structured practices of liberty: individual agents actively and freely subject themselves in terms of a range of 'compelling choices', variable but restricted structural possibilities 'proposed to, suggested by and imposed on' them. Foucault's twin focus on the forms of rationality that structure what we do, and the strategies we freely deploy within these bounds, could thus be described as Marx's view of history turned inside out, to the extent that neither the 'people' who make it nor the 'circumstances' within which it is made are givens, pristinely acting upon each other towards dialectical transcendence, but are themselves products of their interrelationship, their actions already having been acted upon without hope of transcendence. Under these conditions, we must firstly rethink how we think, in order to act; then, we must direct our actions at changing our thoughts; and, finally, we must think how we act, in order to change how we think.

To sum up, then, Foucault's work is entirely coherent and consistent. Grasping the nettle of Enlightenment, it suggests that the present can be problematized through the refabrication of received truths and the reconstitution of revealed reality. In this task, modern intellectuals, suitably critically aware of their erstwhile role in provoking and legitimising social transformation, have an important role to play, not least in rethinking power and politics and knowledge and science. Recognising the coexistence of relations of power with forms of knowledge in Western political rationalities, modern relations of power need to be understood as the effects of, and the internal conditions for, countless historically and contextually determined divisions and inequalities; while theory needs to adopt the more circumscribed but still effective stance of rendering present and available for critical examination the historical trajectory of these political rationalities. The instability and antagonistic nature of relations of power allows for localised resistance by subjects whose *raison d'être*, including their identities and capacity to act freely, is

constituted by a context in which politics is the continuation of war by other means. Given this context in which forms of knowledge legitimise and extend the relations of power which make them possible, the principal task is now to rethink and exploit the prevailing structure/agency dichotomy in terms of contingent conditions of possibility and multiple and contradictory forms of subjection.

At stake, finally, is our ability to think ourselves out of the Enlightenment paradox of the parallel growth of human autonomy and the intensification of relations of power, by inventing, stylising and experimenting with our autonomised selves. To seek to alter the manner in which we have been subjected does not supplant but at most supplements and qualifies more conventional struggles against ethnic, religious or economic domination, nor does it deny the need at strategic moments to invoke existing laws and individual human rights. Foucault's personal solution to the problem of how to think differently was to conduct an arduous 'philosophical exercise' aimed at aesthetic self-transformation: not a surrender to the drifting currents of hedonistic and sensationalistic postmodern culture, but a slow and rigorous elaboration of self as a work of art. It is not a question of universality or objectivity: the protagonist is partisan, wielding truth like a weapon and experimenting with the production of identity rather than engaging in the politics of extant identities. The strategy of the stylisation of the self thus fuses together the free actions of individuals with the determining effects of relations of power and the imperious demand that individuals speak the truth; subjects, as the conduits and the detritus of strategic games of liberty, multiply and differentially reinvent themselves in the space allowed them by the state of play.

Whereas Foucault's preferred choice in subjective art-work can be summed up in the phrase, 'everything to excess', this is only one amongst a huge range of possible strategies, past, present and future. However, the key element of any strategy aimed at rethinking our Enlightened philosophical heritage is not to be awed and immobilised by it but to approach it irreverently if rigorously. To rethink the foundations of the present is dangerous; to forget that all foundations were once constructed is even more dangerous.

Hence, "live dangerously," as Nietzsche exhorted. "Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius. Send your ships into uncharted seas. Live in conflict with your equals and yourselves. Pillage and conquer ..." (Nietzsche 1950: 228; my translation - RD). The point is not necessarily to seek or attain truth or power, clarity or confirmation, but to 'bewilder' or 'derange' oneself, to free oneself from oneself. In philosophy and against philosophy, by freely subjecting ourselves to the forces that engulf us, we must be determined to be free. One's personal comportment, one's care for, invention and refashioning of self, which always involves standing in a certain relation of power and truth towards oneself and others, will constitute the concrete expression of one's liberty. That particular stylistic philosophical exercise known as the 'essay' - understood as an assay or test which induces transformations - must be reaffirmed as central to philosophical as much as everyday life: practice liberty, by ordering oneself.

To return once again to my opening question: what is left to us of theory, politics and ourselves as subjects, now that pessimism and nihilism supposedly hold sway? Amidst nothing, there is everything: the reinstatement of chance, the consideration of difference, the possibility of transformation. Following Foucault, we are the subjects of an experiment on ourselves, the white mice in the historical laboratory of Chance, which wears the mask of Fate. Though crude and far too popular, a mixed metaphor such as this, combining antiseptic scientific images with magical beliefs of the 'antiquarian margins', nevertheless assists in describing what is simultaneously our predicament and a set of more or less infinite possibilities. Our lives, our histories, the modern social order in general, is a series of discontinuously unfolding experimental experiences; we experience the Enlightenment's history. Hear the cry of the tout: Roll up for 'The Enlightenment Experience'! A social experiment on a planetary scale, in which the participants, finding themselves subjected by disciplinary technologies involving surveillance (producing knowledge) and constraint (exercising power), inexpertly if scientifically essay to confess and discover the truth and utility of the experiences assayed or freely endured.

'The Enlightenment Experience', built upon a millennia-long Western philosophical and political search for the truth that we believe to reside within ourselves, carried along with it tremendous consequences for the world as a whole. Not only did it make us into very particular kinds of beings, with highly specific ways of relating to ourselves and others economically, culturally, morally, sexually and politically, but it also made possible a modernity in which scientific advances and productive successes have been inextricably entangled with the subjection of, and mandatory critical introspection by, masses of individuals, as well as the (sometimes simultaneous) devastation and conservation of natural and social formations. This is still our reality. A significant difference, however, in part thanks to Foucault who directed our attention to them, is that the historical processes which made the Enlightenment possible are today rendering it increasingly problematic. Scientific and technological development proceeds apace, rendering its own products obsolete in a matter of months; the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the new style of warfare demonstrated in the 1991 Gulf War suggests that the kinds of revolutionary change to which we became accustomed over the last two centuries are a thing of the past; and the realignment of international relations around new political and economic blocs - East Asia, Europe and America - and an awareness of the imminence of ecological disaster means that globalisation is now an issue, not just an inevitability.

The university, that central relay in the distribution of knowledge and the production of intellectuals, where it survived co-optation by corporations and governments, is also being thoroughly subjected to new "technologies of informatization" (Derrida 1983: 14-15). The need to rethink power relations and processes of producing knowledge and constituting subjects has never been more acute, particularly when such a prominent representative of the new informational bourgeoisie as Bill Gates manages to eerily echo these Foucauldian concerns:

We're experiencing the early days of a revolution in communications that will be long-lived and widespread. There will be some surprises before we get to the ultimate realization of the information highway because much is still unclear. We



don't understand consumer preferences yet. The role of government is a troubling open question. We can't anticipate all of the technical breakthroughs that lie ahead. But interactive networking is here to stay, and it's only just beginning (Gates 1996: xii).

Where once human subjects were mediated by significant and authoritative others, now we stand on the threshold of a new, but still totalising and individualising, "'mediated' way of life" (Gates 1996: 5): a furiously fast-paced and 'immediate' kind of life, in which knowledge takes on the form of an information highway, networks of governance require restructuring, and human subjects are invited to interactively participate in their constitution as consumers.

If Foucault is to be taken at his word, that the modern self, its politics and its theories are "nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history", then it stands to reason, albeit an Enlightened one, that the problem, and the solution, "is to change those technologies" (Foucault 1993a: 222-23). This is the logical response to the productive predicament in which we find ourselves: to wholeheartedly accede to theoretical experimentation and political play, not in order to bemoan our subjection or to succumb to despair but precisely in order to refabricate modern life, both personal and social. It suggests that criticism and struggle should abjure teleological and subject-centred models of explanation and juridico-political models based on conflict over scarce resources, or by class struggle, or against patriarchy. Theory is not about affirming human rationality and autonomy nor about resisting indoctrination and control; and politics is not about liberation, progress and Utopia nor about tyranny, stagnation and the end of history. It is not a starkly reassuring choice between "struggle or death, bloody war or nothing" (George Sand, quoted by Marx, in McLellan 1977: 215), but an infinitely more dangerous experimentation on ourselves. Avoiding defeat but not seeking victory, theory and politics are about refabricating the contingent truths of the past upon which the present depends, about engaging strategically in the perpetual battle around forms of subjection and governance, and about continuously reinventing oneself in one's complex relationships with others. This experimental attitude is not necessary or fixed; it is a strategic and no



doubt temporary (if recurring) operation. This, following Foucault, is the future for social theory and practice: to critically continue with that peculiar Enlightenment project of rationalising the management of individuals.

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