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Michel Foucault: Towards an Archaeology of Archaeology

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In this chapter an attempt will be made to discuss Foucault in a manner which I believe he would prefer; not as an author, a producer of a singular genre, a unified centre of consciousness inscribed into texts, but as a set of problems and problematizations of major areas within history, philosophy and social and political theory. Foucault, then, is the proper name we ascribe to a series of texts, problems and ways of thinking about these problems, and connecting them with past and present.

Foucault's work is both so extraordinarily wide-ranging and written in such a manner as systematically to defy any attempt to provide meaningful compression. He has written histories of madness, medicine, the human sciences, incarceration and sexuality, to provide a minimal description of his work. But he is not a historian, at least in the conventional sense. He has investigated areas such as discourse, power, truth, subjectivity, ethics and rationality. His work has sparked off debate and work within the spheres of literary criticism, art history, linguistics, philosophy, history, social and political theory, geography, anthropology and archaeology. His texts have been extolled as 'the most fully developed version of a new political "theory" and "practice" that is just beginning to emerge from the discrediting of Marxism and reformism' (Sheridan 1980: 221–2) and he has been criticized as 'a central figure in a disgraceful metamorphosis of continental philosophy [involving] the "subversive cynicism" of preaching irrationalism' (Merquior 1985: 159–60). Foucault himself has noted that:

> I think I have in fact been situated in most of the squares on the political checkerboard, one after another and sometimes simultaneously: as anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, nihilist, explicit or secret

anti-Marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, new liberal etc. An American professor complained that a crypto-Marxist like me was invited to the U.S.A., and I was denounced by the press in Eastern European countries for being an accomplice of the dissidents. (*FR*: 383–4).

What follows is a discussion of a number of central themes in Foucault's texts: the manner in which we should write the past and the nature of discourse, power, history, space and time, subjectivity and politics. Foucault does not provide any overarching systematization with regard to either these themes or other areas; his work is fundamentally opposed to any attempt to provide a single all-embracing theoretical system for the study of society, history or whatever. There can, then, be no question of simply following Foucault or becoming a Foucauldian as one may become, or attempt to become, a Marxist or a rationalist. Foucault's abiding importance is to show us new ways to conceptualize and study the past and the present. Rather than attempting to follow exactly in his tracks into the thicket of the social constitution of reality the important thing is to use him to both construct and deconstruct our own conceptual clearings and insert different footprints within them. In the conclusions a few potential guidelines for using Foucault in relation to reading and writing material culture, or the archaeological study of past and present, are outlined: directions towards an archaeology (in Foucault's sense of the term) of and for archaeology.

The Past and its Writing

Consider the representation in figure 6.1. In *TP* Foucault amusingly uses Magritte's painting of a pipe, with its appended message 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe', to demonstrate the fundamental gap between

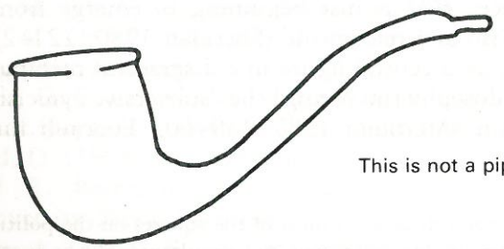


Figure 6.1

language and the world, between signifiers (e.g. words) and things. What is the relationship between the image and the words above it? Foucault identifies at least four possibilities:

1 This is not a pipe but a drawing of a pipe.
2 This is not a pipe but a sentence saying that this is not a pipe.
3 The sentence 'This is not a pipe' is not a pipe.
4 In the sentence 'This is not a pipe', *this* is not a pipe: the painting, written sentence, drawing of a pipe – all this is not a pipe.

The negations multiply, at no point can the image connect with the words. In *OT* Foucault remarks: 'it is not that the words are imperfect, or that, when confronted by the visible, they prove insuperably inadequate. Neither can be reduced to the other's terms: it is in vain that what we say we see; what we see never resides in what we say' (*OT*: 9). Stated in this way, all this appears strikingly obvious, but it is an obviousness we tend to forget when writing the past, that the meaning comes from syntax and not through a transparent relationship of language to the world. We need to understand that we *are* writing and the manner in which we write conveys as many messages in itself as the discursive objects discussed, illustrated and fitted together. In describing material culture we are producing discursive objects on which subsequent discourse may then set to work. At no point are we transparently dealing with the 'real'.

With the exception of *AK* all of Foucault's major works begin with vivid descriptions of points of historical detail encapsulating certain features of the subsequent arguments. *MC* begins with the closing of the great European leper houses and an account of the ship of fools conveying a cargo of 'madmen' set to drift in the liminal space of the sea; *BC* a contrast between the clinical practice of Pomme and Bayle; *OT* a description of the painting *Las Meninas* by Velasquez; *DP* details of the execution of Damiens the regicide set against a timetable for the correction of inmates at the House of Young Prisoners, Paris; *HS* a discussion of the anonymous Victorian memoir, *My Secret Life*, detailing various sexual activities; *UP* a kaleidoscope of various discursive images of gonorrhoea, principles of the devout life based on analogies with the sexual life of elephants, homosexuality, and the virtues of abstinence. On one level these obviously serve the rhetorical purpose of interesting the reader, but their meaning goes further. They point to two things, first, the importance of empirical detail ('data') which is subsequently integrated into the wider discursive arena of the texts. This detail provides clarification for the arguments rather than a weight of evidence to back them up or test them.

Furthermore, this detail is considered in all its specificity: it is not reduced to tables of statistical inference. Second, an integration of theory, data and practice.

Apart from *AK* Foucault has never written a book of theory and *AK* is more an attempt at systematization of the background informing the earlier studies *MC*, *BC* and *OT* than a book which stands on its own. For Foucault theory *is* practice, data *is* theory or theoretical. There can be no meaningful separation between these terms or areas. The texts systematically avoid a discursive strategy so common in the social sciences in general and archaeology in particular: the presentation of a theoretical structure followed by its 'application' to supposedly explain or test against a data set. Such scientism systematically precludes any success in understanding. At the outset theory and practice are divorced from data. Consequently their relationship can only remain arbitrary and contingent.

Foucault productively transgresses the theory – data divide as usually posited. For example, *HS* and *DP* are fundamentally to do with power, knowledge and agency. Foucault does not begin these books with a formal set of theses concerned with power which are then applied to discourses on incarceration or sexuality. His theoretical position is inseparable from and emerges in his discussions of history. We can, of course, extract and create a theory of power, the subject and discourse from the texts but what we are left with is often not all that satisfactory on a formal level and definitely has much more to do with the person carrying out this process of textual dissection than it may do with Foucault. Simply because of the way Foucault's theory, practice and historical discussions adhere to each other it is extraordinarily difficult to summarize what is stated. Any discussion of Foucault is necessarily a dim shadow of the texts themselves. This is precisely their strength. Foucault shows us through example, a new way to write the past involving neither an account of 'how the past really was' nor a reduction of its difference to being merely a pale reflection of the present.

Foucault is very conscious of the fact that he is not simply doing research concerned with the past. He is writing that past and the way in which he writes is of vital significance. Censoriously described as a 'prose-poet' (Rousseau 1972: 238), his writing style is far removed from the normal measured tones of academic analytical blandness, as the quotations throughout this paper illustrate. He plays on words and syntax to create meaning and turns language use into a productive space which is not conceived as a value-neutral representative system. Words may obscure as much as illuminate that which they are meant to signify. The relation of words to things or the signifier to the

signified is problematic. Discourses do not simply consist of groups of signs. They are rather 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech' (*AK*: 49).

For Foucault positivist science is a myth and a dangerous one at that. He analyses its discourse to reveal its mythic status, its failed attempts at representation, and replaces it with a linguistic poetics in which signifiers become released. He refuses to inhabit the dank, drab and deadening discursive dungeon characteristic of all empiricist discourse. Discourse is a violence done to things linking desire and power. That which is important is to determine the nature of these powers and desires and their social effects.

Power

Foucault's conception of power can be summarized by the following points:

1 Power is not simply repressive. It is also productive and positive. No power means no social relations. Social relations are dependent on power. It works through them, in them and on them.
2 Power creates subjects of a certain kind in relation to historical and social circumstances.
3 Power is integrally linked to knowledge. Knowledge and power are dependent, they build on each other so we can speak of power–knowledge strategies. This does not mean that power collapses into knowledge or vice versa (S: 207). What is important is the intimate relationship between the two terms and their linkage, in turn, to truth and rationality.
4 Power relations are multiple. They do not simply flow from the top to the bottom of the social order.
5 The modalities power takes, and the way it operates, are historically specific.
6 Power is a networking of relations and practices throughout the social. It is found in e.g. institutions, forms of administration and family relations but is not exactly located in them. In other words power does not radiate out from specific points or nodes. It is more like a series of interlinked threads in the social which, when they cross, become more dense. Power is everywhere because it comes from everywhere. This means we must abandon any notion of

power arising in the economic or being 'held' and 'wielded' by individuals. A king may be a point of the *exercise* of power but he does not *hold* this power in his hands like a crystal ball. A definition: 'it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society' (*HS*: 93).

7 Power comes from below so that relations of domination on a societal or global scale are effects of and sustained by power in families, local groups, offices, etc.

8 Power is not a property. It is a strategy which is 'both intentional and nonsubjective' (*HS*: 94). Power is exercised with aims and objectives but these cannot be simply reduced to a framework of intentional agency in relation to either individuals or social classes.

9 The rationality of power is characterized by its tactics: 'the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them' (*HS*: 95).

10 Where there is power there is always resistance. These resistances are inscribed into power as its irreducible opposite. Like power resistances are dispersed and heterogeneous.

11 The principal modalities of the operation of power in the modern state are disciplinary procedures coupled with a bio-power managing populations.

We can now consider some of these themes further. It is apparent from the argument in *DP* and elsewhere that for Foucault the supposed humanitarianism of the Enlightenment merely results in a fresh system of domination linked to new modes of surveillance technology. Truth, reason and science are simply slogans of a new, more systematic and totalizing technology of power and Marxism is itself embroiled in such a conception. Foucault radically decentres power from any sort of specifiable context or location such as residing in individuals, institutions, classes, the economy, the state or whatever. His work marks a radical break with previous Weberian individualizing theories of power, locating power in a determinate set of relationships between power-holders in positions of authority and power-subjects over whom power is wielded, and structuralist accounts locating power as a structural feature of the social order. He reverses such a thesis, maintaining that such contexts can only be understood in relation to the kind of power that inhabits them.

Power, Truth, Ideology

The linkage of power to knowledge and so to discourse means that such knowledge and discourse can never be regarded as dispassionate

or disinterested. Knowledge is always useful, a *will* to truth, a will to social domination. Power is linked to truth: it creates truths which cannot be detached or liberated from power. Truth therefore cannot be a condition for, nor a means of, liberation. Neither can any appeal be made to rationality or processes of rational argument. Here again we have to ask what power–knowledge–truth strategies do an appeal to rationality in any argument make. That these strategies run through rather than omit from agents, i.e. they are intentional strategies without the need for the postulation of a human subject(s), is entirely consistent with Foucault's dissolution of the subject into history. If modalities of the networking of power in the social field result in social domination this is because of their capacity to create empirical truths and not through ideological mystification. Rather than oppose truth to falsity the emphasis of such a perspective shifts over to the historical investigation of why some truths are accepted in society rather than others. The concomitant is that there can be no Marcusian deep-seated human nature to liberate and set free from the chains of capitalist repression. Furthermore any notion of ideology becomes difficult to make use of as Foucault regards any talk of ideology as being necessarily founded on some deep-grounded distinction between falsity and truth (*PK*: 118). Power cannot simply be repression because:

> In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law which says no, power is taken above all as carrying the force of prohibition . . . If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? (*PK*: 119)

Avoiding Essentialism

Foucault's emphasis on the positive aspects of power in society act as a useful counterweight to the melancholy of Critical Theory. Both domination and resistance are expressions of power. Foucault's position leads us to a concept of power which can perhaps be most broadly understood as referring to a capacity in social life to bring about outcomes and effects in the world. Such an understanding of the concept underlines the fact that power has a plethora of meanings as an integral feature of social life. This avoids essentialism: power is not to be automatically linked solely to systems of social oppression or conceived as simply an effect of economic processes. Power has two sides or faces. It may be regarded as a facet of all social encounters, a positive production of social effects. So without power the social world

would not and could not exist. The negative side of power cannot be unequivocally linked with discipline and social control since these may be necessary for the positive outcomes of social action. Although power is neither directly positive or negative the picture Foucault leaves us with is that it generally results in new forms of domination.

Foucault's decentring of power from agency, class or institutions or the state means that what we are left with is power strategies without there being any necessary purpose to them. Where these power strategies operate there is always resistance to them because strategies are not necessarily coherent but operate within a contradictory and conflictual field of social articulation.

Power and Resistance

Many commentators have regarded both Foucault's conception of power and his portrayal of contemporary society as incredibly nihilistic. The workings of power are everywhere. No one escapes. The disciplinary apparatuses seem to be so profound and all-embracing that to hope for any other political future seems merely an exercise in self-deception. Struggles against power–knowledge–truth strategies seem only to reinforce them. A critique, for example, may merely reinforce the status, influence and power effects of that criticized. Poulantzas has argued that for Foucault the power relation never has any basis but itself and the question 'what power and power to do what?' becomes a mere obstacle. Poulantzas goes on to argue:

> his famous resistances, which are a necessary element of every power situation, remain a purely gratuitous assertion in the sense they are given no foundation: *they are a pure affirmation of a principle* . . . if power is always already there . . . if every power situation is immanent in itself, *why should there ever be resistance? From where* would resistance come, and *how would it be even possible?* (Poulantzas 1980: 149)

This charge that Foucault extends the concept of power so far that it becomes a virtual metaphysical principle is a common one. Poulantzas sees power and resistance to it as operating in terms of class struggle and division involving exploitation, the location of classes in terms of power apparatuses and in state mechanisms. In other words power and resistance are located in the social relations of production. Resistance to the exploitative effects of power take the form of class struggle. Foucault's position fails from such a perspective because he develops an over-radicalization of the concepts of power and resistance coupled with a total decentring of these concepts from the economy, classes or

the state and this is why he has so little to say about resistance apart from noting its presence. Foucault comments: 'What I find striking in the majority – if not of Marx's texts then those of the Marxists . . . is the way they pass over in silence what is understood by *struggle* when one talks of class struggle' (*PK*: 208).

Governmentality and the State

For Foucault what is needed is not so much an analysis of classes or the state in relation to power in modern society but one concerned with what he terms 'governmentality' (G; OS; SP). The tactics of government make possible a continual series of definitions and redefinitions of what the state can do, how it may intervene, how it may decide between, for example, public and private issues. Governmentality allows the state to survive: it is more fundamental. By this term Foucault means very broadly a complex linkage of institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections targeting power on entire populations and linking it with knowledge of those populations (G: 20). Although historically power relations have become increasingly linked to state control they cannot be reduced to state apparatuses. This is because such an analysis would evade consideration of the manner in which the political structures of the state relate to the construction of definite forms of individualization. Foucault's specific contention is that the governmentality which secures the conditions of existence for the modern state has its roots in a Christian ethic of pastoral power. Pastorship is a form of power involving an aim of individual salvation; it is a power which does not simply command subjects, it is also sacrificial; it is a type of power looking after not just the whole community but each individual in that community during their lifetime; it is a kind of power dependent on knowing people's minds, exploring their souls (SP: 214). This pastoral power has, according to Foucault, ramified and spread into the secular form of the modern state. The effects are individualization and totalization (OS: 254). In the state such pastoral power operates to ensure the health, well-being and security of the population: worldly, secular aims. In order to do this the officials of this pastoral power increase in the form of public institutions, such as the police (Foucault points out that in the eighteenth century the police force appears as an administration heading the state together with the judiciary, army and exchequer yet its tasks, as outlined in documents, include virtually everything which will create a live, active and productive population (OS: 248). Prior to the modern state pastoral and political power, the power of the sovereign, were to a large extent separated. In the modern era pastoral

power invades the entire social body, becoming linked to political power. The result: 'there was an individualizing "tactic" which characterized a series of powers: those of the family, medicine, psychiatry, education and employers' (SP: 215). According to Foucault the problem is not to try and liberate the individual from the power of the state and its institutions – power is not *located* there – but to liberate the individual both from the state and its manner of individualizing, the way in which subjects of a certain sort are created so as to be compatible with its ends and strategies. The totalizing power of the state, its totalitarianism, cannot be separated from its powers of individualization.

Foucault's analytics of power can only be adequately understood in relation to those of discourse, history and subjectivity considered below.

Discourse

This single term 'discourse' may be held both to provide one succinct description of Foucault's entire work and its subject matter. But what does this term mean and, in the light of the statement made above, is it impossibly broad? Foucault's most explicit formulations occur in three texts: *OT*, *AK* and *OD*, and these will be considered in turn.

The Notion of an Episteme

In *OT* an analysis is made of the changing historical discourses of the human sciences, those concerned with what we would call today biology, linguistics and economics. The aim is to show that diverse sets of discursive practices are ordered according to underlying codes and rules which change radically through time, govern what may be thought or said at any one time, and are culturally specific (Foucault's is an analysis of Western culture). *OT* sets out to show how cultural order is created and sustained through discursive practices. Consider the following passage:

> Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, Pomme treated and cured a hysteric by making her take 'baths, ten or twelve hours a day, for ten whole months'. At the end of this treatment for the desiccation of the nervous system and the heat that sustained it, Pomme saw 'membranous tissues like pieces of damp parchment . . . peel away with some slight discomfort, and these were passed daily with the urine; the right ureter also peeled away and came out whole in the same way'. The same thing occurred with the intestines, which at another stage, 'peeled off their internal tunics, which we saw emerge from the rectum. The oesophagus, the arterial trachea, and the tongue also peeled in due course; and the patient had rejected different pieces either by vomiting or by expectoration'. (*BC*: ix)

What do we make of this account? Written by a doctor it was intended as a serious description of a pathological condition and its treatment. In such a piece of writing what is to count as an observation? And how do we distinguish a true from a false statement? How can *we* be sure that Pomme did not observe what he reports? Foucault uses such accounts not as evidence of later scientific advance towards the truth, a happy condition existing for us today, but to problematize any claims to truth or progress. In taking Pomme's description seriously and bracketing off the question of meaning content, he aims to demonstrate that such accounts are not at all fantastic or wild but obey a discursive logic which is at the same time internally consistent and utterly different from our own. Such statements represent an ordering of reality which was once accepted and taken seriously. The implication is, of course, that our own thought will, no doubt fairly soon, be regarded in a similar manner as we are inclined to think about that of Pomme.

In *OT* four periods of discursive coherence are distinguished, from the sixteenth century to the present day (Renaissance, Classical, Modern and Post-Modern). These are termed 'epistemes': total sets of relations uniting the discursive practices giving rise to various epistemologies, sciences and formalized systems. An episteme is a historical and a social *a priori*. It is impossible to think, write, learn or discover beyond an epistemic framework. An episteme constitutes the very grounds on which to distinguish between true or false statements. Between each of the epistemes is a gulf so deep as to be beyond meaningful discussion. Epistemes are totally incommensurable, historically they arise from ruptures in the ordering of experience. Why such ruptures take place is of no interest to Foucault. He analyses these epistemes vertically rather than horizontally, to uncover the rules underlying the discourses produced. Epistemes are like islands separated by an unbridgeable gulf of water going down to uncharted depths. *OT* alights on each of these islands and digs down to uncover their discursive strata, strata that permit them to take the form of an island. It is this process of digging down to reveal that which underlies discursive practices that Foucault terms 'archaeology'.

The book has no historical 'plot' (of, say, development). It is like a play with four separate acts totally disconnected rather than building

on each other. The fundamental concern is with the relationship between an order of things (discursive objects) and an order of language that deals with these objects. A new episteme 'crystallizes' alongside an already established one, filling up and compiling a fresh discursive space. Not only do the representations of the 'real' change, but so do the definitions of the real – what actually is supposed to count as a discursive object. Discourses are examined as sets of self-sufficient representations, i.e. they are not simply effects of underlying social or economic processes. *OT* resolutely refuses such a reductionism. If anything, epistemes explain the social and the political rather than the other way round. Here Foucault has a very real problem. He has no reason to criticize an episteme, to think one is any better than another, yet it is quite clear that the episteme he does detest is that of modern science subsuming forms of social oppression under claims to true knowledge. An analysis situating discourse in relation to power only begins to emerge in *OD*.

In each of the four epistemes an analysis is made of connections between the representation of language, wealth or economic exchange, and living organisms. Each episteme orders the relationships differently. The last is only beginning to emerge with the structuralism of Saussure and the psychology of Freud. A new episteme 'forgets' a previous one working on a new set of discursive objects in a new way. For the Post-Modern episteme Foucault is not just describing a set of discursive practices, he is in a sense predicting and promoting their full realization: the dissolution of humanity into the word (see p. 313). In *OT* we have a picture of discourses as ways in which reality is historically ordered and accepted. Discourse is the combination of a theory (or meta-theory) which is historically specific. The notion of the episteme is continued and amplified in *AK*.

The Inadequacy of a History of Ideas

In *AK* a dominant intellectual tradition in both the social sciences and philosophy provides a foil for Foucault's own conception, as it did in *MC, BC and OT*, but for the first time he explicitly sets out to attack it in detail. This tradition he broadly refers to as 'the history of ideas', a particular way of writing intellectual history or the manner in which conceptual structures are developed, become accepted and/or subsequently rejected. It should be immediately noted that the kind of framework Foucault is criticizing has totally dominated all work in archaeology which has dealt with the history of the discipline. If we reject such a framework and take Foucault's criticisms seriously the implications are quite profound: we will have to rewrite archaeology's history.

The history of ideas is dependent on a number of related notions: genesis, continuity, totality and authorship/consciousness. An emphasis on genesis assumes that knowledges have specific points of origin either in terms of individuals or the collective consciousness of an age. These knowledges develop through time as definite traditions of thought (continuity). We can trace the development of these ideas to the present day. Ultimately it will all add up to a single story of progressive intellectual development of knowledges (totalization) which is to be related back to (ideally) named individuals and the writings or ideas they produce. Ideas constitute a series of representations of the world, developing through time and providing a coherent object of study for the intellectual historian or for those interested in writing the history of specific disciplines such as archaeology. Such a perspective has the following results:

1 It reduces knowledges to being either an expression of or representation of other social relations.
2 It relates knowledge to the consciousness of imaginative individuals.
3 This means that the history of ways of thinking about the world is to be derived from the manner in which theories and ideas are passed down (modified, extended or replaced) from one generation, or one individual, or one tradition of thinking, to the next.
4 All this implies a separation between an abstract non-material realm of ideas and a non-discursive realm of real material objects and relations which lies beyond it.

Foucault is rejecting a perspective in which knowledge is conceived solely in terms of sets of ideas developed by individuals and given a 'lifespan' by being subsumed into a wider notion of tradition linking together a number of individuals and texts and also sometimes being related to 'the spirit of an age'. Not only does he suspend the categories of ideas, thought traditions, periodizations of ideas, but also those of the discipline, the author, the book and the *oeuvre*. Knowledges are not simply produced differentially in discrete disciplines by 'authors'; they are not located in books; nor is there any necessary unity in the texts an individual named author produces (an *oeuvre*). Here what is being challenged is any supposition that the discipline, book, author or *oeuvre* may be held to be self-sufficient categories closed in on themselves.

Our notions of the academic discipline or types of discourse, e.g. economics, politics, literature, are of very recent date. We can only rather dubiously and retrospectively define and designate a discourse as

'economic' or 'archaeological' two hundred years ago on the basis of making a series of anachronistic assumptions which assume what we think of as economics or archaeology has always existed in a more or less stable form. Furthermore our disciplines are entirely artificial creations whose boundaries are far from clear although enthusiastic attempts are always being made to maintain them (e.g. archaeology proper is the study of the distant past and not the present). Foucault points out that academic disciplines are themselves products of a particular type of discourse and need to be analysed as such.

Books do not form any simple or unitary category. There is little in common between a collection of poems, a history book, a work of philosophy or between Balzac's novel-cycle and the stories of Stephen King. Furthermore, each text forms a vast web of references and interrelations with other texts – nodes within a wider network – and have different forms in the cases of mathematical treatises or literary commentaries. Authors who put texts together are the medium through which webs of references and relations run rather than a distinctive point of origin. There is no necessary unity to an author's *oeuvre* – what he or she produces under a proper name. Does the name of an author designate in the same way a text that he has published under his or her name, a text under a pseudonym, an unfinished draft, a collection of jottings, a notebook, texts intended for publication and not completed, first drafts, crossings-out, sketches, letters, notes, reported conversation, ultimately shopping-lists? What is the essential and the inessential, who is to decide, and why, if there is any connection at all between any of these?

Discursive Formations and Statements

AK attempts to introduce a radically new set of concepts from those utilized in the history of ideas approach and we will now examine what these are, their implications and their adequacy. Foucault wants to clear away all the conceptual baggage referred to above to open up an entirely new field for the analysis of discourse. This means that before we approach what happens in archaeological discourse, a book of an individual archaeologist or any statements ('archaeological' or otherwise, written or spoken), the material we are dealing with is 'a population of events in the space of discourse in general'. This leads to a project which attempts to describe these discursive events in order to search for internal unities which will not be those of the book, author, discipline, tradition, etc., but may in themselves lead to a different conceptualization and form of understanding of these displaced categories (*AK*: 27).

Knowledges are to be located in 'discursive formations'. These discursive formations consist of a body of related statements. A statement is neither a sentence nor a proposition (although in certain circumstances it may be) so, for example, if we were to say: 'Lewis Binford is an archaeologist who thinks it is important to study bones' we would not necessarily be making a statement in Foucault's sense of the term. Consequently a discursive formation does not simply consist of a set of related sentences or propositions of this kind. A discourse does not reside in a set of statements conceived as related but nevertheless fundamentally discrete entities; it is a group of thoroughly mediated statements existing within the specificity of a discursive formation. In other words discursive formations and statements dialectically provide conditions for each other's existence. As a statement cannot be conceived according to linguistic or logical categories it has no unitary essence. It is not a thing or unit but an 'enunciative function'. What this means is that the statement is a function relating to signs. Statements have *effects* on both what is said and written and how this is realized.

Analogies, graphs, maps, experiments, qualitative or quantitative descriptions, biographical accounts, deductions, statistical calculations, may all be statements (*AK*: 50). Statements relate to linguistic or, equally, non-linguistic signs, marks or traces. They are not simply reducible to language. According to *AK* to describe a statement means 'defining the conditions in which the function that gave a series of signs . . . a specific existence can operate . . . [in] relation to a domain of objects' (AK: 108). Elsewhere it is stated:

> In examining the statement what we have discovered is a function that has a bearing on a group of signs, which is identified neither with grammatical 'acceptability' nor with logical correctness, and which requires if it is to operate: a referential (which is not exactly a fact, a state of things, or even an object, but a principle of differentiation); a subject (not the speaking consciousness, not the author of the formulation, but a position that may be filled in various conditions by various individuals); an associated field (which is not the real context of the formulation, the situation in which it was articulated, but a domain of coexistence for other statements); a materiality (which is not only the substance or support of the articulation, but a status, rules of transcription, possibilities of use and re-use). (*AK*: 115)

What all this appears to mean is that statements are functions with effects taking place in relation to linguistic or non-linguistic sign systems. The statements have existence only within the space of particular discursive formations and their material effects may emerge

in particular representations (e.g. graphs) and the use of particular signifiers in particular sentences or propositions rather than others. Statements when considered together become sets of functions that may articulate to form rules and rule-governed systems underlying particular discourses and knowledges. Together, statements form conditions of existence for propositions and sentences. However, they have no necessary unitary essence. They are fundamentally oscillating in form, always shifting and changing according to both context and circumstances. They are never available to the consciousness of the social actor. Such statements are usually never 'stated' or 'known', but nevertheless they may be acted upon in a fairly routine way. In order to operate statements require sets of referentials differentiating between objects and elements of social reality, subjects (agents) through which they pass, finally, a field of operation and articulation provided by the discursive formation.

An analysis of statements leads one to investigate why particular discourses are produced at particular times and places rather than others and according to what rules discourses are produced. It is not to search for deeper meaning in the manner of hermeneutics. Rather than 'depth interpretation' it is 'surface description' that refuses to treat discourses as a mere gloss on deeper meaning residing in them, a sign of something else, such as the workings of capitalism. Discourses to Foucault are not *documents* to be interpreted which will finally reveal their inner meaning, but *monuments* to be described (see the discussion on history).

In the passage cited from *AK* on p. 295 two terms: 'the referential' and 'materiality' require further consideration. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982: 48–9) argue that Foucault's use of the term 'statement' is more or less equivalent to what they refer to as 'serious speech acts' and this is a most helpful insight. Foucault is exclusively concerned in his early works up to *AK* with the discourses of those individuals we might term professionals: doctors, psychiatrists, economists, linguists, natural scientists. It is their statements derived from written documents that he analyses. He is not at all interested in analysing in detail the discourses of those subjected to the practices of these professionals (e.g. patients, madmen – with the exception of *IPR*). In other words he is not interested in everyday speech or discourse but that produced by professionals or specialists.

If an archaeologist were to say 'This find of obsidian on Melos is evidence of the operation of a prehistoric exchange system' this would count as a serious speech act, whereas if Andris Michalaros, a local farmer, were to make the same proposition this would count as an everyday speech act, not automatically to be taken seriously. Why?

Any speech act can be serious providing that validation procedures are set up involving, for example, a community of experts of which the archaeologist rather than the farmer is a member, and institutional sites which legitimize speaking and writing as serious claims to knowledge and meaning.

The materiality of the statement does not simply refer to the fact that it has real material effects in the form of 'concrete' utterances or graphic marks on a page. It also means that statements as valued or serious speech acts tend to be copied, repeated, disseminated and commented upon. Stressing the materiality of the statement is also part of a refusal to draw any clear dividing-line between what may be taken to be discursive and another realm, that of the non-discursive.

We will now examine the relation of statements to the discursive formation. A discursive formation is a historically specific and socially contingent ordering of discourse. Initially Foucault proposes that a discursive formation may perhaps be identified if the statements refer to one and the same object; their is a repeated style or series of regularities underlying statements; the same or similar concepts are employed in making statements and if these statements relate to a common expositional theme. He rejects all these possibilities on the basis of his own previous investigations in *MC, BC* and *OT*. For example, in the discourse of psychiatry, there is no common object – madness – to refer to. The meaning of madness is historically variable as is the style in which it is written about, the concepts employed and the themes invoked. Consequently the relation of statements to each other in a discursive formation cannot be one of identity in relation to objects, concepts, etc., it is rather one of a regular and non-random *dispersion*. So a discursive formation is a system determining the manner in which statements are dispersed in relation to each other. It is not a neat, logical dove-tailing and may, therefore, embrace non-correspondences and contradictions (*AK*: 155). Discursive formations are irregular rather than regular, differentiated rather than undifferentiated, multiple rather than singular, a set of oppositions rather than a series of unifications. And if all this sounds difficult to visualize it is only because Foucault bravely attempts to bring out real complexities and real differences rather than subsume these features into a simplistic and reductionist model.

The dispersion of statements within a discursive formation is governed by what Foucault terms 'rules of formation' relating to the formation of the objects of a discourse, the types of statement that are made in relation to these objects (enunciative modalities), the manner in which concepts are formed and certain discursive strategies are actualized. We will briefly consider each of these in turn.

Discursive objects Objects of discourse are by no means natural or pre-ordained but created in particular historical and social circumstances. At any particular time or place 'surfaces of emergence' may occur from which fresh discursive objects take on a recognizable shape and particular form. Foucault gives a particular example of this from an earlier study (*MC*). At the beginning of the nineteenth century the confinement of those individuals socially designated as mad in special psychiatric hospitals created madness as a fresh object of study and investigation bearing little real relationship to a previous discursive object going under the same name 'madness'. In archaeology the creation of a typology of objects based on certain properties – stone, bronze and iron – created a new discursive object which through time became increasingly differentiated from other objects, e.g. fossils and stuffed animals previously collected together in the same curio cases. Processual and post-processual archaeologies have created their own discursive objects, artifacts as, respectively, adaptive objects and part of a significative system. Different discourses are not simply to be differentiated between on the basis of the objects they deal with. They actively *produce* the objects of which they speak, internally limit their own domains, define that which they are purporting to talk about and make these objects manifest and subject to further description.

Foucault proposes to differentiate between two sets of practices that operate to bring about the surfaces of emergence of discursive objects, the realms of non-discursive and discursive practices. The former include relations between institutions, economic and social processes, norms and value systems. These relations do not define what the objects of discourse are but enable them to appear in the first place, to be subjected to analysis. Discursive practices 'determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object . . . These relations characterize not the language (*langue*) used by discourse, nor the circumstances which it is deployed but discourse itself as a practice' (*AK*: 46). What Foucault is proposing is that non-discursive and discursive practices are autonomous and that the latter govern the manner in which the former actually arise. Rather than making a radical separation of the discursive from the non-discursive as Foucault wishes to do in order to 'save' the autonomy of the former as a 'pure form', it would seem to be better to argue that both reside in a relation of mutual mediation, mutual determination, from which definite objects of discourse arise and emerge.

Discursive statements The statements arising in discourse – what are referred to as 'enunciative modalities' in *AK* – set to work on discursive

objects. Discourse becomes instated not as a description of these objects but as a practice working in relation to them. Here the basic questions to be asked of a discourse are: Who is speaking? What is their institutional site? What position is occupied by the subject who does speak or write in relation to discursive objects? These questions all arise from and are related to Foucault's consideration of statements as involving the production of serious speech acts (see p. 297). If we analyse those who are accorded the *right* to speak on any particular occasion this involves criteria of competence and knowledge in relation to institutions, pedagogic norms and legal systems. These allow particular subjects to practise and extend their knowledge claims. In other words archaeological statements cannot come from anyone. Their value, effectivity and influence are to be related to an institutional and educational system, qualifications and legal rights: only the trained archaeologist may be permitted to excavate and decide that which is worth excavating and that which is not. Institutional sites (the academic department, the seminar-room, the finds-processing laboratory, the museum and the library) all provide supports for the making of serious speech acts and differentiate hierarchically betwen those who may and may not make them (the professor, the lecturer, curator, the student and the man or woman in the street). These all act so as to create definite positions that subjects may occupy *vis à vis* the past and its objects, its re-telling.

Concept formation Consideration of modes of discursive object formation and the manner in which statements are and can be made immediately suggests that discourses are not merely sets of concepts. What we must investigate according to *AK* is how concepts arise at a particular time and place and precisely which concepts may be placed alongside each other and those which are incompatible. What kinds of conceptual statements are permitted and which are not? Here *AK* argues that historical shifts in conceptual structures are not to be automatically regarded as being the result of progress, truer or better ideas replacing those which are false. Such a position bears a strong relationship to Kuhn's work on conceptual revolutions where one paradigm replaces another because of shifts of interest within the academic community. However Foucault goes further than this, wishing to search for rules *internal to discourse* that may be held to account for changes in conceptual structures: 'the rules of formation operate not only in the mind or consciousness of individuals, but in discourse itself; they operate therefore, according to a uniform anonymity, on all individuals who undertake to speak in this discursive field' (*AK*: 63).

Discursive strategies Within any particular discursive formation there is space for change in what is said, how it is said, which concepts are employed, objects created and the kinds of statements that occur. Analysis involves a search for regularities both within and between traditionally defined disciplines. *AK* argues that in the human sciences sets of rules underlie particular discourses at particular times, determining the kinds of discursive strategies (ways of speaking, writing, investigating, performing analyses, etc.) which can be undertaken and/or accepted. These rules will account for the fact that some modes of investigation etc., are carried on and others ignored. These rules result in discontinuities relating to real historical differences in discourse rather than continuities and gradual development towards a fuller and truer picture.

Bracketing the Self

Although Foucault is exclusively concerned with what may be taken to be seriously intended discursive formations and the serious statements residing within them he does not take the question of meaning seriously nor the question of truth. The first thing he does when confronted with a text is to laugh at it – at least metaphorically, sometimes literally (*OT*: xv). He has, of course, a serious purpose and precisely for this reason he considers all discourses in the same way. Discursive formations do not replace each other in a successive advance towards the truth, they just change. Discursive formations create truths according to time and place and if we are to study them we must, according to *AK*, bracket off both ourselves and any claims to real meaning made in a discourse. This is why *AK* refers to the project of a pure description of discourses (see p. 296).

Consideration of truth or meaning would only contaminate or actually prevent such description taking place. Discursive formations are merely the space in which statements become linked together in various ways. They have a history – they emerge and fall away – but Foucault is not interested in providing any reasons for why one type of discourse replaces another. Such an interest, with its search for underlying meanings, would again block possibilities for pure description. Discursive formations are simply anonymous rule-governed historical systems. Agency (people using discourse) is quite irrelevant to their understanding and moreover, as we have already seen, discourses are autonomous from non-discursive practices.

The Discursive and the Non-discursive

Discourses are, of course, meaningful to those who participate in them, but *AK* refuses to seek for any underlying meaning residing in the relations between discourse and that outside, the realm of the non-discursive. From a structuralist position we might regard discourses as being structured in the same manner as non-discursive practices according to an underlying relational logic. Discourse would in no sense be a privileged manifestation of this logic. On the other hand, from a hermeneutic perspective, discourses would be regarded as determined by non-discursive factors. Only particular discursive practices at any given time or place are possible given the presumed existence of a horizon of intelligibility beyond which agents cannot speak, think or act. From a structural–Marxist perspective discourses would form part of the ideological instance, operating so as to legitimate the social order, interpellating agents, and being derived in the last instance from the economic. *AK* does not relate discourses to the economic nor to wider questions of the distribution of power within the social order. It attempts to avoid reducing discourses to a particular manifestation of a structural logic underlying all social practices or an outcome of the contextualized matrices of social life underlying all social being and forms of consciousness.

AK's insistence that we should study discourse as an autonomous pure form creates major problems. First, discourse becomes disconnected from power yet discourses are not merely documents to be interpreted or monuments to be described but have definite power effects on the way the social world is organized. Such a conception is present in *AK* but remains largely latent. Second, if *AK* stands outside any horizon of intelligibility merely cataloguing differences it remains problematic (i) how the book could be written in the first place; (ii) whether *AK* itself is supposed to have any meaning or make any difference to the way discourses are produced. If we totally bracket ourselves off from a discourse and discourses as meaningful, how can we be expected to identify statements?

Discourse and Power

In *OD* Foucault begins to make a much clearer linkage, subsequently amplified in *DP* and *HS*, between the discursive and the non-discursive, discourse and the operation of power and social domination. Discourse is not just connected to power, as in *AK*, it is a form of power. In the history of Western thought it is argued, there has been a persistent tendency to invalidate ordinary speech acts and convert more and more statements into serious speech acts produced by specialists within institutional settings. This is a manifestation of a 'will to truth' constantly growing stronger and deeper (*OD*: 56).

Discourse is to be linked with individual desire on the one hand, wanting discourse to be open and unrestricted and institutional constraint on the other, dividing off what may be said and what must be left unsaid and insisting on the restraint, control and formalization of discourse. It is only through this restraint that discourse may possess power, be taken as being expressions of serious meaning.

Foucault identifies controls acting so as to constrain discourse. These may be external to the discourse, internal to it, or both inside and outside it. The extra-discursive controls he identifies are prohibitions, divisions and oppositions. Prohibitions prevent statements being made according to the context of the discourse, what it is supposed to be about and what the subject speaking has a legitimate right to say. These are all familiar. In the archaeology seminar-room only those individuals who have a legitimate claim to being archaeologists or having an interest in the past may be permitted to speak, and they must speak seriously about some aspect of archaeological interest concerning archaeological discursive objects according to dominant definitions of what these interests and objects are supposed to be. Anyone writing an archaeological text must similarly constrain him- or herself or discourse would threaten to fragment and shatter. For example, any text will inevitably be judged archaeological to the extent that it deals with the distant past. Deviations such as modern material-culture studies will always be judged warily. Discourses become divided into a hierarchy of importance serving to distinguish between those which are accepted and sanctioned and those to be banished from serious consideration. Of oppositions structuring discourse by far the most prominent is a division between truth and falsity. An archaeological will to truth involves filtering out those statements designated to be true from those considered false. Foucault notes that '"true" discourse, freed from desire and power by the necessity of its form, cannot recognise the will to truth which prevades it' (*OD*: 56). A true discourse, for the very reason that it is supposed to be true, is supposedly not linked with the exercise of power. Yet it is this very (social and historical) ascription of truth that gives a discourse power and social effects. Any power a 'scientific' archaeology might have is based on its claims to be 'in the true' as opposed to other archaeologies out of it. A vision of apolitical truth supports particular discursive forms such as 'cultural resource management' in which archaeologists establish a legitimate right to a hegemonic control over, and ordering of, the distant past. Prohibitions and divisions of discourse cannot operate without the possibility of violence and coercion. These two external controls are historically being integrated

into the opposition between truth and falsity: denials of the right to speak require 'scientific' justification.

Internal constraints on discourse involve various types of 'rarefaction' resulting in a scarcity rather than a plenitude of meaning. Here *OD* points to principles of the commentary, the author and the discipline. Commentaries are dependent on a gradation of discourses into everyday speech acts, and those speech acts giving rise to new ones, taking up, transforming, interpreting and translating from the original. The latter allow the endless production of new texts and paradoxically demand that one must 'say for the first time what had, nonetheless, already been said, and must tirelessly repeat what had, however, never been said' (*OD*: 58). It should be immediately remarked that this piece of writing does exactly this. Right now (11.30 p.m. 18 December 1987, Lund, Sweden) I would like to say so much, to deviate entirely from this present task of exegesis, and produce something different. I would like to consign Foucault to my bookshelves, to resurrect him in certain texts in ways he probably would not like. Should I go on? Aware that I am infringing permitted boundaries . . . *OD*'s remarks about the author concern the manner in which consciousness of being an author, working out a 'genre' limit what is and can be stated (see pp. 321–2).

Possibly the most important internal control on discourse is that of the discipline. Disciplines are supposedly defined by specific domains of objects (for archaeology artifacts and their associations), methods and corpuses of propositions considered true and proper, rules and definitions for producing truths and technical aids and instruments constituting an anonymous system at the disposal of anyone who wants or is able to use it. For archaeology to exist as a discipline there must be the endless possibility of producing new archaeological statements. However, such statements can only be accepted if they address whatever are defined as proper or true archaeological objects or the manner in which archaeological statements are supposed to be represented in archaeological texts. Disciplines police themselves, preventing the production of inappropriate or non-disciplinary statements. If you transgress these rules you are no longer an anthropologist, archaeologist, sociologist, etc., and can no longer expect anyone to either read what you write or take you seriously at all. And all this is productive of knowledge?

OD concludes the discussion of constraints on discourse with this cogent remark: 'What, after all, is an education system, other than a ritualisation of speech, a qualification and a fixing of the roles for speaking subjects, the constitution of a doctrinal group . . . a distribution and an appropriation of discourse with its powers and

knowledges?' (*OD*: 64). This would appear to be an appropriate note on which to end this section.

History

Foucault tells us in the preface to *OT* that the 'fundamental codes of a culture – those governing its language, schemes of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices – establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home' (*OT*: xx). At a distance from these cultural codes are forms of reflection, scientific theories or philosophical interpretations, which attempt to explain why this order exists. Situated in-between the 'encoded' eye and reflexive knowledge are discourses which are more obscure, providing general theories as to the ordering of things and the interpretation such an ordering involves. These are the discourses which directly confront and transform the world of appearances, and it is primarily these in which *OT* is interested.

Difference

Whatever we may think of the term 'episteme' (Foucault himself abandons it after *AK*), what *OT* manages to do most brilliantly is to show us how to think historical and cultural specificity. Orthodox history may sometimes attempt to show us the different social and cultural objects that have been perceived by different encoded eyes. What Foucault does is actually to present us with those encoded eyes and enable us to see just how obvious an utterly alien world can be through them. The immense descriptive richness of *OT* (a richness which could only be dissipated by an attempt to summarize 400 pages in this small space) stands as a monument to how an alternative archaeology and an alternative history could be written, one emphasizing specificity, particularity and difference, what Foucault terms the historical *a priori*. There is a double refusal here: to write history using present-day terms or to write history by attempting to show that present-day conceptions operated in the past but were perhaps more blurred and/or went under different names: 'the men of the seventeenth and eighteenth century do not think of wealth, nature, or languages in terms that had been bequeathed to them by preceding ages or in forms that presaged what was soon to be discovered' (*OT*: 208). Foucault's is a production of a history which takes history seriously. By contrast a cross-cultural atemporal and aspatial generalizing perspective promoted so much in recent archaeology does not take history seriously; it does not recognize real and irreducible historical differences. History becomes the endless repetition of the same.

Precisely because Foucault takes history seriously he defamiliarizes it. He does not write of conceptions in the seventeenth century by translating them into modernist terminology. Rather than domesticating the past by using the terms of the present he reactivates it as utterly strange, an alien world. *OT* begins by citing a passage from Borges in which a 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia' classifies animals in a variety of bizarre ways, e.g. belonging to the emperor; embalmed; sucking pigs; that from a long way off look like flies, drawn with a fine camelhair brush; included in the present classification . . . Such a classification is clearly impossible for us to think, utterly incomprehensible; but the Renaissance naturalist Aldrovandi's *Treatise on Serpents and Dragons* is not all that different. Snakes are considered alongside dragons and other mythological beasts. A chapter discussing 'On the serpent in general' includes information on anatomy, nature and habitats, coitus, sympathy, monsters, gods to which it is dedicated, proverbs, coinage, riddles, historical facts, statues, use in human diet and much more (*OT*: 39). *OT* describes the Renaissance episteme as being based on a vast series of resemblances, an attempt to link everything together by recovering the same in the different. This search for resemblances included not only relations between things but between these things and the words signifying them. Aldrovandi's work is entirely comprehensible within such a framework in which nature was from top to bottom written: 'when one is faced with the task of writing an animal's history, it is useless and impossible to choose between the profession of naturalist and that of compiler: one has to collect into one and the same form of knowledge all that has been *seen* and *heard*, all that has been *recounted*, either by nature or by men, by the language of the world, by tradition, or by poets' (*OT*: 40).

'Archaeology' and Genealogy

Foucault uses these two terms to describe his historical method. They imply two parallel rather than conflicting approaches, archaeology characterizing *MC, BC, OT* and *AK*, and genealogy *DP, HS* and *UP*. Foucault uses the word 'archaeology' as a metaphor for his early work, suggesting digging down, uncovering concealed layers, letting archival fragments stand for the whole, reconstructing that which has been forgotten As we have seen, this metaphorical use of the term accompanies its use to construct rules for specifying discursive objects and relations between these objects based on a principle of *rarity*: why

is it that of all the things that could have been said just these things were said and not others? His use of the term 'archaeology' to describe his history is also tactical – to differentiate between his concerns and the traditional concerns of historiography. Rather than being simply a different history, Foucault's is an anti-history. He denies all the conventional types of explanation and approach – comparative method, the erection of typologies, cause-and-effect-type explanations and any appeals to the collective consciousness of an age. His emphasis on discursive formations as a dispersed relational order of statements remains utterly distinct from the normal unities proposed as binding ideas, such as traditions, books or authors.

Foucault's work is rightly anti-evolutionary, the emphasis on origins (what was the first civilization?), continuities (what links can be set up between various temporal segments in the archaeological record?) and notions of progress found in traditional history and archaeology are replaced with fundamental ruptures and discontinuities. He suspends any notion of a total history. By 'total history' is meant forms of explanation such as systems theory in contemporary archaeology in which it is proposed that there is one set of processes uniting all areas of human society from economy to religion. Instead of the coherences of processes, Foucault has the dispersions of events. An emphasis on total history also implies that ultimately history is, or should be, a single story the writing of which is divorced from the social and political concerns of the present. Total history is dependent on the unwarranted assumption that all pieces of 'evidence' can be slotted together into one unified picture of the past which ultimately leads up to the present. A total history tries to reconstruct the past as it really was. Instead of this Foucault interrogates the past, relating evidence to specific problems being investigated and this has, apart from the emphasis on problems, nothing to do with the hypothetico-deductive method. There can be no question of testing or independently verifying a theory or hypothesis. Instead, theory practice and evidence are thoroughly interwoven together. Archaeological evidence or historical documents do not simply 'stand for' the past to be interrogated or interpreted to free *the* meaning inhering in them. What this implies is that a potentially infinite number of events can be brought out from a series of potsherds, rock carvings or written sources. The criteria deciding their status as events has nothing whatsoever to do with the past. It has everything to do with the purposes and values of the analysis being undertaken in the present.

If we wish to search for a 'break' in Foucault's work it would be quite easy to locate this between *AK* and *DP*, in which the term 'archaeology' as a general description is displaced by 'genealogy'.

Foucault is now prepared to recognize longer-term continuities as well as transformations in Western culture. The abandonment of the concept of the 'episteme' no longer requires him to regard historical differences in various phases as so profound there is no point of contact. History becomes a more complex web of continuities and discontinuities. In constructing genealogies what Foucault is doing is seeking out the discontinuous in the continuous, what appears to be a directional 'flow' of meaning and social practice. Foucault's genealogical history can be regarded as supplementing or extending rather than contradicting his 'archaeologies'. An 'archaeological' study forms a necessary basis for carrying out a genealogical analysis. The major difference in Foucault's later work, compared with that carried out earlier, is that he is far more concerned than previously with the relationship between discursive and non-discursive practices. The lack of an adequate theorization of the latter created major problems which remained unresolved in *AK*. An emphasis on the supposed autonomy of discourse is abandoned by investigations which show how the discursive and the non-discursive mediate or serve to form each other. Discourse is linked with power and forms of social domination. We might state that while archaeology is a descriptive analysis concerned with what statements are actually made, genealogy is a critical analysis of the social conditions of existence of these statements, their relationship to power. In 'archaeology' statements in discursive formations have surfaces of emergence which are considered as being beyond further intelligibility, whereas in genealogy these statements emerge as the result of a linkage between the discursive and non-discursive in a longer-term historical field. Furthermore, as the statements and their related field of social practices are linked with power, they can no longer be regarded as meaningless permutations; they have profound consequences for those involved. Whereas Foucault the 'archaeologist' can bracket himself off (or attempt to do so) from questions of meaning and seriousness, as genealogist he can no longer do so. Genealogy does not revert to a search for deep meanings or an evolutionary trajectory in history. It rather questions the political status of meaning and discourse in relation to power.

On the Interpretation of the Past

Foucault persistently derides hermeneutic attempts at interpreting the past. This does not mean that Foucault does not interpret. His entire output is an active interpretative engagement. To describe is to interpret, to write is to interpret, to think is to interpret, to study objects whether discursive or non-discursive is to interpret. So

Foucault cannot deny the importance, indeed the necessity, of interpretation. His remarks about archaeology being a pure description of discursive events are essentially empty. A 'pure' description would be an impossible description. Choices, for example, are always involved in how to describe discourses. A further claim, which must be taken much more seriously, is his denial of the necessity for 'deep interpretation', which is what hermeneutics is all about, trying to recover hidden meanings and moreover to pin down these meanings in the form of statements such as 'The real meaning of this design is . . .'. Evaluation of such questions inevitably involves us in determining between various truth claims, whether meaning is restricted or infinite and at what level meaning itself can be located. For Foucault truth and meaning are both dispersed, and lie on the surface of things rather than being hidden in their interiority: 'If interpretation is a never-ending task, it is simply because there is nothing to interpret. There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret because, when all is said and done, underneath it all everything is already an interpretation' (AS: 189, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 107). Truths, not truth, meanings not meaning. Human existence *is* interpretation and any and all interpretations are equally imposed on the 'real'. Interpretations are contingent. The questions that arise are, as with the analysis of discourse: Why *these* interpretations? Why *these* ascribed meanings rather than others? A belief in deep, essential, coherent, and non-dispersed meaning might be described as merely a Western cultural malaise. What Foucault wants to show is that when looked at (interpreted) in the right way meaning is visible on the surface in small concrete details, shifts in the forms of practices, in paintings, in architecture, in and between the lines of texts rather than that beyond the lines. Fine. But we can ask why only the surface? Why not surfaces and depths? Part of the reason seems to be that as Foucault has chosen to totally oppose hermeneutics this means he must reject any 'depth' interpretation. If we agree with Foucault that meaning is irrevocably dispersed there appears to be no necessary corollary that this must be only a surface dispersion. This whole problem is, in any case, dependent on what we mean by 'surfaces' and 'depths', and this raises questions of agency, consciousness and social totalities, space and time.

Space and Time

Integrally bound up with Foucault's historical investigations are the uses of space and time in relation to social practices. Space and time are

constructed in relation to these practices rather than acting as containers for them. Furthermore they act so as to construct themselves, the spatial is interwoven with the temporal, but we might say that this interweaving is not like that of the canes or straws in a basket, criss-crossing one another at regular intervals, but a much more irregular and dispersed set of linkages. For the sake of convenience I will unpack these notions of space and time, discussing them separately.

Space

Foucault suggests that a general distinction might be drawn between the Middle Ages constituting a 'space of emplacement' and modern uses of space embracing specific sites with differentiated oppositions and functions (OOS: 22–3). A space of emplacement is one made up of hierarchies; sacred spaces and profane spaces; protected places and open, exposed places; urban and rural spaces broadly corresponding to cosmological theory with its supercelestial, celestial and territorial places. In social practice the celestial provides a map for the worldly and vice versa. The map becomes a medium for inquiry into the form and nature of these spaces (*PK*: 74). Microcosm mirrors macrocosm within such thought, finding expression in the constructed space of the architectural form; structures such as churches have definite experience effects within such a context. Galileo opened up and dissolved such a place of emplacement and for it an infinitely open space became substituted, and in the modern era such an open space becomes increasingly localized in terms of sites with their relations of proximity, accessibility or inaccessibility. The problem becomes that of knowing what relations of propinquity, storage, circulation, marking and differentiation and classification of spaces should be developed for given ends. The division and utilization of space becomes a fundamental anxiety and it is largely desanctified. In the disciplinary society the control and distribution of people in space becomes of central concern. The map becomes a means of inquiry and examination and control: distribution maps of various elements, electoral maps, taxation maps, maps of ethnic groups, etc. Techniques of social control become increasingly invested in varied institutional architectural forms: hospitals, prisons, factories, schools, office buildings. In the context of the modern disciplinary society, Foucault comments, it is hardly surprising that prisons resemble hospitals which resemble schools which resemble prisons (*DP*: 228). The aim in all these institutions is to create a space for surveillance. Below we will consider the cases of the hospital and the prison.

In *BC* Foucault contrasts a 'medicine of species' with one of 'social spaces', the latter developing in France in the final years of the eighteenth century. The former was one based on a nosological classification of diseases, usually in the family and at home. Health is individualized and is simply considered as the converse of a morbid state. It inheres in the humours and sympathies of the body. By contrast, the new medical gaze constitutes bodies as objects for study and dissection and disease resides entirely in what is open to the gaze of the doctor. The medicine of social spaces is concerned with populations rather than individuals and more with the prevention of disease than its cure. The health of the individual becomes measured against that considered a norm. What is important to Foucault in this context is a fundamental change in medical practice involving a tripartite spatialization: (i) the spatialization of the medical gaze over the surfaces of the body: only that which was visible could now be studied; (ii) the location of this new medical gaze in specific institutions, its institutionalization; (iii) the concern with entire populations rather than individuals. A politics of health involves itself in housing regulations, drainage systems, the marketing and consumption of food – in short, with the administration, control and 'well-being' of the population. Society becomes medicalized and medical knowledge becomes a fresh means for surveillance and control. The architectural form of the hospital is both an effect of and a support for the new medical knowledge, involving a new set of problems in which bodies are simultaneously individualized and brought under a centralized system of observation. Such space must be divided up so as to permit both a global and an individualized surveillance (*PK*: 146). By contrast, in the old-style houses of the sick the purpose of the institution was to protect the healthy from the sick or the sick from the ignorant or to treat those in penury. The distribution of space within the hospital duplicated that of the family, the natural locus for disease producing a specific configuration of the world of pathologies: 'there beneath the eye of the hospital doctor, diseases would be grouped into orders, genera and species, in a rationalized domain that would restore the original distribution of essences' (*BC*: 42). In the instance of the birth of modern medicine a specific manner of spatialization can be linked to discourses and the observation of bodies, to specific architectural form, and to urban planning. Doctors were, along with the military, the first managers of collective space according to a principle of hygiene. Thus an administrative and political space became articulated upon a therapeutic space. Discipline creates a medically useful space which then sets to work on this space

further in order to ensure the smooth functioning of bodies. A healthy population is a productive one.

Just as medical practices create and control and distribute subjects in space, so do prisons, and here the principle of surveillance is even more clearly manifested. Foucault uses Bentham's plans for a 'panopticon', although never actually built, as signifying the particular form of the redistribution of space required in the disciplinary society that both individuates and transforms subjects:

> at the periphery an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in the central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. (*DP*: 200)

This sublime scheme permits the prisoners to be constantly observed with a minimum of effort in all their individuality. Surveillance is constant for the simple reason that they can never be sure when they are being watched. Contact between prisoners, perhaps resulting in resistance, is prevented: if they are criminals they cannot plot an escape, if children they cannot copy, if workers they cannot thieve or chat. The principle remains the same. It does not matter that the panopticon was designed as a prison since Foucault demonstrates similar uses of space in other institutions: 'power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up' (*DP*: 202). Discipline can be effective only through the control and structuring of space – enclosure and measured subdivision or partitioning, fixed positions, paths for circulation – complex spaces at one and the same time architectural, hierarchical and functional. Such spatial divisions are not just restricted to institutions, they also determine the arrangement of private space. Gone are the large open rooms of the medieval house in almost any one of which guests could be received. Instead: 'the working class family is to be fixed; by assigning it a living

space with a room that serves as a kitchen and dining-room, a room for the parents which is the place of procreation, and a room for the children' (*PK*: 149). A whole field of morality becomes spatially circumscribed.

Time

Conventional historians have been constantly exasperated with Foucault. He appears to have no concept of time and place, constantly mixing the two up together. His periodizations in *OT*, *MC* and *DP* go against the normal grain. He is supposedly careless about dates yet his books contain them and are packed with historical detail. Is he then incapable of a proper temporal systematization or does he take a cavalier attitude? Of course, Foucault does have a conception of time – his entire work depends on it – but it is not the temporality of a uniform, spatial, chronometric and calendrical time. Time instead is understood to refer to social processes and discourses. His work denies homogenous time, the time of evolutionary theory, which is the same anywhere and everywhere. Foucault understands time as a series of differences inextricably bound up with social practice, hence a simple reference to date cannot provide an organizing principle for analysis. Any periodization of history is contentious because if removed from social practice it remains an arbitrary slice. The way to carve up the past is not in terms of time-slices but in relation to events and connections between these events. Differing types of events each require their own periodizations, their own times. There can be no one periodization applying to all events and no one time corresponding to these events. So something that happens in France in 1839 may belong to the same time as another event occurring sixty years later. It is up to the historian or the archaeologist to organize his or her periodizations according to the specific temporalities of the events under investigation (*AK*: 187; *DP*: 160). This, again, clearly mitigates against the study of societies as coherent temporal wholes. Such a notion of wholeness is always imposed. It is not a reflection of reality.

In *UP* time is shown to be bound up with sexual activity and a moral problematization of pleasure among the ancient Greeks. Morality was an art of the 'right time' and this right time demanded consideration of age (body time), the time of the seasons, dietary regulations and the passage of day and night (*UP*: 57–9). An entirely different conception of time (our own) occurs in societies of the modern era and, as with space, it is linked to disciplinary practices. Activities become precisely controlled in terms of measured intervals in army drill, in factories, in schools and places of correction. Time is

to be added up and capitalized. Disciplinary power is articulated on to a particular time corresponding to its usage of space.

The Subject and Subjectivity

Foucault has examined subjectivity throughout his work in relation to madness and rationality, in the formation of the historical and social sciences, in clinical and psychiatric practice, with regard to punishment, sexuality, notions of death, the soul, the physical body, crime – to compile a minimal list. He has gone so far as to describe his own work as being 'to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects' (SP: 208).

Forging a Materialist Conception

Foucault has provided a strident critique of humanist conceptions of the person, agent or subject and a reconsideration of the place of subjectivity in discursive and non-discursive social practices. It can be claimed that he goes further in this direction than Althusser, Barthes, Kristeva or Lacan, who have similarly 'de-centred' the subject. By de-centred subject is meant, in general terms, a notion of the subject as not the unified subject of consciousness, linking together a body and an ego, but the subject as a variable and dispersed entity, whose very identity, position and place is constituted in language and social practices.

Whereas Lacan, Barthes and Kristeva displace the subject into language and Althusser into ideological practices mediated through language, Foucault displaces the subject into history. In so doing he eliminates both subjectivity and consciousness (individual or collective) as having any prime explanatory significance in considerations of the social or historical change. Subjectivity and consciousness become instead problems for analysis and discussion. Rather than appealing to a realm of ideas which supposedly explain social action (often going hand in hand with the kind of idealism that postulates an immanent rationality or teleology in historical development), Foucault adopts a thoroughly materialist conception of the subject. The subject becomes something attached to the materialism of the physical human body and is historically constituted. Physical and biological bodies do not of course alter historically but the types of subjectivity engraved into them through discursive and non-discursive practices do. The subject is formed through a dialectic of power and knowledge. We will further examine Foucault's notion of the subject in four texts, *OT*, *DP*, *HS* and *UP*.

The Emergence of the Subject

OT, somewhat gleefully, charts the historical birth and predicted death of humanity. The notion of man/woman is merely a fairly transient mutation in Western culture not even 200 years old, a fold in knowledge which will disappear as this knowledge takes a new form. So humanity simply has not been there from the moment he or she can be identified in the palaeolithic until the present but is a very recent creation. An astonishing claim indeed! On what basis can it be established? In order to understand this proposition it is important to remember Foucault's materialist conception of subjectivity and the manner in which he links subjectivity to discourse. The main protagonist in *OT* is not humanity but language and its relationship to things or objects. The human body is one of these objects. In the Renaissance episteme this relation was one of resemblance. Attempts were made to establish resemblances between words and things (see p. 305). In the Classical episteme of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the relationship between words and things transmuted into one of representation, which at the same time and in the very act of representation simultaneously provided an analysis of their essences. Words were to represent things in a universal language of signs. These signs standing for things could be used to represent the order of the world by their tabular ordering, by establishing taxonomies of relations. To know was to tabulate and signification was both representation and analysis. Things reside in their representation as discourse and not just in it. If a correct table could only be established this would permit the relationships established between the discourses on living beings, wealth and general grammar to be manipulated through and by further work on their sign systems. Humanity, while constructing the vast tables of signs, never appears in them:

> In Classical thought, the personage for whom the representation exists . . . he who ties together all the interlacing threads of the 'representation in the form of a picture or table' – he is never to be found in that table himself . . . The Classical *episteme* is articulated along lines that do not isolate, in any way, a specific domain proper to man . . . Classical language as the *common discourse* of representation and things, as the place within which nature and human nature intersect, absolutely excludes anything that could be a 'science of man'. (*OT*: 308–11)

The Modern episteme issues in this science of humanity, so constituting a fundamental break with the Classical episteme. Humanity emerges as we know this category today. Humanity is no longer an object amongst other objects but a subject among objects, a subject *in*

discourse and *of* discourse. Humanity becomes not only a subject and object of knowledge but the organizer of the theatre into which he/she inserts him-/herself. Part of this theatre is an emphasis on history and more broadly the development of the human sciences, such as anthropology, sociology and psychology. The general grammar of the Classical episteme, searching for an originary language to slot into the great table of things, switches to the philologies of nineteenth-century linguistics. Analogy and succession become the primary principles at work (*OT*: 218). 'Man' becomes an 'empirico-transcendental doublet': a fact among other facts studied empirically and yet also attempting to provide a transcendental grounding for this knowledge; surrounded by mysteries which cannot be comprehended yet the source of all intelligibility; a product of history whose origins could not be traced but the source and foundation of this history. The root and branch of the problems created by all this and attempted philosophical solutions, such as existentialism or phenomenology, is that the Modern episteme is incapable of posing a satisfactory relationship between language and representation. This leads to the putative Post-Modern episteme in which humanity, in effect, threatens to collapse forward into subjectiveless objectivity. Intimations of this process are emerging in considerations of structure, language and the unconscious in which humanity becomes deconstructed as a unitary essence or subject of consciousness. Humanity vanishes as an effect of the linguistics of Saussure, the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss and Lacan's re-reading of Freud: 'The idea of a "psychoanalytic anthropology" and the idea of a "human nature" reconstituted by ethnology, are no more than pious wishes. Not only are they able to do without the concept of man, they are also able to pass through it, for they always address themselves to that which constitutes his outer limits . . . they dissolve man' (*OT*: 379).

Genealogies of Power and Subjectivity

Foucault also intends actively to aid and abet this dissolution of humanity but into historically mutable forms of subjectivity in the genealogies of incarceration and sexuality, *DP, HS* and *UP*.

DP traces the constitution of subjectivity in relation to a nexus of power–knowledge and truth. It contrasts forms of the operation of power in the absolutist and capitalist western state through a specific examination of penal history. In the absolutist state punishment, taking the form of torture, was an excessively violent and ritualized public spectacle operating directly and physically on the body with differing degrees of gradation of the torture according to the crime.

This public display of violence represented a display of the force of the sovereign and his ability to punish transgressions. The actual power of the monarch in the absolutist state over the daily lives of the subject population needs in some respects to be de-emphasized. In one respect, of course, it was total: power over life or death. On the other hand, its degree of effective penetration throughout the population remained relatively low. The kind of subjectivity produced by sovereign power was essentially one based on ritual, memory and commemoration of the type found in crests of arms, family trees, portraits, statues, noble tombs, etc. In such a manner the rich and the powerful were subjectified, the great mass of the population remaining anonymous unless transgressing the law. The greater the transgression the more they tended to be marked out, the ultimate being the act of regicide. The scaffold becomes a symbolic and commemorative theatre by an extension of the same logic that creates subjects, the purpose being to render theatrically the transgressor of the law powerless and thus reaffirm the position of the sovereign. The body of the condemned becomes a kind of text:

> torture . . . revealed truth and showed the operation of power. It assured the articulation of the written on the oral, the secret on the public . . . it made it possible to reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal; in the same horror, the crime had to be manifested and annulled. It also made the body of the condemned man the place where the vengeance of the sovereign was applied, the anchoring point for a manifestation of power. (*DP*: 55)

The problem was that the visible display of punitive violence to a 'textual' body on a theatrical stage could be read in different ways for its moral and theological significance. Were the death cries of the condemned perhaps anticipations of the punishments to be expected in hell? Or penitence to God? Signs of guilt? Or innocence? (*DP*: 46). This fundamental ambiguity and the reactions of the crowd made such ritualized public torture increasingly ineffective. The victim was sometimes likely to evoke the sympathy rather than the vilification of the crowd, which on occasion expressed resistance by revolt. By the eighteenth century the public spectacle of controlled torture began to have definite political risks. The subsequent reforms, often considered to be more humane, shifted discipline from the public application of force on the body to systems of incarceration and finely tuned observation which required the creation of the 'soul'.

The advent of incarceration as the principal means of punishment is associated with disciplinary procedures taking on a major role in

structuring social life in the context of the development of industrial capitalism. The contrast Foucault wishes to draw is that between pre-modern and modern modalities of the exercise of power and social domination in the West and the manner in which they create subjects of a certain sort. In the emerging industrial societies of the capitalist West disciplinary procedures and surveillance of the population provide the primary modes of social subjection. The prison is merely the most visual and obvious manifestation of this new focus of power, a microcosm of all institutional forms. Discipline creates subjects of everyone. Power does not just operate on a few tortured bodies to serve as an example but radiates throughout the entire social fabric, creating subjects and simultaneously subjecting. As power spreads throughout the social field it simultaneously becomes more anonymous and less visible. Discipline is located and exercised in a wide variety of institutions: factories, schools, hospitals, university departments of archaeology, military organizations, to name but a few. This discipline creates subjects by providing procedures for the training or coercing of people through hierarchical observation, the normalizing judgement (of, for example, the teacher or the social worker), and the examination involving the compilation of documents and the constitution of case histories. Surveillance takes place in the workplace, increasingly separated from the home, and through the systematic collection and organization of information that can be stored and used to monitor populations. The factory-based labour process renders bodily behaviour routine, repetitive, subject to codifiable rules and accessible to surveillance and calculation. The factory's logic is thus political rather than purely economic. It is simply more efficient in terms of an economy of power, as is incarceration as opposed to the public spectacle of torture. In capitalism the body is

> directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold over it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to peform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up . . . with its economic us; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is a productive body and a subjected body. (*DP*: 25–6)

The point is that discipline does not just crush, negate and alienate people. It is a far more insidious process producing subjects who *will* work for the capitalist. Power can only subject if it first subjectivizes.

Power–knowledge creates appropriate subjects for its further operation, the means and political technologies fostering subjectification and sets of strategic objectives orientating these power relations. The way discipline creates subjects can be seen in perhaps its most manifest form in the figure of the soldier. In the seventeenth century the soldier bore natural signs marking him out as noble, such as bodily posture, strength and physical condition: 'a lively, alert manner, an erect head, a taut stomach . . . dry feet' (Montgommery in *DP*: 135). In the late eighteenth century the soldier is no longer discovered – he is made. This results in a 'general theory of *dressage*, at the centre of which reigns the notion of "docility"' (*DP*: 136). Docile bodies are more efficient, they may be used, transformed and improved, made to perform. So discipline creates a docile and useful body while controlling it, stripping it of its dangers. Dressage is merely a form of normalization found in the school examination and a multitude of other specific forms located at particular institutional sites: hospitals, factories, offices. The school examination permits subjects to be forced into conformity and simultaneously allows their individualization. Discipline thus permits the standardization of subjects (measurement against a norm) and allows a careful gradation of individual differences. The ideal is a constant surveillance – to observe and to detail in dossiers and to know. Modern society is a carcereal archipelago in which power–knowledge strategies individuate to subject.

Foucault conceives of two major axes of subjectification in the modern state. First, disciplinary technologies or power over forms of living optimize the capabilities of the body and ensure political docility. The second dimension does not so much concern individual bodies (persons) as entire populations, involving interventions in terms of reproduction, mortality and health. He considers this in relation to what he considers to be the central role of sexuality. It provides a 'pivot of the two axes along which developed the entire political technology of life. On the one hand it was tied to the disciplines of the body . . . On the other it was applied to the regulation of populations . . . Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species' (*HS*: 145–6). Foucault argues that sexuality emerges historically as a central element in the surveillance and control of populations. Sexuality, like madness, is a historical construct, during the nineteenth and twentieth century becoming a major object of investigation and adminstrative control with wide-ranging social consequences. The social and political ramifications of AIDS today underline the strength of such an argument. Sexuality and its control and development affects the entire population. Power and knowledge work through and on sexuality.

This is an important part of Foucault's contention that power is not just negative. Power–knowledge strategies create a discourse on sexuality, permitting an object to emerge which may then be utilized as an instrument of subjectification and domination. In *HS* the repressive hypothesis with regard to sexuality is impugned. According to this hypothesis from a time of shameless sexual liberty the pleasures of the body became suppressed during the Victorian era only to be partially released very recently. Reich, Marcuse and others associate this repression of sexuality with the development of capitalism. Sexual pleasures were incompatible with a work ethic. Sexual and political liberation go hand in hand. Here power, conceived as repressive, just says 'no' to sex. Instead, *HS* argues, power creates sexuality. The power relation has been productive of an ever-increasing discourse and knowledge of sexuality extending, intensifying and elaborating its forms and practices. Power produces domains for its exercise (in this case sexuality) and the very reality of the field in which it operates. In the nineteenth century sexuality became a 'police' matter: 'that is, not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses' (*HS*: 25). These 'useful' discourses involved (and still involve) (i) statistical studies of the population: birth rates, marriage rates, frequency of sexual relations, legitimate and illegitimate births, impact of contraception, etc. and (ii) a proliferation of discourses concerned with the body and the mind through the agency of doctors, psychiatrists, sexologists. Here Foucault identifies four major themes: hysterization of women's bodies, a pedagogization of children's sex dealing principally with the problem of masturbation, a socialization of procreative behaviour within the family and a psychiatrization of perverse pleasures (*HS*: 104–5). These were not so much a repression of sexuality as its positive production, a production which may then be integrated today in fresh forms of power:

> What was the response on the side of power? An economic (and perhaps also ideological) exploitation of eroticism, from sun-tan products to pornographic films. Responding precisely to the revolt of the body, we find a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation. 'Get undressed – but be slim, good-looking, tanned!' (*PK*: 57)

Sexuality being produced by power–knowledge strategies cannot be free of them. Its effects are to bolster up the effects and operations of bio-power working together with disciplinary technologies to both create the modern subject or person and the very conditions for his or her individualization and subjection, subjection to power. Both bio-

power and disciplinary mechanisms are integrally bound up with the development of capitalism, involving the insertion of controlled bodies into the production process and the adjustment of populations into the economic process (*HS*: 141).

In *DP* and *HS* what is of almost exclusive concern is the analysis of sets of practices external to subjects that construct them in specific ways. *UP*, the second volume in *The History of Sexuality*, marks a change in the analysis in that here the concern of the analysis is the manner in which individuals turn themselves into subjects. In a sense this is the opposite side of the coin and complementary to those external practices analysed previously. However, the analysis is not of modernity but of fourth-century BC Greek texts. Foucault terms the process of self-imposed subjectification 'techniques of the self'. These are means by which agents affect their bodies, souls, thoughts and conduct hence transforming themselves. Foucault refers generally to 'prescriptive' texts, suggesting rules of conduct, but for the Greeks such rules took more the form of guidelines for the conduct of the self than sets of rigid prohibitions or taboos. Sexuality was problematized as a moral matter associated with a need for moderation and austere conduct, and sexuality was intimately linked with three main arts or techniques of living: dietetics (the subject's relation to his or her body involving diet, exercise and the risks and pleasures associated with sexual activity); economics (the conduct of the head of the household); and erotics (the relationship between men and boys). All these formed areas through which the conduct of the self could be conceptualized. For example, in the realm of dietetics, the food one ate depended on (i) the activities engaged in during the day and their serial arrangement, and (ii) the relation of the self to an external world over which one had no control: the climate, seasons, the hour of day, degree of humidity and dryness, heat and cold, directions of the winds, regional geography and the layout of a city (*UP*: 106). In winter conduct of the self should have a drying and warming effect, hence one should eat roasted rather than boiled meats, whole-wheat bread, dry vegetables accompanied by numerous vigorous exercises and more frequent sex. All these aspects of conduct of the self would have warming effects, whereas in the summer sex should be reduced to a minimum, diet consist of barley cakes and boiled or raw vegetables and exercise should be limited – all to produce cooling and moistening effects (*UP*: 110–14).

Foucault's aim in the *History of Sexuality* series, of which *UP* is only an instalment, is to determine how

> Western man had been brought to recognise himself as a subject of desire . . . Not a history that would be concerned with what might be true in the fields of learning, but an analysis of the 'games of truth', the games of truth and error through which being is historically constituted as experience; that is, as something that can and must be thought . . . The object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from one it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently . . . [The] goal is a history of truth. (*UP*: 6–11)

Foucault more than any other modern writer has been concerned to dissect this truth, to disperse it into history as truths to be situated in, of, for and by the subject.

The Role of the Author

Foucault's consideration of the subject extends to the role of the author (*LCMP*: 113–34). His position, quoting Beckett, is 'what matter who's speaking?' What he wants to do is to dispel any notion of the author as a natural fixed point by which we can ascribe meaning to a text or indeed material culture in general. The attribution of a text to an author only has a functional significance within our culture and is very much to be related to wider social features of discursive practice embodied in property relations, legal rights, and questions of accountability and, ultimately, censorship. The author-function serves as a means of classifying texts and grouping them together in what may be an entirely spurious way. The notion of authorship is not simple. First, we have a whole host of problems concerning what is to count as a text belonging to an author (see the discussion of the history of ideas, pp. 292–4). Second, what reason do we have to group texts under a single proper name rather than with different proper names when differences can be enormous within the 'works' of an author? The concept of an author results from a series of complex operations whose purpose is to construct and maintain a rational entity involving notions of creativity, intentionality, continuity, consistency, personal identity, maturation and development. These are all *projections* and are themselves dependent on the manner in which we deal with a series of texts. In academia, it might be noted, the concept of the author is ideally suited to uphold and foster a value-system wishing to maintain competition and which treats ideas like any other commodity.

Foucault subjects the author to exactly the same fragmentation as discourse. The author is, if anything, a discontinuous series rather than a unitary entity. The author is a function of discourse rather than discourse being a production of the author. The questions then become not Who is the real author? Have we proof or his or her authenticity and originality and creativity? What he or she revealed about his or her

most profound self in the text? How can we fit such and such a text into this author's genre? but: What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where does the discourse come from? How is the discourse circulated and who controls it? What placements are determined for possible subjects in the discourse and who can fulfil these diverse functions of the subject? (*LCMP*: 138).

Rather than grasping for the coherency and creativity of the author what is required is an analysis of the way the author-subject fits into discourse in general, i.e. what can be stated and how can it be stated. Traditional notions of authorship are mistaken because they are dependent on non-analytical psychological themes. Instead we must analyse how authors are themselves produced and constructed and inserted into discourse. The author may of course make certain decisions of what and how to write but these are nevertheless thoroughly determined.

Truth, Rationality and Political Critique

If Foucault questions truth, rationality, the author, the subject as a concrete discrete entity and centre of consciousness, a view of power as repressive and moreover disperses all these categories into history and discourse we are pehaps entitled to ask exactly which power–knowledge–truth strategies Foucault himself is embroiled in. In short, why is he writing and can he expect to change anything? This raises the question of the politics of Foucault's work and, somewhat inevitably, the relationship of Foucault to Marxism. Is Foucault a supplement to Marx, a fiancé, following on from the post-war existentialist, phenomenological, hermeneutic and structuralist brides? Or does he provide an alternative? It should be immediately noted that his work has been used both by those on the left and the right, to reinforce and to condemn socialist practices. Does the fact that Foucault's work can be open to such radically different sociopolitical interpretations in itself tell us anything about it? As a means of entry into these questions we can consider one of the texts in some more detail.

Science and Rationality

MC analyses changing conceptions of madness from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. It is not so much a history of insanity as a critique of this category and the development of psychiatric practices. *MC* investigates how an object of discourse came to be created and its

social and political effects in turning people into objects of knowledge and subjects of discourse. Madness is considered not as a given and unchanging fact but a specific product of the 'civilization' of Enlightenment thought. Foucault problematizes the whole question of madness: Why was it created? What historically mutable forms does such a category take? What ends does such a category serve? Madness is a social achievement rather than a preordained and self-evident category. It is not a product of psychiatric science but something this science can set to work on once madness has been produced. Furthermore madness did not develop as the result of the operation of a historical unfolding of reason – rationality – it was rather a chance development, a product of a whole host of social, economic and political factors which could have been otherwise. *MC* thus challenges conventional histories of psychiatry which would regard madness as an unchanging fact released into a proper framework of understanding through the progress of medical reason. *MC* argues that in fact psychiatry only becomes possible when madness becomes defined, and negatively evaluated, as the converse of reason and when those designated as mad are isolated and confined as a special social category. Both these developments precede that of psychiatry. Its role was merely to strengthen a category which had already been created. It is thus a discipline with ignominious rather than noble origins. The history of madness in *MC* is a history in which a series of changing social conditions give rise to discourses which justify the confinement and special treatment of those individuals or groups who are deemed to threaten society at any particular time.

In the sixteenth century the mad did not constitute a homogeneous social category. Madness was not a mental pathology or sickness and indeed the fool could be a source of wisdom. The insane were in some sense a liminal category, between God and humanity: in the world and yet not of it. It was not the mad who were locked up on a consistent basis but lepers. At the end of the sixteenth century a profound shift occurred in conceptions of the mad. They now became a dangerous category and the emptying of the vast leper houses of medieval Europe was accompanied by the filling of this social space – a space of confinement and exclusion – with the mad, who effectively became objects rather than subjects. But the mad were confined not as an isolated class but with all those other social categories deemed dangerous: the poor, the sick, vagabonds and criminals. Madness was not designated a sickness but merely the converse of reason: unreason. It was alternatively conceptualized as a regression to a childlike state or as a form of bestiality. The mad were not properly human and thus could be treated as animals. Another shift in conception occurs at the

end of the eighteenth century, represented by such reformers as Tuke and Pinel who released the mad from their chains. Insanity becomes regarded as an illness to be treated through medicine. The insane become segregated from other antisocial groups but Foucault argues that this was a product of political interventions rather than a result of an advancement in understanding the insane. The mad began to be isolated in a specific institutional site, the asylum, not as an effect of liberal concern for their plight but because other social groups were now treated differently. It was economically inefficient to confine the poor: large populations of workers were now required to fill the factories of the Industrial Revolution. The criminal class, now considered even more a menace to private property, should not be mixed with the insane for the hope of reforming them. The birth of the asylum for the sole treatment of the mad rather than being a liberation resulted in an even more profound confinement, and the development of a special class of practitioners to deal with the problems the mad posed – psychiatrists. An opposition between reason and madness became complete. Madness is no longer simply unreason but a pathology to be cured, and the psychiatrist working at his or her institutional site decides who is mad. Commital to an asylum defines someone as mad. Foucault comments:

> It is thought that Tuke and Pinel opened the asylum to medical knowledge. They did not introduce science, but a personality, whose powers borrowed from science only their disguise, or at most their justification. These powers, by their nature, were of a moral and social order; they took root in the madman's minority status, in the insanity of his person, not of his mind. 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. (*MC*: 271–2)

Stated in other terms, power–knowledge mechanisms create a discursive object, madness, which is then refined and extended as mental illness in modern psychiatric practice, becoming an instrument of subjectification and domination. Madness, rather than being an invariant objective truth, is socially constituted through the changing relationships between those falling on either side of the couplet sane/insane.

Knowledge, Truth and Rationality

The human sciences have their 'technical matrix in the petty, malicious minutiae of the disciplines and their investigations' (*DP*:

226). In other words, they are linked to the kind of disciplinary power Foucault takes as being characteristic of contemporary society. Each society has its own regime of truth and rationality. There is no absolute form of truth or rationality to evaluate statements against. Different social practices determine alternative forms of rationality and truth. Rationality is the historical production of rules and procedures for creating true discourses and legitimating these discourses by providing them with reasons and principles. In modern society the following statements can be made about truth: (i) it is taken to be embodied in science; (ii) there is a constant striving after this truth, a 'will to truth'; (iii) these true discourses are diffused widely; (iv) truth constitutes a battleground. Truth is 'this-worldly' so that which should concern us about truth is not an analysis of an ensemble of statements taken to be true but of the rules and codes whereby truth and falsity are separated and the former linked to power. Power does not stand opposed to truth, it rather invests truth to make it acceptable. To speak the truth is supposedly to be beyond power, i.e. beyond the interests power serves (of domination in a conventional conception), but for Foucault both power and truth invest each other. They are not external and opposed. It is only through the operation of power that truth claims can be made. In Foucault's analytics we must turn our attention to how statements come to be counted as true, and why. Truth is relative to the social practices producing it, inextricably linked with them. Convention guarantees truth rather than the usual philosophical candidates, correspondence with the world or the internal coherence of statements.

Politics and the Analysis of Discourse

In May 1968 Foucault's answer was published to the following question put to him by the editors of *Esprit*: 'Doesn't a thought which introduces discontinuity in the history of the mind remove all basis for a progressive political intervention. Does it not lead to the following dilemma: either the acceptance of the system, or the appeal to an uncontrolled event, to the irruption of exterior violence which alone is capable of upsetting the system?' (HDD: 224). Foucault's reply dealing with his earlier work up to and including *OT* is fascinating in that he attempts to produce, or bring out, a politics in his work. His thesis is that in presenting discourses as involving: (i) limited *practical* domains with boundaries, rules of formation and conditions of existence rather than a world of slumbering texts, history as a completely filled intellectual space without ruptures; (ii) roles and operations for discoursing subjects as opposed to the theme of subjects

constituting meanings and transcribing them into discourse (originary founding subjects); and (iii) emphasizing historical difference in opposition to continuity and a search for origins and thought traditions, he is liberating the study of discourse from a nineteenth-century historical–transcendental structure, creating an intellectual space for a critique of the present. He cogently asks why a progressive politics should be linked to themes of meaning, origin and the constitutent subject:

> In short to all the themes which guarantee to history the inexhaustible presence of the Logos, the sovereignty of a pure subject and the profound teleology of an original destination . . . to all the dynamic, biological, evolutionary metaphors through which one masks the difficult problem of historical change . . . to the devaluation of discursive practices, so that a history of the mind, of conscience, of reason, of knowledge, of ideas or opinions might triumph in its certain ideality?

Foucault wants to destroy all these idealist and ultimately conservative themes. To 'liberate discourse' is to take it seriously. That is to understand it as having real material effects, the kinds of effects described in *MC*. A progressive politics recognizes the historical specificity of particular practices rather than ideal necessities or the free play of individual initiatives; it defines possibilities for transformation rather than relying on uniform inbuilt abstractions such as evolutionary process; it does not make a conscience of humanity but defines the roles and places subjects can occupy; it recognizes the link between the discursive and the non-discursive, between the sociality of discourse and the sociality of oppression (HDD: 246).

Writing the History of the Present

Elsewhere (*DP*: 31) Foucault has proposed that he is a historian of the present. He is not writing about the past because it may be interesting to do so. There is no antiquarian desire to study the past for its own sake, therefore evading the issues of the present. Nor is he writing the past simply from the standpoint of the present. The results of such studies found in evolutionary studies or histories of various disciplines are familiar: How dreadful it was! How brutal the tortures! How confused and inadequate the knowledges! How far we have advanced towards truth and enlightenment and consideration for human freedoms and justice! Foucault more or less reverses such platitudes. By emphasizing the difference of the past and its own internal coherency he systematically undercuts the legitimacy of the present and its

portrayal as either necessarily embodying rationality or truth. The rejection of any historical teleology throws into focus the contingency and arbitrary nature of the present, that the present could be otherwise, and the future will be different. What Foucault cannot and does not do is engage in utopian speculations as to the form of the good society, and neither did Marx. The difference is that while for Marx the overthrow of the capitalist present would necessarily open up a road to genuine human fulfilment, non-ideological truth and justice, Foucault is much more sceptical, and this term would seem to be more appropriate than the one with which he is usually branded: 'nihilist'.

For Foucault 'the history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning' (*PK*: 114). It is through the understanding of these relations of power that a radical critique of the present may be maintained through a study of the past. It is to show that knowledges are not disinterested and neither are truths. They are historically constituted in relation to struggles. So Foucault suspends any notion of ahistorical and natural categories. There is no such thing as madness, criminality or sexuality with a dangerous internal essence to be dissected or analysed. There are rather changing discursive objects formed through power–knowledge strategies. Foucault does not write a history of sexuality, he rather writes a history of how sexuality ever came to be invented in the first place as an object in and of discourse.

The Politics of Totality

Foucault has never attempted to provide a self-sufficient theoretical system for the study of discourse or social totalities, or indeed of individual concepts such as power or subjectivity. His emphasis on dispersion – of statements in discourse, of power in terms of strategies, of subjectivity in history – and his discussion of power–knowledge directly mitigate against any such attempt. If anything he tends towards the disunification of theory rather than its systematization: '"The whole of society" is precisely that which should not be considered except as something to be destroyed' (*LCMP*: 233). Any totalizing theory, a theory that attempts to take account of everything, is not only impossible, it is socially and politically suspect, a manifestation of domination and the 'will to truth' Foucault is so concerned to attack. Perhaps the worst of all is evolutionary theory, postulating a longitudinal as well as a latitudinal totality. Foucault's own emphasis on the episteme in *OT*, it should be noted, was only a unity of statements in dispersion. There was no postulation of a

necessary coherency that is found, for example, in functionalist theories or certain dialectical models.

The Universal and the Specific Intellectual

If Foucault abandons the attempt to create a totalizing theory then it is entirely consistent that he should abandon any notion of the universal intellectual, found in Marxist theory, whose job is to provide a blanket political critique of modern society and so raise the social consciousness of the masses. He sees the role of the intellectual as a specific and localized intervention operating at specific institutional sites and in relation to specific knowledges (*PK*: 126–30; *LCMP*: 205–17). The Renaissance scholar who could attempt to master and incorporate all or most aspects of knowledge within a single framework is clearly a thing of the past. Foucault is simply proposing that as knowledges and social practices in general have become more differentiated and specific then so should their analysis and critique; this certainly does not mean that such critiques should necessarily be restricted within current disciplinary boundaries or within specific institutions or technologies for the operation of power – at least if we are to attempt to follow the example of Foucault's own discourses.

It should, however, be noted that although Foucault has spoken of the active political role of the specific intellectual in relation to the 'micro-powers' that inhabit society he has never self-reflexively described himself as one or addressed the question 'What should be done?'. All we find, for example in *HS*, in opposition to the fresh form of domination he argues is issued in by the repression hypothesis, is talk of a return to 'bodies and pleasures' which does not appear to be all that helpful. We look to Foucault in vain for recommendations of how to act, how to change the present. After Foucault we are always left with the question as to whether any proposed reforms may merely be a fresh act of domination. If Foucault can, as he wishes, leave us with a feeling that we simply do not know what to do (QM: 12) (will the new museum exhibition be even worse than the last?) perhaps he has achieved what he can only hope to do: to make us think harder, more critically, more intensely, more self-reflexively.

Marxism

A supplement to Marx? Foucault, at one point, suggests that he is: 'one might even wonder what difference there could ultimately be between being a historian and a Marxist' (*PK*: 53). However, he has also stated in interviews that he has never been a Marxist (S: 198) and

whether he is or is not labelled a Marxist does not appear to be a matter for great concern anyway. Foucault's great strength is his attention to detail and historical specificity, and tracing through the social and political outcomes of various discourses and social practices. He provides no alternative to Marxism and has never set out to do so. If his work has been linked by some (certainly not by himself) to the concerns of the new right (the 'Nouvelle Philosophie'), this is only in a naive and superficial manner. In relation to Marxism, Foucault's work can be regarded as both a serious critique and an extension which, of course, leads to a need for reformalization and revitalization.

First the critique: for some, such as Althusser, it is absolutely essential to determine the scientific credentials of Marxism as opposed to other forms of knowledge. Marxism can be effective only if it is grounded in the truth as opposed to the ideologies of non-Marxist discourse. For Foucault this is both the wrong direction and the wrong battle to fight (*PK*: 84–5). To claim that Marxism is a science is, of course, to grant it definite power effects within the framework of an Enlightenment discourse bound up with wider themes of modernity and rationality. It is this very notion of scientificity that Foucault wishes to dispel, for it merely inserts Marxism within a form of discourse which it *ought to be challenging*. By contrast Foucault claims that his genealogies attempt to emancipate historical knowleges from this subjection, 'to render them, that is, capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse' (*PK*: 85). By basing itself on an ultimately mystical notion of scientific truth and rationality, Marxism in a sense only serves to neutralize itself or at the very least cut away the grounding for a more radical critique. It might be added that such a position does not convince or persuade anyone outside the ranks of the Marxists although it may have the effect of promoting internal solidarity within them.

Much Marxist theory, whether operating in terms of the very broad and very ambiguous foundations laid down by Marx or in subsequent structuralist ramifications, has been consistently prone to economism, the total or partial reduction of social practices and forms of consciousness as an effect of the working through of the internal logic of the economy. To use traditional Marxist terminology all of Foucault's work is concerned with the superstructure. However, what his work clearly shows is that any neat division between economic base and ideological superstructure is misplaced; both form part of each other. Foucalt's 'discursive formations' are not simply an ideological icing on the basic processes of economic determinancy in a social formation. They actively 'select for', i.e. help to create, bring into existence,

certain forms of social and economic organization rather than others. This does not mean we simply replace a materialist Marxism with a Hegelian idealist Marxism. It rather extends the notion of materialism to include discourses which can be argued to have effects in and on the world in a similar manner to more obviously economic processes. Foucault's conception of modern societies as disciplinary is a powerful one. Indeed having read *DP* it seems almost impossible to regard them in any other way (his discourse *has* power). This concept of discipline cannot be reduced either to the realm of ideology or to economics: it unites them. Discipline operates materially on the body in the production process and simultaneously acts so as to maintain hegemony, producing forms of political subjugation. If we take Foucault seriously rather than automatically denouncing him for challenging certain of the commandments of Marx, it is obvious that what is required is a rethinking rather than a complete abandonment of classical Marxist concepts such as alienation, ideology, class exploitation and notions of power, domination and resistance. His particular scattered critical remarks on concepts such as ideology are hardly decisive but what they do point to is a need for greater debate and theorization.

Second, the extension: if for the Frankfurt school writing and research is intended as an active means of social intervention, with the aim of social emancipation, then for Foucault it is a more muted matter of a social analytics, which takes the form of a discourse on discourses in which the intention is not to try to establish a general theory of power but only to reflect on certain aspects, such as the relation of power to knowledge to rationality to subjectivity. However, it can be argued that precisely the advantage of Critical Theory is that there is a systematic refusal to abandon the whole problem of repression, ideology and social domination as Foucault might appear to do with his emphasis on the positive effects of power. He does not take sides with resistance against social domination but rather wants to establish 'a topological and geological survey of the battlefield. But as for saying, "Here is what you must do!", certainly not' (*PK*: 62). This appears to lead inevitably to a theme of increasing personalized resistance, found, for example, in his discussion of the specific intellectual. We might ask if this is itself a manifestation of the greater entrenchment of power and domination today and political despair in the face of it?

Nevertheless, Foucault's work can be regarded as providing a form of social and political critique in a similar manner to the Frankfurt school of Critical Theory. Radically different premises result in different forms of critique. It is the notion of, and importance assigned to, intellectual labour as an act of cultural and political critique that links

Foucault with Adorno or Habermas, and perhaps it is this similarity that should be stressed rather than the differences. His argument that 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (*PK*: 109) does not leave any possibility whatsoever that work can, is, or should be, value-free. All writing, all speaking, all knowledge has power effects. The implication: be careful (self-reflexive) as to what you do or do not say and how you say it. Nor does such a statement allow us to cling to notions of primary objectivity to evaluate various discourses or statements. The objects we deal with are always *discursive objects*. All discourses deal in truths, discursive rather than absolute truths. The point of critique is to detach the *power of truth* from present-day forms of hegemony and social oppression. That is, it is to analyse how certain truths come to be accepted or formulated rather than others and the social and political ends these truths serve: 'liberation can only come from attacking . . . political rationality's very roots' (OS: 254). The fundamental area Foucault directs our attention towards is the politics of truth. The kinds of truth claims Foucault is particularly concerned to demolish are precisely those that have been of concern to critical theory: those involved in the positivist social sciences, which simultaneously turn people into objects and subjects of a certain sort, thus all the better for surveillance, control and manipulation.

Conclusion: Some Directions for Use

> I often quote concepts, texts and phrases from Marx, but without feeling obliged to add the authenticating label of a footnote with a laudatory phrase to accompany the quotation . . . For myself, I prefer to utilise the writers I like. The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest. And if commentators then say that I am being faithful or unfaithful to Nietzsche, that is of absolutely no interest. (*PK*: 52–4)

There are a large number of possible areas or topics around which this conclusion could be structured, but I wish to tackle two broad areas of fundamental concern, each of which embrace's a number of key points: reading and writing material culture in discourse, and in history.

Discourse, Material Culture

Foucault's work on discourse opens up a vast field for archaeology and

material-culture studies more generally. Here I will initially separate out three areas: (i) the question of how the past and material culture should be written; (ii) the manner in which archaeology's history could be produced; (iii) the means in which the production of archaeological knowledge can be understood as a discursive practice.

Writing the past The inscription of artifacts, their attributes, context and associations into a textual medium is something that needs to be problematized. Any writing of material culture is transformative. It is not and cannot be a transparent medium for expression and analysis. The associations made between artifacts and their context occur as much in the linguistic medium of the text as they do in that which the text may attempt to describe or discuss. Here it is important to deny a nihilistic assertion of incommensurability in which we would assert that the text is a free-floating medium, an endless play of meaning which can only refer back to itself. This would, if followed through to its logical conclusion, only result in a self-denying ordinance that any meaningful study of material culture is impossible. By meaninglessness is meant, in this context, an assertion that writing material culture is an entirely fictional enterprise. It is not, of course. Studying material culture means transcribing artifacts. The end product is both something more and something less than the raw materials worked upon. The text *mediates*: it is neither a direct expression of reality, nor is it totally divorced from it. So meaning in the text is dual. It is both to be found in the text's organization and syntax and in the relation of the text to the world. These two aspects of meaning creation cannot be separated out, they inhere in each other and help to form each other.

The artifact in the text is always a *discursive object*. This object is formed through language acting on the world. No description is pure nor can it be total. Listing the attributes of a pot does not allow one to arrive back at that pot. The textual embodiment of an artifact is always partial, less than that artifact. It is more than that artifact because it transports it into an entirely different medium, a medium which then sets to work on it. This means that we are never dealing with the artifact, or more generally the past or the present, in itself and for itself. Our knowledge and understanding comes through a linguistic, textual medium. The need to place artifacts into texts is simultaneously a violence done to those artifacts and a productive and creative exercise. Writing material culture is producing material culture.

Now, this linguistic production of material culture has to be taken very seriously indeed for the *meaning* of material culture is created in the text. It does not reside outside the text. From the beginning to the end meaning resides in what the text does to material culture.

Meaning is internal to the text and its language use. It does not reside externally except in so far as discourses have effects in the world. They help us to interpret and understand it. But it needs to be recognized that this exercise is always already an interpretation of an interpretation of an interpretation.

It is possible furthermore to regard discursive and non-discursive practices as equally material. The notion of materiality needs to be extended so as to properly include discourse. Both discursive and non-discursive practices have effects in the world. Second, they mediate each other. There can be no clear dividing-line. Material culture is non-discursive in the limited sense that it is a set of objects. However, these objects (e.g. pots) are multidimensional in that they act both physically in an instrumental sense and so as to frame and constitute significative systems of meaning. Meaning again has to be understood as a form of materiality, a production rather than an abstraction (something which just occurs within thought). Every material object is constituted as an object of discourse. What this means is that objects only become objects *in* discourse. Such a position does not deny that a pot or a rock carving exists outside thought but that a pot or a rock carving could constitute itself in a particular manner without discourse.

We must write material culture and we must write the past and the present. Part of the creation of an alternative past and an alternative understanding of material culture will of necessity be to write it in a different way. Foucault provides us with a whole series of examples of how this might be accomplished. First, and as implied by the discussion above, we need to abandon any longing for, or striving after, a basic originary and primary objectivity. Rather we have to understand that the subjective is the form of the objective. Objectivity and subjectivity do not stand opposed. They both form part of each other. Second, producing meaning is an expressive and formative exercise. Consequently the manner in which statements are made is an important as their propositional content. The creation of meaning is in part a literary exercise. This implies that we should perhaps write material culture in a manner that has more similarities to novels or poetry than to a treatise on constant acceleration equations. However, it is important to avoid any simplistic notion of returning to, or falling back on, 'common-sense' everyday discourse. The manner in which Foucault writes is dense, some would say 'difficult'. He does not write like Balzac, or like Oppenheimer. His writing is, in a sense, a mixture of technical discourse and literary creation. Both are articulated to create a space for meaning and neither aspect can be singled out. This is important because writing material culture is not like writing

physics or biochemistry, nor is it simply writing a good, bad or indifferent story. In writing material culture we need to distance ourselves both from writing with a spurious scientism, which regards language merely as a technical medium to state things using an abstract terminological system, and from writing as a novelist, who may create anything and destroy anything at will.

Third, we need to pay much greater attention to detail, being empirical while avoiding empiricism. The artifact cannot be reduced to its visible surfaces. Meaning resides both in these surfaces directly open to observation and beyond them. By paying attention to detail and specificity we impugn any notion that material culture can be adequately understood by reducing it to tables of measurements and statistical correlations of various traits. These may obscure just as much as they may help us. Such types of analysis have a place but should be shorn of the rhetoric of objective neutrality which normally accompanies their use.

Fourth, data should be used as a means of clarification for an argument rather than as its sole basis. In other words, our texts should incorporate a genuine dialectic between theory, data and practice. Rather than regarding these three areas as separate they should be understood as mediating or helping to form each other. There can be no question of testing theories against data since they form part of each other. Nor can we simply apply a theory to data since by doing so we are making the unwarranted empiricist assertion that the two are essentially separate.

Fifth, texts should be produced that open out a field of meanings for material culture rather than attempting to pin it down as precisely as possible to one meaning: plurality rather than unidimensionality. One way of achieving this will be to create 'dense' texts: texts which the reader actively has to work at to understand. This is precisely what Foucault does. A reading of *AK* demands precise attention. This opens out an active rather than a passive role for the reader. Part of the creation of the meaning is undertaken by the reader. His or her role is not simply to absorb ideas or information. In a similar way, texts on material culture need to be written in such a manner as to actively involve the reader rather than to shut him or her out. The role of the reader should be not simply to absorb information or ideas but to engage in a productive critical dialogue within the spaces of the text. This also draws attention to the fact that an author has no necessary priority with regard to the meaning of a text. The meaning goes entirely beyond the writer.

Writing archaeology's history Taking into account Foucault's cogent attack on the history of ideas, if we were going to write the history of archaeology or any other discipline or a set of disciplines we would *not*: (i) regard archaeology as a 'natural' and unproblematic field of inquiry; (ii) envisage any necessary continuity in thought from a supposed point of origin (e.g. the moment when archaeology can first be conceived as existing as a body of thought) to the present day; (iii) regard archaeology merely as a set of ideas about the past; (iv) locate archaeology as developing in tandem with other types of investigations into the past or present as merely being part of the way people thought at particular times and places; (v) attempt to trace the manner in which ideas such as the concept of culture are developed or rejected from one archaeologist to the next; (vi) conceive of knowledge of the past as simply residing in archaeology books, which through the progressive influence of one individual archaeologist on another, or one generation of archaeologists on another, provide closer and closer accommodations to the way the past really was; (vii) think there is any necessary unity between a series of books or articles because they have a single name (e.g. Childe; Clarke) stamped on them, or regard changing ideas about the past as the result of innovations in thought developed by those individuals who label themselves, or become labelled, as archaeologists.

If we suspend this entire edifice as inadequate or downright misleading we have seriously called into question the validity of all histories of archaeology written to date. We need to re-write archaeology's history. The manner in which this might be attempted must include consideration of archaeology as a set of discursive practices linked to power and the non-discursive, which will now be briefly examined.

Analysing archaeological discourse One aspect of contemporary archaeology that is quite shocking is its comparative lack of self-reflexivity or awareness of itself as a contemporary activity being forged by women and men today. Here we need to be constantly aware of two features: archaeology as a practice within contemporary capitalism and archaeology as an active production of statements about material culture, whether past or present. Part of the process of understanding material culture has to be about the form and nature of this practice as carried out today, an awareness that archaeology is not just about events or material culture but itself is an event and a material production. It is necessary to understand archaeology as a discourse, as a set of dispersed statements, codes and rules which actively form the objects of which it speaks. Archaeology needs to be examined in terms of power–knowledge–truth strategies for the

creation of meaning. The only way to alter archaeology and our understanding of material culture is to attempt to analyse what is being done now, and what has been done in the past. Foucault's analyses of discourse provide us with some important directions with which to situate archaeological texts both in relation to each other and contemporary capitalism.

In analysing archaeological texts a necessary preliminary must be an attempt at creating a certain degree of personal distance. In other words, we should try to read a contemporary archaeological text as if it were written, say, in 1066. To put it another way, in order to take a text or a series of texts seriously we first need to treat them as a joke and laugh at their attempts to seriously represent material culture. In many cases, no doubt, this may be rather difficult but it is worth a try! The distance created by laughing at the claims to serious meaning produced in the text may have a productive cathartic effect. Next, we need to look at texts from the perspective of a principle of rarity. Why is it that, given there are an almost infinite number of aspects of material culture patterning to be discussed, only a limited number of statements tend to be made, disseminated in various ways, and repeated? We can begin to analyse various discursive formations within archaeology as sets of rule-governed statements in a relation of dispersion. We will be analysing the regularities governing this dispersion and their effects. Needless to say, we will not be concerned with the psychology of individual authors. We do not reduce texts to simply being the products of individual imaginative consciousnesses. Furthermore, we need to analyse the social and political implications of producing one version of material culture rather than another. In other words, what linkage is there between a text and its social context of production? We have to try to analyse the relationship between archaeological knowledges and power, both within the academic community and without. We have to understand the manner in which archaeology creates its own discursive objects – never the only possible ones – and the manner in which these are framed and worked upon in texts. The archaeological record is variously and continuously being constituted by all that has been said about it, the manner in which it is named, divided up into segments, the way in which these segments are correlated with each other, described, understood, explained, and judged. The archaeological record exists only within the space of the discourses that have purported to deal with it. Objects of archaeological discourse are actively created, they have no objectivity except through the medium of their subjective constitution. Furthermore, any notion of archaeological objects as objective categories on which mathematical or other operations may be performed only makes sense

in terms of certain forms of discourse in the present. An assertion of objectivity has got nothing to do with the past; it has everything to do with the present. Archaeological discourse does not merely use a linguistic medium as a group of signs to represent the past. These signs create the past, its objects and its objectivity.

An important area to analyse will be the manner in which prohibitions are placed on what 'proper' archaeological discourse is supposed to be about, who has the right to speak about material culture, to engage in serious speech acts about it, and who does not. Some remarks about this have already been made in the section on Foucault's analysis of discourse and will not be repeated here. We also need to analyse discourses in terms of the micropolitics of power in the academy. One way to do this might be to study the networking of references in texts in terms of individual and institutional influence and power; various tropes of writing and critique also need to be examined. Studies need to be conducted of who obtains employment and how, and who does not, who gets grants and who does not, who gets published and who does not, who has praises heaped upon them and who does not, why some books are read and others are ignored, why some debates take place rather than others. All these and others are not secondary issues. They are of some considerable significance in understanding how archaeology polices and constrains itself.

Choices are always made as to what to study and why to study it. A positive outcome of analysing contemporary archaeological discourse will be to open out fresh choices, new discursive objects. Contemporary empiricist discourse puts the study of material culture into a brittle, crystalline discursive structure which it is vital to shatter in order to open up fresh meanings, new ways of seeing, fresh truths. A focus on material culture and its study today threatens to dissolve the normal discursive boundaries archaeology erects around itself and this is productive–productive of fresh discourses and fresh knowledges. In fact it would be just as well to abandon the disciplinary label 'archaeology' altogether. Instead a new set of discourses needs to be developed, one that focuses on material culture and its relation to social practice irrespective of whether this be in the past, in the present, in our own society or others. Contemporary material-culture studies need to be undertaken, for example, because they are important studies in their own right, not for the sole purpose of trying to understand the past more adequately. Such a focus would be truly interdisciplinary. The purpose of most so-called interdisciplinary studies in archaeology today is merely to reinforce the unreality of present-day disciplinary boundaries.

It is important to abandon simplistic notions of an opposition

between truth and falsity in analysing texts and statements made in these texts. Rather we should ask why these statements rather than others are made and what ends they serve. Archaeology is not so much about reading the signs of the past but writing these signs into the present. Correct stories of the past are dependent on a politics of truth linked to the present because all interpretation is a contemporary act. This interpretation is active. There is no original meaning to be textually recreated in an analysis of a set of artifacts. Meanings are always to be linked to the practices producing them, whether of prehistoric artisan or contemporary archaeologist, and discourse is a willed act of struggle for and against the production of particular types of statements.

History, Material Culture

Archaeology–history is constituted by concrete social practices, practices which relate to the production of material culture and the discourses which construct it within the framework of particular significative systems. Foucault is concerned to demonstrate that these practices are always material. They go beyond being mere expressions of systems of ideas. They also have a context. The use, production and meaning of material culture is not a context-free event. Equally, material culture does not simply consist of a set of signs to be read in which inheres a teleology of intentional meaning. Consequently, to understand social practice and its link to material culture we cannot (i) reduce material culture to a set of ideas either on an individual or societal basis; (ii) regard it simply as having utilitarian or social functions; (iii) carry out context-free cross-cultural studies; or (iv) adopt an evolutionary frame of reference. Material culture instead exists in a space falling between rules and principles for action and actual social practices. The rules do not govern the practices in the manner of norms or laws because they are dispersed and multifarious but dialectically relate to them. By uncovering the dispersions of rules and principles we can begin to account for both the form and variability of social practices. These practices are to be linked with power–knowledge strategies both producing material culture and constraining the forms it may take according to context. So the use and form of material culture can be understood in relation to power and knowledge as can the social practices producing it. The production of material culture and its societal significance cannot be understood by attempting to reconstruct sets of goals or motives on the part of subjects. It goes entirely beyond them. Regularities (systems of dispersed rules) define the limits of both social practice and material culture: they make them intelligible but the intelligibility and the regularity involved here is not that of an overall structural logic with everything in its place in a system of pure difference. The regularities may embrace contradictions, conflicts, and may superficially appear incoherent.

Foucault's work points to the centrality of power and its various forms of linkage with knowledge and truth as a crucial area for understanding the relation of material culture to social practice. The emphasis on power as dispersed throughout the social field avoids the essentialism involved in locating power solely in the economy or other areas such as the state apparatus in contemporary societies. We can clearly link this conception of power–knowledge to an understanding of the social conditions of production of material culture and the manner in which it may act back so as to have definite effects within the social field. Foucault's discussion of architectural forms shows quite clearly how definite forms of social practice are articulated with and in part mediated through the built environment. Constructed space helps to produce certain forms of action and agency as opposed to others. Material culture is shown to be actively involved in processes of perception, surveillance and the manner in which forms of subjectivity, subjugation and domination are constituted.

Material culture, agency, society In reaching an understanding of the relationships between material culture and social practices Foucault shows us that there is a need for recognition of the fact that we can achieve an adequate understanding of material culture *without* attempting to reconstruct the specific intentions of individual agents or the whole of society. Given the extreme difficulty of doing either in prehistory this can only be a relief! An understanding of material culture in relation to social practice is not dependent on giving priority to the individual or society. The production of material culture is always social and goes beyond the individual but there is no necessity to locate it within an all-embracing social totality. Rather than suggesting that all the way across whatever entity we might like to define as 'society' all social relations and material culture are linked in some continuous manner, we could suggest that social relations are *discontinuous*, lacking any overall processes of connection or forms of determination. Such a standpoint would seem to have particular relevance in forms of prehistoric social organization that lack any overall political or state apparatus to connect them together. So rather than linking in material culture with a notion of systems or other conceptions of social wholeness we would have to regard its connection with social practices as both more specific and more dispersed, i.e. less unified.

Taking the past seriously Foucault takes history – historical difference – seriously and so should we. There are two aspects to this. First, material culture can be understood only by locating it in a specific historical context: specificity and detail, not generalization. The latter only destroys what we should be trying to understand and makes it meaningless. Second, the very concepts we use in analysis need to be historically located. What this means is that any search for a general theory of material culture good for all times and places is futile. Understanding must be always relational, related to history. Similarly, attempting to define individual concepts such as power, ideology, agency, domination, class, forces of production, relations of production, space and time, etc., as precisely as possible only makes sense within a historical context. These concepts and others need to be defined and redefined continually according to the historical context under investigation. For example, in a study of the distant past we will be dealing with social practices operating in and through spaces and times radically different from our own, times which are not chronometric and spaces which are not Euclidean, and differing events may again have their own times within such times. In a similar fashion, subjects or agents in the neolithic cannot at all be thought to possess exactly the same sorts of attributes or capacities as agents in the modern Western state. This has nothing to do with either a positive or negative valorization *vis á vis* the present. What it does mean is that it is important to recognize that the subject and subjectivity have no enduring essence. There is no such thing (except ideologically) as human nature. The subject is thoroughly constructed and the only thing which we are likely to have in common with a palaeolithic social actor is the possession of a physical body of more or less the same kind. The men and women of the past did not just think or conceive the world differently from us, they *were* totally different and part of this difference will run through to the very conception of an agent (peculiarly modernist) as a discrete centre of emotion, awareness and consciousness.

History and critique The purpose of writing the past should not be simply to try to reconstruct an aspect of it for its own sake, thus attempting to escape from the contingencies of the present. such a purely antiquarian concern has little relevance today and furthermore is invariably associated with a conservative politics. The past is, in part, politically created and this needs to be recognized. Material-culture studies have to be undertaken both critically and as an exercise in social critique. Here we can try to understand the relationship of material culture to patterns of social domination and repression and

also the way in which material culture positively contributes to the fostering of particular forms of social practice rather than others. Studying contemporary material culture, if done in the right way, may have a constructive contribution to make as a form of social and cultural criticism. It is admittedly less easy to immediately envisage how studies of prehistoric material culture can aid social construction in the present. Here two points may be very briefly made. Part of the conception of the present lies in the past, so writing that past critically and self-reflexively will have an impact. One possible means of approach will be to perform genealogical studies of the kind Foucault has undertaken, identifying an issue of strategic social and political significance today, such as gender representation, and undertaking highly specific studies that cross-cut standard archaeological conceptions and periodizations of materials. More generally, what is required is an emphasis on the difference of the past in the analyses being undertaken to make the present appear as strange and exotic as possible in order to undercut its legitimacy and seeming necessity. The past can be a very powerful tool in the defamiliarization of the present, as Foucault has shown us.

Dialogic understanding and evaluation Mention has already been made of the need to rework and situate historically concepts used in analysis. This also applies to knowledge, truth and rationality, which have definitely been over-valorized in the recent history of Western thought. It might be argued that if we deny that criticism is fundamentally grounded in epistemology then we are simply condemned either to a self-defeating acknowledgement of the 'truth' of the position we criticize or we have to resort to an appeal to some kind of natural reality or perspective outside discourse. This is not the case at all. We can regard the trinity of knowledge, truth and rationality as having a dialogic and historical resolution that is not reducible to abstract epistemological and ontological arguments. Rationality can be regarded as an attribute which allows us to make problematic what once seemed self-evident, to examine statements critically, to think self-reflexively about thinking. Such a process is historically and culturally grounded and the same applies to truth and knowledge. We always operate in terms of knowledges and aim to write truths. The problem is (or rather is not) that these knowledges and truths are always changing and always linked to power. We can well do without the self-congratulatory stance that this is in a unilineal progressive direction. The truth is to be found in history, history is not to be found in the truth. The resolution of opposing critiques or differing explanations is structured through processes of persuasive argumenta-

tion within the perspective of the present. Foucault expresses this well:

> In the serious play of questions and answers, in the work of reciprocal elucidation, the rights of each person are in some sense immanent in the discussion. They depend only on the dialogue situation. The person asking the questions is merely exercising the right that has been given to him: to remain unconvinced, to perceive a contradiction, to require more information, to emphasize different postulates, to point out faulty reasoning etc. As for the person answering the questions, he too exercises a right that does not go beyond the discussion itself; by the logic of his own discourse he is tied to what he has said earlier, and by the acceptance of dialogue he is tied to the questioning of the other. (*FR*: 381)

Foucault is laughing at you reading this, he was laughing at me scripting it. If it is possible to laugh at failed representations and failed discourses, no doubt including this piece, perhaps there is hope for the future.

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* *Both only available to me after this chapter was completed.*

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