

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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S E R I E S P R E F A C E

Michel Foucault provides a splendid definition of work: "That which is susceptible of introducing a significant difference in the field of knowledge, at the cost of a certain difficulty for the author and the reader, with, however, the eventual recompense of a certain pleasure, that is to say of access to another figure of truth."¹ Diverse factors shape the emergence, articulation, and circulation of a work and its effects. Foucault gave us intellectual tools to understand these phenomena. In *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984* we use these very tools to understand his own work. Though he intended his books to be the core of his intellectual production, he is well known for having made strategic use of a number of genres—the book and the article to be sure, but also the lecture and the interview. Indeed, few modern thinkers have used such a wide array of forms in so skillful a fashion, making them an integral component in the development and presentation of their work. In this light, our aim in this series is to assemble a compelling and representative collection of Foucault's written and spoken words outside those included in his books.

Foucault died on June 25, 1984, at age fifty-seven, of AIDS, just days after receiving the first reviews of the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality* in the hospital. A year previous to his death, when he was showing no signs of illness, he had written a letter indicating that he wanted no posthumous publications; through the course of complex negotiations between those legally responsible to him, intellectually engaged with him, and emotionally close to him, it was decided that this letter constituted his will. He left behind, as far as we know, no cache of unpublished texts; we must conclude, then, that his papers were "in order." Ten years later, Editions Gallimard published *Dits et écrits*, well over three thousand pages of texts, organized chronologically. The editors, Daniel Defert and François Ewald, sought to collect all Foucault's published texts (his prefaces, introductions, presentations, interviews, articles, interventions, lectures, and so on) not included in his books. We have made a selection, eliminating overlapping or repetition of different versions of similar materials.

Likewise, a number of the lectures and courses will in time be published separately in English.

What we have included in these three volumes are the writings that seemed to us central to the evolution of Foucault's thought. We have organized them thematically. Selecting from this corpus was a formidable responsibility that proved to be a challenge and a pleasure. Many of these texts were previously unavailable in English. In broad lines, the organization of the series follows one proposed by Foucault himself when he wrote: "My objective has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. My work has dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects."² In Volume One, following his course summaries from the Collège de France, which provide a powerful synoptic view of his many unfinished projects, the texts address "the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject."³ Volume Two is organized around Foucault's analysis of "the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of the sciences."⁴ Science, for Foucault, was a domain of practices constitutive of experience as well as of knowledge. Consequently, this volume treats the diverse modes of representations, of signs, and of discourse. Finally, Volume Three contains texts treating "the objectivizing of the subject in dividing practices,"⁵ or, more generally, power relations.

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NOTES

- 1 Foucault, "Des Travaux," in *Dits et écrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vol. 4, p. 367.
- 2 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (2d ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 208.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*

INTRODUCTION

Who, or what, is Michel Foucault? The possibilities already seem endless: structuralist, idealist, neoconservative, post-structuralist, antihumanist, irrationalist, radical relativist, theorist of power, missionary of transgression, aestheticist, dying man, saint, or, if nothing else, "post-modern." But, in fact, the most accurate label may simply be "Foucauldean." In accord with the precedent that Paul Rabinow set in his introduction to the first volume of this series, I will try to present the Foucauldean within those horizons immanent in Foucault's own writings: in his own puzzlings and assertions, his own speculations, his own references and allusions to other writers and other texts, to objects and events.

The papers and interviews included in this volume have been selected with this aim in mind. Spanning virtually all of Foucault's career, they reveal the remarkable scope of his philosophical attention, which ranges over painting and music, architecture and film, literature and historiography, mathematics and linguistics, the life sciences and the behavioral sciences; over ancient Greece, the European Renaissance, the Enlightenment (or "Classical age"), the Romantic period, the early (and the late) twentieth century. They reveal his most enduring philosophical "interlocutors," past and present: Plato and G. W. F. Hegel, whom he consistently opposed; Immanuel Kant, whom he both resisted and admired; Friedrich Nietzsche and Gilles Deleuze, neither of whom he could wholly embrace but both of whom provided him with critical and conceptual examples and important tools; and Georges Canguilhem, his mentor. The first volume of this series is devoted to Foucault's treatment of ethical action; the third will be devoted to his treatment of power relations and modes of domination. This, the second, volume brings together a more abstract collection of postulates and positions which informs Foucault's engagement and concern with ethics and power alike. Accordingly, some of the writings included here focus on madness and the shifting normative articulation of the boundary between reason and unreason, between valid and invalid experience, between normal and abnormal behavior. Others focus on the self, or "subject," and its shifting

sociocultural constitution. Many more focus on knowledge and the shifting historical configuration of the practices of speculation and research thought, in the past or in the present, to produce truth.

Last but by no means least are a few of Foucault's retrospective reflections on his own work. The essay entitled "Foucault" (see pp. 459–63)¹—extracted from an early version of what would become the preface to volume two of *The History of Sexuality*, submitted for publication in an edition in the French *Dictionary of Philosophers*, and signed pseudonymously "Maurice Florence"—is of special note for its clarity. It describes Foucault, its author, as belonging to the "critical tradition" of such philosophers as Immanuel Kant, and presents his project as a "critical history of thought." That project has two guiding questions. The first: At any historical moment, what kinds of conditions come into play in determining that a particular subject is the legitimate executor of a certain kind of knowledge? The second: At any historical moment, what conditions come into play in determining that a particular object is the appropriate object of a particular kind of knowledge? These are general questions, but Foucault declared that he was always interested only in specific sectors of the broader field of which they might be posed. His interest lies in those sectors where the subject, the bearer and executor, of a certain kind of knowledge is also posited as the object of that very same kind of knowledge. Hence his explorations of the "human sciences" and, later, his investigations of the history of ethics.

Foucault read himself quite accurately. Yet it is also worth noting that—in "Foucault," at least—he only alludes to the great number of twists and turns that even such a "restricted" project had taken, the conceptual revisions and methodological reworkings it underwent in its two decades. It might finally be noted that "Foucault" makes no mention whatever of its author's many investigations into avant-gardist art. Those investigations, to which I shall shortly turn, are intimately related to Foucault's project, but his omission of them is not a matter of simple oversight. Although they may not have been an integral part of what the project had become, they nevertheless were its "ontological preliminary." Or, more simply, they formed an inquiry into the very nature, the very being, of thought, but of thought before, or beyond—or, better, outside—"the subject."

AISTHĒSIS AND EXPRESSIBILITY

Chronologically preliminary as well: Foucault wrote his most sustained essays on literature and other “works of imagination” very early in his career, between 1962 and 1969. In 1966 he published *Les Mots et les choses*, which opens with a celebrated analysis of Velázquez’s *Las Meninas*.² This book includes the earliest version of his well-known essay on René Magritte (see pp. 187–203), which appeared in 1968. Yet, for all the historical and generic range of the examples on which he draws, Foucault developed his early ontological resolutions most fully through his treatment of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century avant-gardist literature. In 1963 he published a monograph on the French experimental novelist Raymond Roussel.³ For the first time in 1964 he participated in several literary colloquia, most of which included one or more of the leading members of the emerging elite associated with Philippe Sollers and the journal *Tel quel*.⁴ He was not in search of beauty: he was not an aesthete but a student of what the ancient Greeks called *aisthēsis*, “feeling,” “experience,” “felt experience.” In the works of Roussel (see pp. 21–32), in the Surrealists (see pp. 123–35 and 171–74), in Georges Bataille (see pp. 69–87) and in Maurice Blanchot (see pp. 147–69) among others, he finds an obscure but articulate engagement with experiences that many modern philosophies of *aisthēsis* would prefer to ignore. It was, for him, the precedent and the inspiration for the first and one of the most urgent aims of his enterprise: a critique of the strictures, the exclusions, and the errors of what he often calls “humanism”—the doctrine that, behind history or beyond it, looms the singular nature or the singular essence of the human subject.⁵

It would be misleading to ascribe even to the early Foucault the intent to “transcend” either humanism or its ponderous subject. The avant-garde itself taught Foucault less about transcendence than about its limits. Among the most instructive of the literary characters he discerned, in one version or another, in the work of such writers as Roussel, Bataille, Gustave Flaubert,⁶ Blanchot, Jorge-Luis Borges,⁷ and Alain Robbe-Grillet,⁸ is that of the latter-day Scheherazade. Like its predecessor, this character too is a spinner of tales: it tells tales in order to avoid confronting the intolerable, to defer the moment of its own destruction or death. It does not however, seek merely to add to what it has already composed. Its goal is less exhausting, if no less

futile—to construct tales the last words of which are also the first, to tell stories that repeat and recount themselves over and over, ad infinitum (see pp. 91–92). This is one of the hallmarks of a literature that Foucault follows Marthe Robert in characterizing as “a certain relation to self, complex, multilateral, simultaneous, in which the fact of coming after (of being new) cannot at all be reduced to the linear law of succession.”⁹ It suggests, first, “an ontology of literature” for which Flaubert’s infinite library is an apt metaphor (see pp. 103–122), and for which processes of doubling, or reiteration, and of recursion are very much of the literal essence (pp. 92–93).

Such an ontology must be antimimetic: it must run counter to every effort, from that found in Plato’s *Republic* onward, to reduce the essence of literature to that of an “imitation of the real.”¹⁰ Notwithstanding the importance it seems to assign to the horror of death, it must also run counter to any attempt to locate the source of literature in the emotions. For the Rousseau of *La nouvelle Héloïse*, fiction has its cause in raw desire. It is the refined, the cultivated articulation of a primal cry of pain, of lust, of longing.¹¹ For Foucault, fiction has multiple and heterogeneous causes; it serves multiple and heterogeneous purposes. Among other things, it can be a means of intellectually and emotionally deferring the writer’s encounter with his or her own finitude. Neither the causes nor the functions of fiction, though, reveal its being as clearly as the opposite, the fundamental *alter*, against which it stands. Questions of motive aside, the presence of fiction is the absence of death.¹² Its presence fills, or seeks to fill, a horrible expressive vacuum.

Fiction, a domain constituted against that vacuum, that “void,”¹³ has usually counted among its “fundamental categories” that of the “speaking subject.”¹⁴ Beginning with the works of Sade, Foucault detected another category developing, which would need two centuries to mature. It denotes not an entity but a process, which Foucault initially names “thinking speech.”¹⁵ It informs an array of avant-gardist themes and expressive techniques. Death is its structural and logical *alter*, and it is a category of subjectivity and of experience; yet its difference lies in its lack of further strictures, especially those which might be imposed by any subject—any personage or personality—whether transcendental or historical. Unlike the Cartesian *cogito* (“I think”), thinking speech is manifest only as language: it owes its freedom to the structural permissiveness of language, but it has no exist-

ence outside of language itself. True, it appears in the guise of an “I” who speaks in and through the fiction of such writers as Blanchot (see pp. 147–48), but it is not an “author”—this presumptive character to whom interpreters appeal in arguing for the distinctive spirit or intention of a work.¹⁶ It is not a self: Descartes’s “I” is referential, but the “I” who speaks in and through Blanchot’s fiction is only a placeholder. This “I” serves as an index for the expression and exploration of experiences that put our own ontological integrity—our “subjecthood”—into question or carry us beyond its limits. Only the “I speak” of fiction can serve as the index for thinking about our ontological “outside” (pp. 149–50).

Blanchot, for his part, is Foucault’s definitive avant-gardist. More than a mere contributor or one among many “witnesses,” Blanchot is “the real presence, absolutely distant, shimmering, invisible, the necessary destiny, the inevitable law, the calm, infinite, measured strength” of “thought of the outside,” and so of fiction itself (p. 151). Foucault, crediting Blanchot with making discourse about fiction possible, describes him as “the last writer,”¹⁷ a literary consummation and literary summum. Blanchot is a master at the construction of simulacra—the “copies without original” that Foucault sees as among the avant-garde’s most subversive weapons¹⁸—and the definitive cartographer of fictional space. He systematically conflates genres and conflates “fiction” with philosophical “reflection.” His novels are critical; his criticism narrative and novelistic (p. 154). He makes systematic—if never a dialectical—use of negation and contradiction (p. 152). His characters are often curiously absent, either soon to come or recently departed. They speak, but without stable voices or identities (pp. 165–67). The arena in which they act is the “equivocal hollow” of a *dénouement* always in the offing, of an origin forever lost (p. 154). The discursive space they inhabit has no end, no truth, no mask, no affirmation: it is “free of every center, unfettered to any native soil.” It has no subjects: it is the ontological outside, and it permits movement in only a single direction, further out (p. 153).

Is this a space of transcendence? Far from it. It is the singular locus that allows the expression of all those experiences emanating from, or tending toward, self-dissolution. In Nietzsche, Foucault suggests, it is the space of “force” (p. 154). In Roussel, it is the space of the fantasy of self-annihilation and the erosive process of dying. In Bataille, it

is the space of the transgression of the boundaries of the self in erotic transport. In Blanchot, it is the space of “attraction”:

It is necessary to be clear about what the word designates: “attraction,” as Blanchot means it, does not depend upon any charm. Nor does it break one’s solitude or found any positive communication. To be attracted is not to be beckoned by the allure of the exterior; it is rather to suffer [*éprouver*]—in emptiness and in destitution—the presence of the outside and . . . the fact that one is irremediably outside the outside. Far from calling on interiority to draw close to another, attraction makes it imperiously manifest that the outside is there, open, without depth, without protection or reserve . . . but that one cannot gain access to that opening. . . . (p. 154)

Thus, two ancient figures reemerge and become entrenched in Blanchot’s oeuvre. The first is that of the Sirens, “the elusive and forbidden form of the alluring voice” (p. 160). The other is Eurydice, whose lover’s hungry gaze would spell her eternal inaccessibility, her eternal condemnation to the underworld (pp. 161–62). They are all bitter reminders that transcendence must remain always out of reach.

This attraction is not tantamount to an enduring and unrequited longing. Instead, it is a single-minded condition, a state of fixation or obsession, the inextricable companion of “negligence.” Attracted, the self cannot bother to maintain either appearances or its own boundaries. Attracted (and so, distracted) the self inevitably exceeds itself and the boundaries of the ordinary world—its meanings and laws and orders. Like Bataille’s fictional space, Blanchot’s is also a space of “transgression” (pp. 157–58). Within the two spaces, however, transgression is not at all the same. Bataille pushes Foucault toward paradox:

[D]oes transgression not exhaust its nature when it violates the limit, being nothing beyond this point in time? And this point, this curious intersection of beings that do not exist outside it but totally exchange what they are within it—is it not also everything that overflows from it on all sides? It serves as a glorification of what it excludes: the limit opens violently onto the limitless, finds itself suddenly carried away by the content it had rejected, and fulfilled by this alien plenitude that invades it to the very core of its being. (p. 73)

With Blanchot, the paradox disappears. His *dramatis personae* may both obey and violate “public decrees,” but they remain uniformly

distant from “the law” (pp. 157–58). In Blanchot, law is not the “internal principle or prescription of conduct, but rather the outside that envelops it.” It is always “invisible” (p. 158) and unattainable. Transgression has the same status—is indeed the structural and functional equivalent—of attraction itself. It is a disposition or a reaching-out that must remain unfulfilled.

In 1964 Foucault remarked on “the general form of transgression of which madness has for centuries been the visible face.”¹⁹ Yet he never mentions the relation between transgression and madness, or even madness at all, in his essay on Blanchot. This apparent omission, if surprising at first notice, already has its rationale in Foucault’s doctoral dissertation—submitted in 1958, published in French in 1961, and published much abridged in English in 1965 as *Madness and Civilization*: “There is no madness except as the final instance of the work of art—the work endlessly drives madness to its limits; *where there is a work of art, there is no madness*; and yet madness is contemporary with the work of art, since it inaugurates its time of truth.”²⁰ This phrasing is intentionally paradoxical, yet it has the status of an interpretive commandment. Where there is a work, there is no madness; where there is madness, there is no oeuvre: Foucault reiterates this at the conclusion of his introduction to an edition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Dialogues*, published in 1962 (pp. 50–51). He reiterates it again in a favorable review of Jean Laplanche’s *Hölderlin et la question du père* (see p. 18). With it, he summarizes his objectives to any interpretive approach that pretends to reveal or explicate the madness in or of any oeuvre, work of imagination, or work of thought. In 1964, offering a rare homage to Freud, Foucault offered this rationale:

It will be necessary one day to pay this justice to Freud: he did not make a madness *speak* that had, for centuries, precisely been a language (excluded language, loquacious inanity, speech flowing indefinitely outside of the reflective silence of reason). On the contrary, he emptied out the unreasonable Logos. He dried it up. He made words go back to their source—to this blank [*blanche*] region of self-implication in which nothing is said.²¹

As every Scheherazade somehow knows, death is the experiential *alter* of thinking speech. “Madness” is Foucault’s designation of the semiological and performative *alter* of thinking speech: madness

says, it communicates nothing; it does nothing except “open an empty reserve [*réserve lacunaire*], which indicates the hollow in which language and speech implicate one another [and] are formed, the one out of the other. . . .”²²

AISTHĒSIS AND ITS LIMITS

In several of the texts included in this volume Foucault notes that the literary quest for experiential and expressive frontiers—a mission of discovery that leads beyond referentiality, beyond imitation, beyond “reason,” beyond the established generic bounds of disciplined invention, to the edges of coherence and interpretability just short of madness²³—has come at a considerable cost: it has obliged literature to share some portion of the fate of madness itself. Even before the advent of industrial capitalism, madness held the status of “excluded speech.”²⁴ By the nineteenth century, it took on an even more singular status as the purest negation of an ascendant practical logic of production and productivity.²⁵ It became a veritable sickness, a quintessentially disorderly incapacity that demanded new technologies of containment and a new legion of specialists dedicated to specifying its causes, symptomatology, and cure.²⁶ Throughout this period, literature always had greater liberty and commanded greater epistemic respect. But with its avant-gardist pioneers, it gradually infiltrated epistemic regions that differed from those of madness only in degree, but not in kind; though not altogether “invalid,” avant-gardist literature did come to attract an ever-greater number of its own psychoanalysts. It came to seem increasingly “symptomatic”; and, with madness, it increasingly was relegated to the “neutral space” (p. 149) of the most remote epistemic margins.

Foucault’s study of those margins has the character of an epistemological rehabilitation; even more, though, it has the character of ontological reconnaissance. It explores those far reaches of expression which hold the greatest potential to illuminate the nature of thought, because they express nothing but thought. The study owes its very possibility to a particularly portentous event—the beginnings of the liberation of madness from its long-standing conflation with “mental illness,” and the beginnings of the dissolution of the long-standing “anthropological unity” from which the bond between madness and mental illness had, for at least two centuries, derived much of its

strength.²⁷ No longer definitively pathological, madness might at last be seen as purely psychical. Foucault, however, made few predictions as to what experiential or expressive epiphanies might lie ahead. The most pivotal conclusion he was willing to draw rests on the established example of both madness and the literary avant-garde. It is skeptical in tenor: finding no good reason to believe that the boundary between madness (as thoughtless speech or as the unspeakable) and thinking speech (or expressible experience) is anything but historically contingent and historically variable, he was dubious not only of Kant's analytic but of any similarly finitistic analytic that purports to resolve the "necessary conditions of any possible experience" without having every possible experience at its disposal. Hence his resistance to phenomenology from Edmund Husserl through Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.²⁸ Even for the early Foucault, the necessary conditions of any possible experience already look far less stringent than what Kant and his successors presumed them to be; they look likely to be determinable only at infinity (and so, essentially indeterminate).

If the individual human consciousness, which is necessarily finite, is thus unlikely to provide a structurally adequate foundation for a philosophy of thought, it is even less likely to serve as an adequate repository of thought itself. Foucault extracts his alternative from Flaubert among many others: language, not consciousness, is at once the matrix of thought and its potentially infinite storehouse.²⁹ Yet what of thought as a process, as an event? In 1969 Foucault published *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, a long, somewhat troubled, but not altogether unsuccessful attempt to establish the co-determinacy of those "discursive events" he would call *énoncés*—"statements" or "pronouncements"—and the discursive formations that comprise them. In 1970 he appeared to strike an ontological alliance with the premier French philosopher of events—his friend and contemporary, Gilles Deleuze. Stress "appears": Foucault's brief review of two of Deleuze's treatises has become famous for its speculation that "perhaps one day, the century will be known as Deleuzian" (p. 343). Understood in this way, the speculation is as awkward in French as it is in English. It is, in fact, a *double entendre*, and it reads and translates more elegantly in its covert signification: "Some day, the in-crowd will be Deleuzian."³⁰ It is not a profession of full discipleship. However, the review provides an important bridge between Foucault's

aesthetics and the ethics he later developed, by providing an important reminder of the conceptual and practical expanse separating them: though dense and difficult, it asserts clearly enough two principles that Deleuze and Foucault shared. The first establishes the general ontological priority of the event over the object; the second establishes the specific ontological priority of thought as an event over thought as *any* structure or system—notably over structures and systems of humanist design.

Foucault's Deleuze is a "reverse Platonist" (p. 344): he opens the door to all the alleged "imitations" and all the alleged "imitators" that Plato so distrusted. Plato urges the thinker to ascend from the world of transitory "appearance" to a sublime world of eternal and perfect Forms;⁵¹ Deleuze urges the thinker to look down. He subverts Plato with his meticulous scrutiny of "a crop of hair or the dirt under its fingernails" (p. 346). He "perverts" Plato in inclining toward "the Sophists' spitefulness, the unmannerly gestures of the Cynics, the arguments of the Stoics, and the fluttering chimeras of Epicurus." He makes us want to read that most unmannerly of Cynics, Diogenes Laërtis. Deleuze is a philosopher of "all this swarming of the impalpable," a philosopher of emanations and phantasms that "topologize the materiality of the body." He escapes "the dilemmas of truth and falsehood and of being and nonbeing," and lets his phantasms "conduct their dance . . . act out their mime, as 'extrabeings'" (pp. 346–47). Deleuze teaches us how to think about the "pure event," and about the relation between the pure event and the phantasm. The former has no extension, either in space or in time; the latter is the event "in play," contracted or expanded to fit the scale, the pace, and the import of the story of which it is part.

Though Deleuze's inspirations include Spinoza, most analytical philosophers would probably see him as arguing less for Spinoza's "psychophysical parallelism" than for an ontology grounded exclusively in the incorporeal—and so they would label him a "mentalist."⁵² Deleuze may or may not be a mentalist, but he certainly recognized in his own turn that Foucault, however preoccupied with the self-referential mechanisms of fiction or the self-constructive mechanisms of discourse, is neither a Kantian nor a mentalist. Deleuze's formidable *Foucault* has its faults,⁵³ but it does have the virtue of underscoring that Foucault always regards the psyche as being in, and of, a wider world. Nor is the Foucauldian psyche simply

passive: it is both the partial effect and the partial cause of its surroundings. And it is both the partial effect and the partial cause of certain aspects of itself.

However, Foucault finds in Deleuze terms immediately adequate to define only the latter of the psyche's dynamics, its production and reproduction of itself.⁵⁴ The pure event is "the thought," or "the object of thought" [*le pensé*]; the phantasm is "thought" [*la pensée*]. In order to grasp both their difference and their symbiosis, Foucault proposes that

we must conceptualize not the synthesizing and synthesized subject but rather a certain insurmountable fissure. Moreover, we must conceptualize a series, without any original anchor, of simulacra, idols, and phantasms which, in the temporal duality in which they are formed are always the two sides of the fissure from which they are made signs and are put in place as signs. The fissure of the I and series of signifying points do not form a unity that permits thought to be both subject and object, but they are themselves the event of thought [*la pensée*] and the incorporeality of what is thought [*le pensé*], the object of thought [*le pensé*] as a problem (a multiplicity of dispersed points) and thought [*la pensée*] as mime (repetition without a model). (pp. 353-54)

There is no unity of subject and object, nor possibility of that sort of transcendence. What Deleuze instead allows Foucault to add to the results of his aesthetic investigations is the specification of a psychic "radical"—not yet another alter of thought, not its origin or first principle, but its productive and reproductive "moment." The ancient Greeks knew that moment as an *aporia*—a "difficulty," or more literally, a thing that "stops us in our tracks." Foucault identifies it here as the "object of thought," and that object as a *problem*.

Deleuze further allows Foucault to supplement, and to begin to reorient, the conceptual apparatus out of which he had recently constructed his archaeology. Consider one of the most indispensable elements of that apparatus, the "archive":

Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have, in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and

field of use) . . . all these systems of statements (whether of events or things) . . . [are] the archive.³⁵

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault objects that too many historians have privileged grand and conventional notions such as “evolution” or “development,” “the spirit of an age” or the “mentality” of a civilizational “tradition.” These privileges all too often signal an overemphasis on historical continuity at the expense of discontinuity and disruption, and methodological devaluation of the event itself.³⁶ However, the concept of the archive is open itself to very much the same objection: it, too, renders events subordinate to the “systems” of which they are a part. The concept of the object of thought as problem in fact holds the potential to effect an inversion of that subordination; but as a concept only of the dynamics of *aisthēsis*, and only of the seemingly vacant Deleuzean “point,” it remains of quite limited analytical use. It demands both expansion and extension. Five years passed before, suitably altered, it began to reappear in Foucault’s writings as “problematization.”³⁷ Another five years passed before it became the conceptual centerpiece of his twin investigations of ethics and governmentality. In the interim, Foucault largely left behind his investigations of the thought of the outside in order to clarify, for his growing audience (and also for himself), those other dynamics of the psyche, within which limits can be quite palpable, and within which transgression is always also moral. Such were what he came to call the dynamics of “subjectivation,” of thought very much in, and of, a wider world of regimes that would marshal it and of wills that would require of it not what it might inherently afford—the truth—but rather what it might be taxed to offer up, “knowledge.”

METHOD AND MAN

For Foucault as for Ludwig Wittgenstein, language is never private, but its public “games” are irreducibly plural in form and function.³⁸ Between those discourses fashioned sheerly for the expression of experience and those fashioned for the production of knowledge, there is little common ground. The latter traffic in “facts.” Between facts and knowledge, between knowledge and truth, Foucault clearly presumed a systematic relation. He did not, however, have a “theory” of knowledge; he never offered an account of the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge. As he said in a 1981 interview: “I’m

not an analytical philosopher. Nobody's perfect."³⁹ If pressed, he might at least have agreed with those analytical philosophers who argue that knowledge is always defeasible, that claims to know perfectly justifiable in one context might turn out to be both unjustified and false in another. Any finitistic theory of knowledge would, for Foucault, in any case require a *prioris*. If valid at all, its validity could only be normative.

The starting point of Foucault's investigation of discursive and extradiscursive knowledge-producing practices is not normative; instead, it is descriptive and interpretive. Its potential domain comprises all those practices, past and present, which have been proposed or presumed to systematically generate the truth: put simply, it potentially includes all such "games of truth." Foucault is too often read as a relentless epistemological relativist, a disbeliever in the truth—which is odd, because he is entirely prepared to take a great many would-be purveyors of truth more or less at their word. In his 1968 "Response" to the Paris Epistemology Circle (see pp. 297–333), as in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he specifies four general criteria that mark the degree of systematicity and the objective epistemic authority of any game of truth. Between the "Response" and the *Archaeology*, his terms differ, but the criteria remain constant. Citing the latter text:

The moment at which a discursive practice achieves individuality and autonomy, the moment therefore at which a single system for the formation of statements is put into operation, or the moment at which this system is transformed, might be called the *threshold of positivity*. When, in the operation of a discursive formation, a group of statements is articulated, claims to validate (even if unsuccessfully) norms of verification and coherence, and when it exercises a dominant function (as a model, a critique, or a verification) over knowledge, we will say that the discursive formation crosses a *threshold of epistemologization*. When the epistemological figure thus outlined obeys a number of formal criteria, when its statements comply not only with archaeological rules of formation, but also with certain laws for the construction of propositions . . . it has crossed a *threshold of scientificity*. And when this scientific discourse is able, in turn, to define the axioms necessary to it, the propositional structures that are legitimate to it, and the transformations that it accepts, when it is thus able, taking itself as a starting-point, to deploy the formal edifice that it constitutes . . . it has crossed the *threshold of formalization*.⁴⁰

Foucault sees these criteria as indices of degrees of systematicity. His use of them highlights “levels, thresholds, and ruptures” between *and* within discursive practices—a much more complex and qualitatively ambiguous motility than Thomas Kuhn’s distinction between “revolutionary” and “normal” science can capture.⁴¹ Foucault’s use of these criteria also highlights the temporal irregularity of the constitution of the scientific domain: in his judgment, only a single science—mathematics—has ever crossed all four thresholds simultaneously. The history of mathematics can thus be a history of an “ideality” which “has been questioned only to be repeated and purified.”⁴² The history of all other sciences, from physics to psychopathology, must at least as much be a history of “gropings and failures” as of resounding or stable success.⁴³

Yet the historian should not treat mathematics as either a normative or a diagnostic model: “if one takes the establishment of mathematical discourse as a prototype for the birth and development of all the other sciences, one runs the risk of homogenizing all the unique forms of historicity, of reducing to the authority of a single rupture all the different thresholds that a discursive practice may cross, and reproducing endlessly, at every moment in time, the question of origin: the rights of historico-transcendental analysis would thus be reinstated.”⁴⁴ The ontologist should also heed the warning: if relatively few discursive practices have crossed all four thresholds even at present, not all should ever be expected to cross any more than the first two or three. The “fault” of these inevitably less formal approaches might lie not only with their (relative lack of) internal resolution but also with the constitution of their objects. Numbers are one sort of thing; the psyche, and its history, are quite another. For Foucault, as for Wilhelm Dilthey and Hans-Georg Gadamer, knowledge is plural, at least in part because being is itself plural.⁴⁵

In the “Response,” Foucault announced his debt to an elder generation of historians of philosophy and of science who refused to privilege continuity over “rupture”—Gaston Bachelard, Martial Gueroult, and Georges Canguilhem (p. 299). Foucault’s rejection of historical continualism may recall his own anti-Kantian aesthetics but his concern in the “Response” is not with the self-productive psyche alone: “The desire to make historical analysis the discourse of continuity, and make human consciousness the originating subject of all knowledge and all practice, are two faces of one and the same system

of thought. Time is conceived in terms of totalization, and revolution never as anything but a coming to consciousness [*prise de conscience*]” (p. 301). Foucault called for the historiography of the psyche to disburden itself of its enchantment with the ordinary subject and all of its conventional proxies, from “tradition” and “mentality” to “evolution” and the “spirit of an age [*époque*]” (pp. 302–3). He also called for the renunciation of historicism, for which every beginning is merely apparent, and all manifest discourse secretly based upon an “already said” (p. 305). The psyche repeats itself only at infinity; so, too, its history. There can be no a priori delimitation of the possible variety of its multiple trains.⁴⁶

On ontological grounds alone, then, one would have to conclude that the historiographer could never be confident of being able to specify every last axiom necessary to his or her practice, and historiography never confidently be able to cross Foucault’s fourth threshold, the threshold of formalization. At best, it might aspire to cross the threshold of scientificity. But should it aspire to cross even that? The question certainly troubled Foucault throughout his career, not least because most of the inquiries that occupied him from about 1966 forward are themselves historiographic in character. No less troubling is the question of history’s epistemological status, the epistemological authority it commands. He posed both questions to himself in dialogue with himself at the conclusion of *The Archaeology*. His answers are quite preliminary; they are also subtle. Their subtlety plays out in his usage not only of *histoire archéologique* and *épistème* but of two other terms—*connaissance* and *savoir*—whose ambiguities are easily lost under the single English rubric of “knowledge.”

“What archaeology tries to describe,” Foucault writes, “is not the specific structure of science, but the very different domain of *knowledge* [*savoir*].”⁴⁷ His *histoire archéologique*—“archaeological history”—has as its “point of attack the threshold of epistemologization—the point of cleavage between discursive formations defined by their positivity and epistemological figures that are not necessarily all sciences (and which may never, in fact, succeed in becoming sciences).” At this level,” he adds, “scientificity does not serve as a norm . . . what one is trying to uncover are discursive practices insofar as they give rise to a corpus of knowledge [*savoir*], in so far as they assume the status and role of a science.”⁴⁸ Such a corpus is made up—largely if not exclusively—of that typically scattered field of what Foucault calls

a discourse.⁴⁹ Discourses are neither less nor more orderly than the conventional archaeological “site”; they may be rather “basic.” They should not, however, be confused either with some “ordinary language” or with the ordinary language of everyday experience. They are, rather, that particular linguistic matrix which allows the archaeological historian to “reveal, between positivities, knowledge [*savoir*], epistemological figures, and sciences, a whole set of differences, relations, gaps, independences, autonomies, and the way in which they articulate their own historicities on one another.”⁵⁰ Hence the possibility of the analysis of an *épistème*, an “episteme”:

the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems. . . . The episteme is not a form of knowledge [*connaissance*] or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyzes them at the level of discursive regularities.⁵¹

Although the episteme constrains discourse, it is always discursively open. It is not some “system of postulates that governs all the branches of knowledge [*connaissance*].”⁵² It is, rather, “a constantly moving set of articulations, shifts, and coincidences that are established only to give rise to others.”⁵³

“Archaeological history” and the “episteme” belong to Foucault’s technical vocabulary. *Savoir* and *connaissance* take on technical nuances of their own (though these nuances are never at great variance with ordinary French). *Savoir* is at once a verbal and a nominal form—“to know” as well as “knowledge.” Its general sense is perhaps that of “awareness” or “cognizance” (compare the English “savvy”). One might, in this sense, know the Pythagorean theorem or the time of day, know that Beijing is in China or that the hydrogen atom has only a single electron, know of a continent called “Asia” or a diagram called the “periodic table,” know of someone that she is kind or an heiress, know about a certain item of news, about a theory, about a rumor. *Savoir* can be quite abstract, or it can be quite concrete: one might know that a certain flower is fragrant from having smelled it. Such knowledge is not genuine if its object is nonexistent or false. It need not, however, be grounded in any principle. It need not be the

product of a reliable method or a reliable pedagogy. It cannot be completely without justification, but its justification does not need to be precise or definitive. It can fall far short of proof. Hence, for Foucault, the general domain of *savoir*: a domain not of things known but of things to be known, one way or another, with less or with greater rigor from one instance to the next. Within such a general domain, there may be (and typically are) many subdivisions, many *savoirs*, each the constellation of a particular discursive practice, however scientific it may or may not be.

The verbal form of *connaissance* is *connaître*. Both are linked to the general concept that might best be rendered in English as “acquaintance.” Thus one makes the acquaintance of (*fait la connaissance de*) or is acquainted with (*connait*) another person. One is acquainted with, familiar with, a museum to which one has paid two or three visits. One is familiar with, perhaps even well versed in, Baroque painting (recall the “connoisseur”) or economics or Boolean algebra. One has learned, and so knows, Mandarin or Sanskrit. One has learned, perhaps memorized, and so knows how to play Mozart’s Sonata in C on the piano. *Connaissance* and *connaître* are ambiguous in French in very much the same way that “acquaintance” and “to be acquainted with” are ambiguous in English. They may signify a relatively superficial mode of knowledge, grounded in incomplete information or incomplete research, “knowledge” of minimal degree. But this knowledge might always be enriched; acquaintance might be cultivated and transformed into intimacy, into expertise. Hence the other significative side of both terms: *connaissance* can sometimes only be translated as “cognition,” sometimes only as “learning,” and its plural sometimes only as “a body of learning,” indeed sometimes only as “expertise.” *Connaître* sometimes demands translation as “to comprehend” or “to have mastered.” Foucault’s more technical usage of both of these terms always favors this latter side; it consistently evokes modes of knowledge tied to highly developed apparatuses of justification and modes of competence supported by well-crystallized apparatuses of “background training.” In his more technical usage, *connaissance* always has its closest affinities with science. In his “Response,” Foucault thus locates *savoir* “between” experience and science. “*Connaissance*,” in contrast, “confers on experience the charge of giving an account of the effective existence of science. . . . The

thematic of understanding [*connaissance*] is tantamount to a denegation of knowledge [*savoir*]" (p. 332).

How close are *connaissance* and archaeological history? The imaginary interlocutor at the conclusion of *The Archaeology* remarks: "one must at least deduce that your archaeology is not a science. . . . Yet another of those discourses that would like to be taken as a discipline still in its early stages, no doubt; which gives their authors the double advantage of not having to establish their explicit, rigorous scientificity, and of opening up for it a future generality that frees it from the hazards of its birth."⁵⁴ Foucault does not reject the accusation or pretend to be plying a "science." He does not expect archaeological history ever to attain scientificity.⁵⁵ What he claims for it, instead, is an established domain of positivity: "it is related to the sciences that are already constituted and establish their norms in the knowledge [*savoir*] archaeologically described; for the archaeological enterprise, these sciences are so many *science-objects*."⁵⁶ He suggests that it can appeal to "generative grammar" for some at least of its analytical standards.⁵⁷ He points to "social formations" as those "correlative spaces" in which it might seek controls for, and the corroboration of, at least some of its results. Finally, he proposes that it might some day be able to call upon a "general theory of productions" as its own "enveloping theory."⁵⁸ Archaeology is neither a science nor a guarantor of *connaissance*; it can only offer *savoir*; but it might some day be able to cross the threshold of epistemologization, to call a regulative epistemological figure its own.

Could a general theory of productions, a general theory of how historical (and psychic) differences are made, be the ultimate epistemological figure not just of archaeological history but also of historiography as a whole? Foucault does not say so; the tentative tone of his conclusion to *The Archaeology* does not suggest that he encourages any such inference. But he may be inclined toward the position all the same. What form would a theory of productions take? Again, he does not say, but surely it cannot be yet another transcendentalism, yet another specification of the necessary and sufficient conditions either of historical process or of historical events. He surely cannot expect it even to take the form of a statistical or probabilistic modeling of such conditions. Yet Foucault's venturing of the very idea of a general theory of productions, which might at least postulate the necessary (or, in their lieu, the sufficient) conditions of historical practice, or

postulate the general relation between discursive and extradiscursive practices, underscores his reluctance to adopt, even provisionally, any principle of the fundamental plurality or heterogeneity of historiographical diagnosis and historiographical method themselves. It underscores his central ambition, as historiographer and as methodologist, from *Madness and Civilization* through the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*: not merely to describe but to provide a corrective to the vast error that has its realization in the philosophy of the “constituting subject” (p. 437) and in “the human sciences,” the sciences of “man.”

ENVISIONING REVISION

In *Les Mots et les choses*, published in French in 1966 and translated into English four years later as *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Foucault argues that our “modern” conception of “man” is only some hundred and fifty years old. This new “man” is a being that makes the world, but it is also a creature, a being made from the world in which it lives. It is at once the subject of knowledge and the object within which the conditions of all possible knowledge lie.⁵⁹ It makes its philosophical appearance in the simultaneously transcendental and empirical analyses of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁶⁰ It retains a central role in all those philosophical traditions to which Hegel is ancestral—in subsequent phenomenologies, but also in Marxism. It makes its scientific appearance when, in the early nineteenth century, “natural history becomes biology, when the analysis of wealth becomes economics, [and] when, above all, reflection upon language becomes philology.”⁶¹ In all these new sciences, “man” is an essentially finite being, an ephemeral expression of the laws of the various natural systems into which it is born and within which it is bound to die; but it is also a being who, for all its finitude, is somehow able to grasp its own nature, to comprehend all that it has ever been and all that it ever might be.⁶²

“Man,” in short, is a mystery. It is a being of paradoxes. It has, Foucault thinks, had its day. His conclusion to *The Order of Things* once again recalls what he has seen in Blanchot:

[T]he whole of the modern episteme . . . was bound up . . . with the shift of language towards objectivity, and with its reappearance in multiple form. If this same language is now emerging with greater and

greater insistence in a unity that we ought to think but cannot as yet do so, is this not the sign that the whole of this configuration is now about to topple, and that man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter upon our horizon?⁶³

Foucault soon came to regret such grand and epochal pronouncements.⁶⁴ He never, however, abandoned his suspicion of either phenomenology or Marxism.⁶⁵ Though far from indicting all the discourses and practices that now constitute biology and economics and philology, he never abandoned his suspicion of any discourse or practice founded in a determinate axiomatics of “human nature.” And he never abandoned the question that fiction might inspire but could never answer: “Does man really exist?”⁶⁶ Plainly, Foucault does not think so. But the question must then be: What has encouraged so many people to believe the contrary for so long?

That people should be in error is not itself odd. In a lengthy homage, Foucault credits Canguilhem with leading him to recognize, instead, that “life . . . is that which is capable of error” (p. 476). Error, in its turn, is generative of both “human thought and its history”:

The opposition of the true and the false, the values that are attributed to the one and the other, the power effects that different societies and different institutions link to that division—all this may be nothing but the most belated response to that possibility of error inherent in life. If the history of the sciences is discontinuous—that is, if it can be analyzed only as a series of “corrections,” as a new distribution that never sets free, finally and forever, the terminal moment of truth—the reason, again, is that “error” constitutes not a neglect or a delay of the promised fulfillment but the dimension peculiar to the life of human beings and indispensable to the duration [*temps*] of the species. (p. 476)

Following Canguilhem, Foucault is not a pragmatist but a fallibilist, or better, a philosopher of fallibility.⁶⁷ The history of thought is a history of trials, an open-ended history of multiple visions and revisions, some more enduring than others.

A pragmatist might settle for an intellectualist analysis of how durable any particular vision or revision is, however much in error. Foucault is a much more complex “psychologist,” and his treatment of the endurance of error is by no means limited to the pragmatist notation of the absence of any “stronger argument.” In *The Archaeol-*

ogy, he already specified that dimension of his treatment which became central to his research through the seventies. He notes the "rarity" of statements, the considerable gap between the indefinite number of statements that might be generated within any discourse and the relatively few that actually end up constituting it. The gap evinces the "costliness" of such statements, the considerable capital that is required for their production and the price they accordingly bear. It evinces their "value," but a value that cannot be defined "by their truth." The value of statements resides, rather, in their presumptive truth, their presumptive authority, and so in their actual instrumental potential. In its rarity, the presumptively authoritative statement is "an asset—finite, limited, desirable, useful—that has its own rules of appearance, but also its own conditions of appropriation and operation; an asset that consequently, from the moment of its appearance (and not only in its 'practical applications'), poses the question of power; an asset that is, by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle."⁶⁸ Hence the rationale for a frankly functionalist investigation of the interaction of two separate forces: *pouvoir* and *savoir*, "power" and "knowledge."⁶⁹

In a 1967 interview Foucault suggests that his archaeology "owes more to Nietzschean genealogy than to structuralism" (p. 294). Only in 1971, with "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (see pp. 369–91), did he further elaborate his debt, or perhaps *hint* would be more accurate. Here as elsewhere, it would be incautious to conflate his explication of another writer's position as in any sense a straightforward explication of his own. The essay on Nietzsche nevertheless marks another important turning of Foucauldean discourse—away from the archaeology of knowledge and toward a genealogy of "power–knowledge," as well as away from archaeological history and toward a history of the "dynamics of knowledge."⁷⁰ Genealogy remains a historiography of epistemic discontinuities, of epistemic ruptures; yet it introduces an additional dimension. It combines a diagnostics of the interior systematicity and structural productivity of discourses, of discursive formations, and of epistemes with a diagnostics of "descent": of "the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things which continue to exist and have value for us" (p. 374). It thus can reveal that "there is 'something altogether different' behind things, not a timeless and essential secret but the

secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms” (p. 371). It unmasks pretensions to “naturalness.” It exposes the apparently simple as actually complex. It reveals that the things of history—historical things—are, at base, disparate (see p. 372). If archaeology attends to discursive practices, genealogy assumes a much broader vantage. It looks behind discursive practices to their extradiscursive setting, to the milieu from which they are excluded or in which their products are deployed. It looks not just for the descent of things but also for the emergence of the boundaries between them. What it confronts are “forces” and the “hazardous play of dominations” (p. 376). To aesthetic or archaeological analyses of the relations among forms, genealogy unites an analysis of those “relations of contrary forces” which constitute the actual stuff of history, actual events. What it finds are neither mechanisms nor final destinations. It instead finds chance, “the luck of the battle [*hasard de la lutte*]” (p. 381).

Foucault does not merely slip into prioritizing the system over the event in formulating his archaeology; he also imposes a severe phenomenological limit on it. Archaeology must always be a history of the past, because the archives available to us can only be past, can only be other than the one “within whose rules” we speak and which “gives to us what we can say.”⁷¹ At least by 1970, however, he began to recognize in his own past example an “ethnographic” strategy that might allow at least the outlines of the present to become clear. The historian may not be able to grasp the present in its totality. But a historian attentive to the shifting boundary dividing the normal from the abnormal, the historian of what the ethnographer would call the “deviant” and the “taboo,” might be able even so to discern the general “modality” of the present to which he or she belongs (p. 335). Foucault reiterated the virtues of such a strategy—on which he never ceased to rely—much later in his career, even as he continued to advise “modesty” toward the present (p. 449). The strategy is nothing more than the synchronic phase of genealogy itself, its review of the state of subjects, of objects, and of the relations between them not through time but, instead, at any particular moment of time. From 1971 forward, Foucault favored genealogy not simply for its prioritization of events over systems but also for its programmatization of a history no longer constrained to be a history of the past but capable of being a “history of the present.”⁷²

Genealogy has yet another advantage over archaeology. It continues to treat archaeological phenomena—discourses and discursive formations; extradiscursive practices and organizations; the heterogeneous amalgams of discursive and extradiscursive practices and their technological accoutrements that Foucault occasionally refers to as “apparatuses” [*dispositifs*].⁷³ Like archaeology, it remains detached from those individual human intentions to which the classic historiographer or the phenomenologist might have appeal. Hence it neither lionizes nor blames. Unlike archaeology, though, it expands its focus beyond the internal generativity of discourses, to a much wider domain of interaction: between the proponents and the antagonists of any discourse or discursive formation; between discursive formations and their functional milieux. Archaeology—at least in its diagnostic “purity”—is a method suitable for rendering historical discontinuities and ruptures, but only at the expense of historical continuities and enduring historical conduits. Genealogy has its focal ground in the luck of battle, the unpredictable turns of victory and defeat. Like archaeology, it too is concerned with disruption. Precisely in its far more refined localism, though, it opens onto the regions above or beyond the fray, regions perhaps longer or more briefly at peace. It allows Foucault to characterize the historical process neither as discontinuous nor as continuous but, rather, as “a multiplicity of time spans that entangle and envelop one another” (p. 430). It allows him to conceive of history as a plurality of encounters and temporalities.

However, genealogy too has its shortcomings. It informs Foucault’s approach to an extraordinarily diverse array of events and practices and institutions, from a peasant’s confession of murder to the coalescence of “governmentality,” but throughout, its methodological status is curiously indefinite.⁷⁴ It is of great service in illuminating the various historicities of the “sciences of man.” But Foucault’s remark in *Discipline and Punish* that certain sciences have managed to detach themselves from the conditions of their discursive emergence, to distance themselves from the play of power–knowledge, suggests that genealogy might prove of much less service to the historian of physics or mathematics.⁷⁵ What, moreover, of genealogy itself? Does it somehow preserve a privilege that other historical methodologies lack? Is it alone liberated from the scrutiny to which it subjects other informal knowledges? Foucault certainly never claimed that genealogy is itself beyond genealogical analysis, or that genealogy is beyond any in-

volvement with power; if anything, he believed the contrary. Nor would a genealogy of genealogy inevitably undermine the virtues of the method or inevitably negate its results. Genealogical critique, whatever its object, is not the same as disproof. It is not a *reductio ad absurdum*. However, it does tend to leave its objects under a persistent aura of suspicion.

Might genealogy itself thus be suspect? Perhaps; but the answer would depend less on an inquiry into what it renders positive and what it excludes than on the quality of the forces that drive it. Foucault was convinced that the sciences of man emerge in error, in the mistaken postulate of a stable, definable, suprahistorical human essence, a fixed human nature. But, however grave, the error does not preclude discovery or the amassing of a great many particular truths about human beings. It persists in part because it has so many apparent corroborations. It persists in greater part, however, because of its virtually perfect accord with the norms of conceptual formation and the grand ambitions of a particular modality of reason, a particular rationalism, increasingly dominant in Europe and elsewhere from the early nineteenth century forward. Emphasizing its affinities with capitalist practices and the capitalist ethos, Max Weber would characterize such rationalism as “technical,” as “calculative” and “instrumental.”⁷⁶ Foucault, emphasizing its intellectual pragmatism, tends to write of it as the prevailing modern expression and prevailing modern instrument of *la volonté de savoir*, “the will to know.”⁷⁷ Is genealogy an expression and an instrument of the same will?

If so, it would be a conceptually ill-formed, a very poor instrument. At least in its Foucauldean deployment, it would also seem consistently to lead to results quite contrary to those which would satisfy any managerial passion. It belongs apparently to another rationalism, another will. Yet genealogy leaves other rationalisms, other wills, largely obscure. Its constant point of departure and return is power-knowledge. Its critique has the will to know as its constant object. Its history is a history of strategies, of tactics, of battles. Were it a total, a universal method, it would surely be guilty of promulgating a reductive image of history and the psyche alike. Even restricted, it would seem to run the risk of picturing the sciences of man as nothing more than so many instrumentalist fantasies, nothing more than so many excrescences of the same acquisitive and inquisitorial spirit. It would

thus seem to run the risk of perpetuating the monotony of the very sort of “critique of ideology” to which Foucault is most opposed.

Not until the early eighties did Foucault settle on a more generous regard for both history and possible foci of genealogical research. In the interim, he developed a friendship with one of his former students, the classicist and philosopher Paul Veyne. At Berkeley and elsewhere, he also embarked upon an extensive philosophical exchange with Paul Rabinow and philosopher Hubert Dreyfus, and at last began to embrace the inevitable plurality, the inevitable heterogeneity, of historiographical diagnosis and historiographical method.⁷⁸ Adopting Veyne’s term, Foucault spoke, first in 1979, of the necessity of historiographical “nominalism.”⁷⁹ Veyne’s nominalism, for its part, has much in common with Hayden White’s “metahistory” and with many other recent narratologies:⁸⁰ it construes history as an ever-passing human spectacle, “not scientist but sublunary.”⁸¹ As spectacle, history lacks “elementary facts, because each fact has meaning only within its own plot and has reference to an indefinite number of plots.”⁸² No single plot can claim pride of place over any other; and no finite grouping of plots can claim to be exhaustive of any “event-worthy field.”⁸³ It is somewhat unlikely that Foucault, who so pointedly objected to Jacques Derrida’s excessive “textualization of discursive practices” (p. 416), could wholeheartedly embrace Veyne’s own textualist rendering of the historical “fact.” But he came at least to accept that what a nominalist would say of any particular technique of emplotment, any particular method, should be said of genealogy itself: it never tells the “whole story.”

But of what might genealogy be able to tell at least part of the story? Especially in the aftermath of the publication of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault became increasingly interested in ethics and in that reflexive exercise of power through which human beings can, if always within limits, undertake to envision and to revise themselves. A history of such “practices of freedom” can be genealogical, but it is not, or not only, a history of battles. It is not, or not only, a history of the will to know. It evokes other relations, and other forces. One of these latter—though Foucault mentions it only rarely—is the *volonté de vérité*, the “will to truth,” a will not strategic but curious. To another of them, Foucault never quite gave a name,

but it might roughly be called the “will to become,” a “poetic” will that exercises itself on the psyche, on the self, for the sake of self-realization.

With its application to ethics, genealogy itself becomes internally plural. In the early eighties, Foucault began to expand and to redefine its fulcrum. Deleuze returns, with the relevant changes being made. From a 1984 interview:

For a long time, I have been trying to see if it would be possible to characterize the history of thought in distinguishing it from the history of ideas—that is, the analysis of systems of representations—and from the history of mentalities—that is, the analysis of attitudes and schemes of behavior. It seemed to me that there existed an element that was of a nature to characterize the history of thought: what one could call problems or, more exactly, problematizations. . . . Thought is not what dwells within an instance of behavior and gives it a meaning; it is rather what allows for a step back from that manner of doing or reacting, for putting it forward as a thought-object and interrogating it about its meaning, its conditions, and its ends. Thought is liberty in relation to what one does, the movement by which one detaches oneself from it, constitutes it as an object and reflects on it as a problem.⁸⁴

In the same month, Foucault offered to another interviewer that “the notion that serves as a common form” to his studies, from *Madness and Civilization* forward, is precisely that of problematization, however long it might have taken him “to isolate it.”⁸⁵

What, then, provokes problematization? A historical hodgepodge, to consider only the evidence that Foucault himself has left to us. It includes the will to know, the will to truth, and the will to become. It includes the urge to administer both men and things. It includes the failure of the best-laid plans and the unexpected success of irresponsible frivolities. It includes the always-nagging inevitability of death, war, contagion. It includes demographic explosion and decline, rationalization, bureaucratization, industrialization, moral paradox, and experiential anomaly. It includes the eerie trenchancy of the mad and the inexplicable cry of a small child. It includes all that might ever trouble or startle us—not least, the occasional, unsummoned coalescence of our own idle musing.

What is the “form” of problematization? A certain distance, per-

haps, between the psyche and its milieu, a distance that, in each case, has its own stimuli, its own consequences, and its own historicity. A hiatus in which the most unrestrained fantasy and the most rigorous reason might have equal exercise. A gap in which thought first of all mimics nothing but itself. A space of vision, and the constant test and trial of revisions, within which Foucault's philosophical and historical imagination, his personal *daimōn*, would always reside.

The *daimōn* lives. Had Foucault himself lived, his notion of problematization would undoubtedly have grown more rigorous, more refined. His genealogy of problematization would have grown even more copious and even more diverse. What remains is at once an incomplete and an imposing precedent. With it, there are many tasks, some of which to call, perhaps, our own.

I would say that the work of the intellectual is in a sense to say what is, while making it appear able not to be, or not to be as it is. . . . What reason experiences [*éprouve*] as its necessity, or rather what the different forms of rationality put forward as their necessary being—one can perfectly well undertake a history of that and recover the network of contingencies from which it emerged. Which does not mean, however, that those forms of rationality were irrational: it means that they rest upon a base of human practice and human history; and since the latter were made, they can be unmade, provided one knows how they were made.⁸⁶

JAMES D. FAUBION

NOTES

- 1 Here and throughout the introduction, internal citations refer to pages in this volume.
- 2 Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 3–16.
- 3 See Foucault, *Raymond Roussel: Death and the Labyrinth*, trans. Charles Ruas (New York: Doubleday, 1984).
- 4 Founded in 1960 by the novelist and critic Philippe Sollers, *Tel quel* was devoted for more than two decades to the publication of avant-gardist literature and was especially important as a venue for “new novelists” such as Alain Robbe-Grillet.
- 5 See Foucault, “Entretien avec Madeleine Chapsal,” in *Dits et écrits*, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald, with the assistance of Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 516–17; “Qui-êtes-vous, professeur Foucault?,” in *Dits et écrits*, vol. 1, pp. 615–19; and “Entretien sur la prison,” in *Dits et écrits*, vol. 2, pp. 751–52.
- 6 Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880) is often regarded as among the first “modern” French writers. His best-known works are *Madame Bovary* (trans. Alan Russell [Baltimore: Penguin, 1950]) and