IX

The Critique of Reason as an Unmasking of the Human Sciences: Michel Foucault

I

Foucault does not stand to Bataille, as Derrida does to Heidegger, in a relationship of disciple and successor. Even the external bond of a discipline within whose tradition both grew up together is lacking. Bataille took up ethnology and sociology without ever holding an academic post; Foucault was until his recent death Professor of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France. Yet Foucault still calls Bataille one of his mentors. He is fascinated by Bataille as someone who stems the tide against the denaturing flood of enlightened discourse about sexuality and who wants to give back to both sexual and religious ecstasy their proper, specifically erotic meaning. But, above all, Foucault admires Bataille as someone who ranges texts in fiction and analysis, novels and reflection, alongside one another; someone who enriches the language with gestures of waste and excess and transgression of limits, in order to break out of the language of triumphant subjectivity. To a question about his mentors, Foucault gave the instructive response: "For a long time I was dominated by a badly resolved conflict between a passion for Blanchot and Bataille on the one hand, and an interest in certain positive studies like those of Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss on the other. But actually, both these directions, whose single common denominator is perhaps the religious problem, have contributed in the same fashion toward leading me to the idea of the disappearance of the subject."[1]

Like many of his contemporaries, Foucault was also taken with the structuralist revolution; it turned him, as it did Derrida, into a critic of the phenomenological-anthropological thought prevalent from Kojève till Sartre; and it was what first determined him in his choice of methods. He understood this "negative discourse about the subject" introduced by Lévi-Strauss to be at the same time a critique of modernity. But Nietzsche's motif of a critique of reason reached Foucault not via Heidegger, but through Bataille. Finally, he worked out these impulses not as a philosopher but as a student of Bachelard, and indeed as a historian of science who, in contrast to what is usual in that specialty, was more interested in the human sciences than in the natural sciences.

These three lines of tradition indicated by the names of Lévi-Strauss, Bataille, and Bachelard are joined together in the first book that made Foucault known outside the narrower circle of his fellow specialists. *Madness and Civilization* (1961) is a study of the prehistory and early history of psychiatry. The model of structuralist ethnology is noticeable in the means of analyzing discourse and in the methodical distantiation from one's own culture. The subtitle already lays claim to a critique of reason: *The History of Madness in the Age of Reason*. Foucault wants to show how the phenomenon of madness has been constituted as a mental illness since the end of the eighteenth century. With this goal in mind, he reconstructs the history of the rise of the discourse in which psychiatrists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries talk about madness. What makes this book more than a wide-ranging study of cultural history by a historian of science is a philosophical interest in madness as a phenomenon complementary to reason. A reason that has become monological holds madness at arm's length from itself so as safely to gain mastery of it as an object cleansed of rational subjectivity. Making madness clinical, which first renders mental illness a medical phenomenon, is analyzed by Foucault as an example of those processes of exclusion, proscription, and outlawing in whose traces Bataille had read the history of Western rationality.

In Foucault's hands, the history of science is enlarged into a history of reason because it studies the constituting of madness

as a reflex image of the constituting of reason. Foucault declares programmatically that he wants "to write the history of the boundaries . . . by which a culture reprobates something that lies *outside* it."[2] He classifies insanity among those limit experiences in which Western logos sees itself, with extreme ambivalence, faced with something heterogeneous. Boundary-transgressing experiences include contact with and even immersion in the Oriental world (Schopenhauer); rediscovery of the tragic element and of the archaic in general (Nietzsche); penetration of the dream sphere (Freud) and of archaic prohibitions (Bataille); even the exoticism nourished by anthropological reports. Foucault omits Romanticism from this list, aside from one mention of Hölderlin.[3]

And yet in *Madness and Civilization* a Romantic motif comes through that Foucault will later give up. Just as Bataille discovers in the paradigmatic experience of ecstatic self-unbounding and orgiastic self-dissolution the eruption of heterogeneous forces into the homogeneous world of an everyday life that has been compulsively normalized, so Foucault suspects that behind the psychiatrically engendered phenomenon of mental illness, and indeed behind the various masks of madness at that time, there is something authentic whose sealed mouth need only be opened up: "One would have to bend an attentive ear to the whispers of the world and try to perceive the many images that have never been set down in poetry and the many fantasies that have never reached the colors proper to the waking state."[4]

Foucault recognizes immediately the paradoxicalness of the task of catching the truth of madness "as it bubbles up long before it gets apprehended by erudition," for "the act of perception that tries to apprehend these words in their unfettered state necessarily belongs to a world that already has it in its grip." Nonetheless, the author still has in mind an analysis of discourse that, in the manner of depth hermeneutics, probes its way back to the original point of the initial branching off of madness from reason in order to decipher what is unspoken in what is said.[5] This intention points in the direction of a negative dialectics that tries to break out of the enchanted circle of identifying thought by means of such thought itself, that

pursues the history of the rise of instrumental reason back to the point of the primordial usurpation and of the split of a monadically hardening reason from mimesis, and then circles round this point, even if only in an aporetic fashion. But then Foucault would have to clamber about archeologically among the debris of an objective reason that had been destroyed, from the mute testimony of which we might still retrospectively shape the perspective of a (long since revoked) hope for reconciliation. But this is Adorno's approach, not Foucault's.

One who desires to unmask nothing but the naked image of subject-centered reason cannot abandon himself to the dreams that befall this reason in its "anthropological slumber." Three years later, in the foreword to *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault calls himself to order. In the future, he will abstain from dealing with texts through commentary and give up all hermeneutics, no matter how deeply it may penetrate below the surface of the text. He no longer seeks madness itself behind discourse about madness, or the mute contact of body with eyes, which seemed to precede any discourse, behind the archeology of the medical gaze. Unlike Bataille, he rejects any evocative access to the excluded and outlawed — heterogeneous elements no longer promise anything. A hermeneutics of unveiling always still connects a promise with its critique; a chastened archeology should be rid of that: "Is it not possible to make a structural analysis of discourses that would evade the fate of commentary by supposing no remainder, nothing but the fact of its historical appearance? The facts of discourse would then have to be treated not as autonomous nuclei of multiple significations, but as events and functional segments gradually coming together to form a system. The meaning of a statement would be defined not by the treasure of intentions that it might contain, revealing and concealing at the same time, but by the difference that articulates it upon other real or possible statements, which are contemporary to it or to which it is opposed in a linear series of time. A systematic history of discourses would then become possible."[6] There is already a suggestion here of a conception of historical writing that Foucault, under the influence of Nietzsche, from the late 1960s set over against the human sciences — which are integrated into the history of reason and

hence degraded — as a kind of antiscience. In the light of this conception, Foucault would assess his earlier work on madness (and the rise of clinical psychology) as well as on sickness (and the development of clinical medicine) as in part "blind attempts." Before getting into this, I want to point out some themes that establish a continuity in subject matter between the earlier and the later works.

II

In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault already investigates the peculiar connection between discourses and practices. It is not a matter of the familiar attempt to explain the internally reconstructed evolution of science from conditions external to science. In place of the internal perspective of a problem-oriented theory of science, we find from the very beginning a structural description of selected conspicuous discourses which starts out in the gaps that are covered over by the approach of historians of ideas and problems; it is in such gaps that a new paradigm begins to establish itself in opposition to an old one. Moreover, the discourses of scientists are related to other discourses — those of philosophers and those of academically trained professionals such as physicians, judges, administrative officials, theologians, and educators. Of course, the human sciences, which form the stubbornly maintained reference point of Foucault's studies, do not only stand in the context of other discourses; far more important for the history of their emergence are the mute practices into which they are admitted. By the latter, Foucault understands the institutionally fixed and often even architecturally embodied or ritually sedimented regulations of modes of action and customs. Foucault builds into the concept of "practice" the moment of coercive, asymmetric influence over the freedom of movement of other participants in interaction. Legal judgments, police measures, pedagogical instructions, internment, discipline, checks and controls, forms of corporal and intellectual drill are examples of the intrusion of socializing, organizing forces into the quasi-natural substrate of bodily creatures. Foucault allows himself an altogether unsociological concept of the social. From the outset, he is interested in the human sciences as media that in modernity strengthen and promote the mysterious process of this socialization, that is, the investment with power of concrete, bodily mediated interactions. There is some unclarity, to begin with, regarding the problem of how discourses — scientific and nonscientific — are related to practices: whether one governs the other, whether their relationship is to be conceived as that of base to superstructure, or on the model of a circular causality, or as an interplay of structure and event.

Foucault also retained to the end the epochal divisions that articulate the history of madness. Against the background of a diffuse and not very clearly portrayed high middle ages, which in turn point toward the origins of Greek logos,[7] the contours of the Renaissance stand out more clearly. The latter, in turn, serves as a foil for the Classical age (from the middle of the seventeenth until the end of the eighteenth century), portrayed lucidly and with sympathy. Thus, the end of the eighteenth century marks the peripeteia in the drama of the history of reason. It is the threshold of modernity shaped by Kantian philosophy and the new human sciences. Foucault bestows on these epochs, whose conventional names are due more to shifts in cultural and social history, a deeper meaning in accord with the changing constellations of reason and madness. He ascribes to the sixteenth century a certain self-critical restlessness and openness in dealing with the phenomenon of insanity. Reason still has an osmotic porosity — madness is still linked with the tragic and the prophetic and is a place of apocryphal truths; it has the function of a mirror that ironically unmasks the weaknesses of reason. To be disposed toward illusions pertains to the character of reason itself. During the Renaissance, all reversibility has not yet been expunged from the relation of reason to its other. Against this background, two processes take on the significance of watershed events in the history of reason: the great rash of confinements around the middle of the seventeenth century, when, for example, within a few months during the year 1656 every hundredth inhabitant of Paris was arrested and put into an institution; and then, at the close of the eighteenth century, the transformation of these places of incarceration and asylums into closed institutions with super-

vision by doctors for medically diagnosed mental illness — that is, the birth of the kind of psychiatric establishments that still exist today (and the dismantling of which is promoted by the antipsychiatry movement).

These two events (first, the involuntary confinement of the mad, the criminal, those without housing, libertines, the poor, and the eccentric of every kind, and later on, the erection of clinics for the treatment of mentally ill patients) signal two types of practices. Both serve to delimit heterogeneous elements out of that gradually stabilized monologue that the subject, raised in the end to the status of universal human reason, holds with itself through making everything around it into an object. As in later studies, the comparison of the Classical age with the modern age is central. Both types of exclusionary practices agree in forcing a separation and in rigorously erasing from the picture of madness those traits that are similar to reason. It is just that the indiscriminate confinement of every deviant only means a spatial segmentation of the wild and the fantastic, which are left to themselves; it does not yet mean a domesticating confrontation with a chaos that gives rise to anxiety and that has to be integrated into the order of nature and of humanity as suffering and pathology: "What the classical period had confined was not only an abstract unreason which mingled madmen and libertines, invalids, and criminals, but also an enormous reservoir of the fantastic, a dormant world of monsters supposedly engulfed in the darkness of Hieronymus Bosch which had spewed them forth."[8] Only in the late eighteenth century does the fear of a madness that could force its way outside through the cracks in the asylums grow, along with a compassion for those with nervous disorders and a feeling of guilt for associating them with dirty criminals and abandoning them to their fate. The clinical cleansing of asylums henceforth reserved for the sick goes hand in hand with the scientific objectification of insanity and the psychiatric treatment of the insane. This means at once a humanizing of suffering and a naturalizing of illness.[9]

Here we touch on a further theme that Foucault will pursue with ever greater intensity: the constitutive connection between the human sciences and the practices of supervisory isolation.

The birth of the psychiatric institution and of the clinic in general is exemplary for a form of disciplining that Foucault will describe later on purely and simply as the modern technology of domination. The archetype of the closed institution, which Foucault initially discovers in the clinically transformed world of the asylum, turns up again in the forms of the factory, the prison, the barracks, the school, and the military academy. In these total institutions, which extinguish the quasi-natural differentiations of old European life and elevate the exceptional case of internment into a kind of normal form of "boarding," Foucault perceives the monuments to victory of a regulatory reason that no longer subjugates only madness, but also the needs and desires of the individual organism as well as the social body of an entire population.

A *gaze* that objectifies and examines, that takes things apart analytically, that monitors and penetrates everything, gains a power that is structurally formative for these institutions. It is the gaze of the rational subject who has lost all merely intuitive bonds with his environment and torn down all the bridges built up of intersubjective agreement, and for whom in his monological isolation, other subjects are only accessible as the objects of nonparticipant observation. This gaze is, as it were, architecturally congealed in the Panopticon sketched out by Bentham.[10]

The same structure is to be found at the cradle of the human sciences. It is no accident that these sciences, especially clinical psychology, but also pedagogy, sociology, political science, and cultural anthropology, can, as it were, frictionlessly intermesh in the overall technology of power that finds its architectural expression in the closed institution. They are translated into therapies and social techniques, and so form the most effective medium of the new, disciplinary violence that dominates modernity. They owe this to the fact that the penetrating gaze of the human scientist can occupy that centralized space of the panopticon from which one can look without being seen. In his study on the birth of the clinic, Foucault already conceived of the gaze of the anatomist, trained on the human corpse, as the "concrete apriori" of the sciences of man. In his history of madness, he already sensed the primordial affinity between the

setup of the asylum and the doctor-patient relationship. In both, in the organization of the supervised institution and in the clinical observation of the patient, there is effected a division between seeing and being seen that links the idea of the clinic with the idea of the science of man. It is an idea that attains dominance at the same time as subject-centered reason: that killing off dialogical relationships transforms subjects, who are monologically turned in upon themselves, into objects for one another, and only objects.

Using the example of the reform movements that gave rise to psychiatric institutions and clinical psychology, Foucault works out the internal kinship between humanism and terror that endows his critique of modernity with its sharpness and mercilessness. In connection with the birth of the psychiatric institute from humanitarian ideas of the Enlightenment, Foucault demonstrates for the first time that "double movement of liberation and enslavement" which he later recognizes along a broad front in the reforms of the penal system, the educational system, the health establishment, social welfare, and so forth. The freeing of the insane from the neglect of their places of confinement on humanitarian grounds, the creation of hygienic clinics under medical direction, the psychiatric treatment of the mentally ill, the right won by the latter to psychological understanding and therapeutic care — this was all made possible through an institutional ordinance preparing the patient to be an object of continuous supervision, manipulation, isolation, and regulation, and especially the object of medical research. The practices institutionally stabilized in the internal organization of life within these establishments are the basis for a knowledge of madness that first endows it with the objectivity of a fully conceptualized pathology and thus integrates it into the universe of reason. Psychiatric knowledge means an *ambiguous liberation*, in the sense of emancipation and elimination, not only for the patient, but also for the doctor, the practicing positivist: "The knowledge of madness presupposed on the part of those who possess it a specific way of ridding themselves of madness, of freeing themselves from the start from its dangers and its magic. . . . Originally this meant the fixation of a certain way of not being mad."[11]

I will not deal with these four themes in any detail. Instead, I will take up the question of whether Foucault succeeds in bringing off a radical critique of reason in the form of a historiography of the human sciences, which starts as archeology and is expanded into genealogy, without getting caught in the aporias of this self-referential undertaking. The methodological problem of how a history of the constellations of reason and madness can be written at all, if the labor of the historian must in turn move about within the horizon of reason, remained just as unexplained in the early works as that of the relationship between discourses and practices. In the prefaces to his studies published at the start of the 1960s, Foucault poses himself this question without answering it; however, when he delivers his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1970, it seems to have been solved in the meantime. Drawing a boundary between reason and madness turns up again here as one of the three mechanisms of exclusion in virtue of which rational speech is constituted. The elimination of madness stands midway between the more conspicuous operations of keeping refractory speakers away from discourse, suppressing unpleasant themes, censoring certain expressions, and so on, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the altogether inconspicuous operation of distinguishing within the interaction of discourse between valid and invalid statements. Foucault concedes that at first glance it is implausible to conceive the rules for the elimination of false statements on the model of the delimitation of madness and the proscription of the heterogeneous: "How could one reasonably compare the constraints of the truth with those other divisions, arbitrary in origin if not developing out of historical contingency, in a state of continual flux, supported by a system of institutions imposing them and manipulating them, acting not without constraint, nor without an element, at least, of violence?"[12]

Naturally, Foucault does not allow himself to be influenced by the ostensible lack of coercion of the cogent argument by which truth claims, and validity claims in general, prevail. The appearance of nonviolence on the part of the better argument disappears as soon as one "considers it at a different level," by assuming the attitude of the archeologist who directs his gaze

at the buried foundations of meaning, at the infrastructures to be painstakingly excavated, which indeed first establish what is going to be considered true and false *inside* any discourse. Truth is an insidious mechanism of exclusion, because it only functions on condition that the *will to truth* prevalent within it remains hidden: "As though the will to truth were masked by truth itself and its necessary unfolding. . . . *True* discourse, liberated by the nature of its form from *desire* and *power*, is incapable of recognizing the *will to truth* that pervades it; and the will to truth, having imposed upon us for so long, is such that the truth it seeks to reveal cannot fail to mask it."[13]

The criteria of validity according to which what is true gets discriminated from what is false within a discourse abide in a unique transparency and appearance of having no origin whatsoever — validity has to strip away every element of the sheerly genetic, even its derivation from the basic rules constitutive of the discourse, which the archeologist lays bare. So little can the structures that make truth possible themselves be true or false that one can only inquire about the function of the will that attains expression in them, and about the genealogy of this will from some network of the practices of power. From the early 1970s, Foucault distinguished the archeology of knowledge that uncovers the truth-constitutive rules of exclusion in any discourse from the genealogical investigation of the pertinent practices. Genealogy studies how discourses are formed and why they emerge and disappear again, by tracing the historically variable conditions of validity right to their institutional roots. Whereas archeology follows the style of erudite ingenuity, genealogy cherishes a "felicitous positivism."[14] However, if archeology could proceed in learned fashion and genealogy in the mode of innocent positivism, then the methodological paradox of a science that writes the history of the human sciences with the goal of a radical critique of reason would be solved.

III

Foucault owes the concept of an erudite-positivistic historiography in the appearance of an antiscience to his reception of

Nietzsche, which is set down in the introduction to *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1969) and in the essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971). Philosophically considered, this concept seems to offer a promising alternative to the kind of critique of reason that had assumed the form of a temporalized *Ursprungsphilosophie* in Heidegger and Derrida. Now, of course, the entire weight of the problematic rests on the basic concept of power that lends both the archeological prospecting and the genealogical disclosures their dimension of being a critique of modernity. Nietzsche's authority, from which this utterly unsociological concept of power is borrowed, is not enough to justify its systematic usage. The political context of Foucault's reception of Nietzsche — disappointment with the failure of the 1968 revolt — makes the concept of a historiography of the human sciences as a critique of reason biographically intelligible; but even this cannot ground the specific use of the concept of power with which he loads his paradoxical undertaking. The turn to a theory of power must, rather, be understood as an internally motivated attack on problems with which Foucault saw himself confronted after he had carried out his unmasking of the human sciences in *The Order of Things* using only the tools of discourse analysis. But let us first look at Foucault's appropriation of the concept of "genealogy."

Genealogical historiography can only take over the role of a critique of reason qua antiscience if it escapes from the horizon of just those historically oriented sciences of men whose hollow humanism Foucault wants to unmask in his theory of power. The new history has to negate all those presuppositions that have been constitutive for the historical consciousness of modernity and for philosophy of history and the historical Enlightenment since the end of the eighteenth century. This explains why Nietzsche's "Second Untimely Meditation" is a mine for Foucault. For, with a similar purpose in mind, Nietzsche had subjected the historicism of his time to a relentless attack.

Foucault wants (a) *to leave behind modernity's presentist consciousness of time*. He wants to break with the privileging of a present which is singled out under the pressure of the problems of facing the future responsibly, and to which the past is narcissistically related. Foucault settles accounts with the presentism

of the kind of historiography that does not get beyond its hermeneutical initial situation and permits itself to be enlisted for the stabilizing assurance of an identity long since shattered. Consequently, genealogy is not supposed to search for an *origin*, but to uncover the contingent *beginnings* of discourse formations, to analyze the multiplicity of factual histories of derivation, and to dissolve the illusion of identity, especially the putative identity of the history-writing subject himself and of his contemporaries: "Where the soul pretends unification or the self fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the beginning. . . . The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events."[15]

There results from this (b) the methodological consequence of *a parting with hermeneutics*. The new history makes use not of *Verstehen* but of the destruction and dismantling of that context of effective history which putatively links the historian with his object and with which he enters into communication only to find himself in it: "History must be detached from the image . . . through which it found its anthropological justification: that of an age-old collective consciousness that made use of material documents to refresh its memory."[16] Hermeneutical effort is aimed at the appropriation of meaning; in each document, it hunts out a voice reduced to silence that should be roused into life again. This idea of a *document* pregnant with meaning has to be called into question just as radically as the business of interpretation itself. The "commentary" and its cognate fictions of the "work" and of the "author" as the originator of texts, as well as the tracing back of secondary to primary texts and in general the production of causal chains in intellectual history, are all instruments of an impermissible reduction of complexity; they are procedures for damming up the spontaneous upsurge of discourses which the later interpreter just wants to tailor to his own size and accommodate to his own provincial horizon of understanding. In contrast, the archeologist is going to change talkative documents into mute *monuments*, objects that have to be freed from their own context in order to become accessible to a structuralist description. The genealogist approaches the archeologically excavated monuments from outside, in order to explain their derivation from the contingent ups and downs of battles, victories, and defeats. Only the historian who sovereignly disdains whatever discloses itself to the interpretation of meaning can undermine the foundational function of the knowing subject. He sees through, as sheer deceit, "the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; . . . the promise that one day the subject — in the form of historical consciousness — will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference."[17]

The basic concepts of the philosophy of the subject dominate not only the type of access to the object domain, but also history itself. Hence, Foucault wants above all (c) *to put an end to global historiography* that covertly conceives of history as a macroconsciousness. History in the singular has to be dissolved, not indeed into a manifold of narrative histories, but into a plurality of irregularly emerging and disappearing islands of discourse. The critical historian will first dissolve *false continuities* and pay attention to ruptures, thresholds, and changes in direction. He does not produce teleological contexts; he is not interested in the large causal chains; he does not count on syntheses and rejects out of hand principles of articulation such as progress and evolution; he does not divide history into epochs: "The project of a total history is one that seeks to constitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle — material or spiritual — of society, the significance *common* to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion — what is metaphorically the 'face' of a period."[18] Instead of this, Foucault borrows from the "serial history" of the *Annales* school the programmatically deployed notions of a structuralist procedure that deals with a plurality of noncontemporaneous histories of systems and that shapes their analytic unities in terms of indicators remote from consciousness, that renounces in many cases the conceptual tools issued from the synthetic performances of a supposed consciousness, in other words, that abstains from the formation of totalities.[19] Thus also excluded is the idea of reconciliation, a legacy of the philosophy of history on which the critique of modernity stemming from Hegel still uninhibitedly nourished itself. The kind of history

"whose function is to compose the finally reduced diversity of time into a totality fully closed upon itself; a history that always . . . attributes a form of reconciliation to all the displacements of the past; a history whose perspective on all that precedes it implies the end of time,"[20] receives a harsh denunciation.

From this destruction of a historiography that remains captive to anthropological thinking and basic humanistic convictions, there emerges the outline of a *transcendental historicism* at once inherited from and going beyond Nietzsche's critique of historicism. Foucault's radical historiography remains "transcendental" in a weak sense inasmuch as it understands the objects of the historical-hermeneutical interpretation of meaning as constituted — as objectivations of underlying discourse practices that are to be grasped by structuralist methods. The old history concerned itself with totalities of meaning that it made accessible from the internal perspectives of the participants. From this viewpoint, what *constitutes* such a world of discourse never comes into view. Only an archeology that unearths a discursive practice down to its very roots sees what looks from the inside to be a totality from the outside, as something particular that could also be otherwise. Whereas participants understand themselves as subjects who relate to objects in general in accord with universal criteria of validity, without ever being able to transcend the perspicuous horizon of their world, the archeologist approaching from outside brackets this self-understanding. By going back to the rules constitutive of discourses, he ascertains the limits of any given universe of discourse; its form is *bounded* by the kinds of elements that it unconsciously *excludes* as heterogeneous — and to this degree, the rules constitutive of discourses also function as a mechanism of exclusion. What is defined as out of bounds for any given discourse first makes possible the specific subject-object relations that are, however, viewed from within the discourse as universally valid, without any alternatives. In this respect, Foucault takes up the heritage of Bataille's heterology in his archeology of knowledge. What differentiates him from Bataille is the merciless historicism before which even the prediscursive reference point of sovereignty dissolves. As little as the term "madness" (from the Renaissance down to positivistic

psychiatry in the nineteenth century) indicates an authentic experiential potential this side of all the discourses about madmen, just as little does the other of reason, what is excluded as heterogeneous, retain the role of a prediscursive referent that could point to the coming arrival of a lost origin.[21]

Instead, the space of history is seamlessly filled by the absolutely contingent occurrence of the disordered flaring up and passing away of new formations of discourse. No place is left for any *overarching* meaning in this chaotic multitude of past totalities of discourse. The transcendental historicist looks as if into a kaleidoscope: "This kaleidoscope hardly reminds one of successive forms of a dialectical development; it is not explained by a progression of consciousness, nor yet by its descent, nor by the struggle between two principles: desire and repression — each flourish owes its bizarre shape to the space left it by the adjacent practices."[22]

Under the *stoic* gaze of the archeologist, history hardens into an iceberg covered with the crystalline forms of arbitrary formations of discourses. But since the autonomy proper to a totality without origin accrues to every single one of these formations, the only job left for the historian is that of the genealogist who explains the accidental provenance of these bizarre shapes from the hollow forms of bordering formations, that is, from the proximate circumstances. Under the *cynical* gaze of the genealogist, the iceberg begins to move: Discourse formations are displaced and regrouped, they undulate back and forth. The genealogist explains this to-and-fro movement with the help of countless events and a single hypothesis — the only thing that lasts is power, which appears with ever new masks in the change of anonymous processes of overpowering: "An 'event,' consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked other."[23] What the synthetic power of transcendental consciousness was hitherto supposed to accomplish for the one and general universe of the objects of possible experience — this synthesis —

is now degraded into the subjectless will of a power effective in the contingent and disordered to-and-fro of discursive formations.

IV

Just as "life" was once elevated by Bergson, Dilthey, and Simmel to the basic transcendental concept of a philosophy (which still formed the background to Heidegger's analytics of Dasein), so Foucault now raises "power" to a basic transcendental-historicist concept of historiography as critique of reason. This characteristic is by no means trivial, and certainly not to be grounded on Nietzsche's authority alone. Using the concept of the history of Being as a contrasting background, I want first to study the role assumed by this vexing basic concept in Foucault's critique of reason.

Heidegger and Derrida want to advance Nietzsche's program of a critique of reason by way of a destruction of metaphysics; Foucault wants to do so by way of a destruction of historiography. Whereas the former surpass philosophy through an exorcising, evocative thinking beyond philosophy, Foucault oversteps the human sciences through a historiography that appears as an antiscience. Both sides neutralize the straightforwardly raised validity claims of the types of philosophical and scientific discourses they study by referring either to an epochal understanding of Being or to the formation rules for a given discourse. It is these that are supposed to first make possible the meaning of entities and the validity of statements within the horizon of a given world or of an established discourse. Both also agree that world horizons or discourse formations undergo change; but in these changes they maintain their transcendental power over whatever unfolds *within* the totalities shaped by them. This excludes a dialectical or circular feedback effect of either the ontic occurrence or the referents upon the history of the conditions of their possibility — whether these conditions are construed ontologically or in terms of discourse formation. The history of the transcendentals and the change in world-disclosing horizons require concepts *different* from those appropriate for the ontic and

historical dimensions. It is at this point that there is a parting of the ways.

Heidegger radicalizes the figures of thought of *Ursprungsphilosophie*, in which he preserves a vestige of confidence. He transfers the epistemic authority proper to the validity of truth to the process of the formation and transformation of world-disclosing horizons. The conditions making truth possible can themselves be neither true nor false, and yet a paravalidity is ascribed to the process of their changing; this is supposed to be conceived on the model of the validity of truth, as a heightened, historicized form of truth. Viewed in the light of day, Heidegger is proposing a curious alloy with his concept of the history of Being as a truth-occurrence. The authority of the history of Being is due to a fusion of meaning between validity claims free of coercion and imperious claims to power. This fusion lends to the subversive force of the insightful the imperative force of an illumination compelling one to one's knees. With a tiny vestige of confidence in the human sciences, Foucault avoids such a pseudo-religious twist by activating for his own purposes Bataille's heterological idea of de-limitation. He strips the history of discourse-constitutive rules of any authority based on validity and treats the transformation of transcendentally powerful discourse formations just as conventional historiography treats the ups and downs of political regimes. Whereas the archeology of knowledge (and in this it is similar to the destruction of the history of metaphysics) reconstructs the stratum of rules constitutive of discourse, genealogy strives to explain "the discontinuous succession of the sign-systems (ungrounded in themselves) that coerce people into the semantic framework of a determinate interpretation of the world"[24] — and indeed it explains the provenance of discourse formations from practices of power that are entwined with one another in the "risky game of overpowering."

In his later studies, Foucault will fill out this abstract concept of power in a more tangible way; he will comprehend power as the interaction of warring parties, as the decentered network of bodily, face-to-face confrontations, and ultimately as the productive penetration and subjectivizing subjugation of a bodily opponent. In our context, however, it is important to note

how Foucault *joins* these palpable meanings of power *together* with the transcendental meaning of synthetic performances that Kant still ascribed to a subject and that structuralism now understands as an anonymous occurrence, namely, as a pure, decentered, rule-guided operation with the ordered elements of a suprasubjectively constructed system.[25] In Foucault's genealogy, "power" is initially a synonym for this *purely structuralistic activity*; it takes the same place that "différance" does in Derrida. But this power constitutive of discourse is supposed to be a power of transcendental generativity *and* of empirical self-assertion simultaneously. Like Heidegger, Foucault also undertakes a fusion of opposed meanings; but here an amalgam results that allows him to follow in the footsteps of Bataille and connect up with Nietzsche's critique of ideology. Heidegger wanted to hold onto the validity-grounding meaning of transcendental world disclosure in his concept of Being as a temporalized power of origin; but at the same time he wanted to eliminate the idealist element of something invariant that points beyond everything historical, beyond everything that is of the nature of a mere event — an element that is also usually found in the concept of the transcendental. Foucault owes his basic transcendental-historical concepts of power not only to this *one* paradoxical operation, which brings synthetic performances a priori back into the realm of historical events; he also undertakes three additional, equally paradoxical operations.

On the one hand, Foucault has to retain for his concept of power — which ironically conceals itself in discourse as the will to truth and at the same time makes itself felt therein — the transcendental meaning of a condition of the possibility of truth. On the other hand, he not only brings to bear against the Idealism of the Kantian concept a temporalizing of the a priori — so that new discourse formations, which push out the old, can emerge like *events* — but also strips this transcendental power of the connotations that Heidegger prudently leaves to an auratic history of Being. Foucault not only historicizes; his approach is at the same time nominalist, materialist, and empiricist. He thinks of the transcendental practices of power as something particular that strives against all universals, and further as the lowly corporeal-sensual that undermines everything intelligible, and finally as the contingent that could also have been otherwise because it is not governed by any regulative order. In Heidegger's later philosophy, it is not easy to pin down the paradoxical consequences of a fundamental concept contaminated by contrary meanings, because meditation upon a Being from time immemorial eludes assessment on the basis of testable criteria. In contrast, Foucault exposes himself to palpable objections, because his historiography, despite its antiscientific tenor, seeks to proceed both "eruditely" and "positivistically." As a result, genealogical historiography can scarcely hide the paradoxical consequences of a basic concept that is similarly contaminated, as we shall see below. There is all the more need to explain why Foucault resolves upon heading his theory of science oriented to a critique of reason onto the path of a theory of power.

From a biographical standpoint, Foucault's motives for taking up Nietzsche's theory of power could be different from Bataille's. Both started out on the political left, and both put increasingly more distance between themselves and Marxist orthodoxy. But only Foucault experienced *sudden* disappointment with a political engagement. In interviews of the early 1970s, Foucault revealed the vehemence of his break with earlier convictions. At that time, he joined the choir of disappointed Maoists of 1968 and was taken by the moods to which one must look if one wants to explain the remarkable success of the New Philosophers in France.[26] Were one to believe it possible to reduce his central ideas to this context, one would surely be underestimating Foucault's originality. At any rate, these external political impulses could not have set anything in motion at the innermost core of the theory, if the dynamism of the theory itself had not (long before his experiences with the revolt of 1968) given rise to the idea that discursive mechanisms of exclusion not only reflect self-sufficient structures of discourse, but carry out imperatives for heightening power. The idea arose in the problematic situation that Foucault faced after the conclusion of his work on the archeology of the human sciences.

In *The Order of Things* (1966), Foucault investigates the modern forms of knowledge (or epistemes) that establish for the

sciences their unsurpassable horizons of basic concepts (one could also say: that establish the historical a priori of the understanding of Being). In the history of modern thought, just as in the history of madness, the two historical thresholds of the transition from the Renaissance to the Classical age and from the Classical age to the modern age are at the center of interest. The internal motivations behind the transition to a theory of power can be understood in connection with the difficulties that emerged from this ingenious study itself.

V

The thought of the Renaissance was still guided by a cosmological world view in which things were ordered in, so to speak, a physiognomic way according to relations of similarity, since in the great Book of Nature each signature refers to other signatures. The rationalism of the seventeenth century imports a completely different order into things. The logic of Port Royale is structurally formative; it projects a semiotics and a general combinatory system. Nature is transformed for Descartes, Hobbes, and Leibniz into the totality of what can be "represented" in a twofold sense — that is, what can be represented and can also, as a representation, be presented by means of conventional signs. Foucault contends that the decisive paradigm for this is neither the mathematization of nature nor the mechanistic perspective, but the system of ordered signs. The latter is no longer grounded in a *prior* order of things, but is what first produces a taxonomic order by way of the representation of things. Combined signs or language form a fully transparent medium by which the representation is linked with whatever is represented. The signifier retreats behind the indicated thing signified; it functions like a glass instrument for representation without having a life of its own: "The profound vocation of Classical language has always been to create a table — a 'picture': whether it be in the form of natural discourse, the accumulation of truth, descriptions of things, a body of exact knowledge, or an encyclopaedic dictionary. It exists, therefore, only to be transparent. . . . The possibility of knowing things and their order passes, in the

Classical experience, through the sovereignty of words: words are, in fact, neither marks to be deciphered (as in the Renaissance period) nor more or less faithful and masterable instruments (as in the positivist period); they form rather a colourless network on the basis of which . . . representations are ordered."[27] Thanks to its autonomy, the sign *selflessly* serves the representation of things; in it, the representation of the subject encounters the represented object and they form an order in the chain of representations.

Language is wholly given up to its function of picturing facts, as we would put it today, and depicts everything that can be represented on the *same* level — the nature of the subject doing the representing no differently from that of the objects being represented. On its tableau, the nature of man enjoys no privilege over the nature of things. Internal and external nature are classified, analyzed, and combined in the same manner — words of language in the universal grammar, wealth and needs in political economy, no differently than species of plants and animals in the Linnaean system. Precisely this is the limit of the nonreflexive form of knowledge proper to the Classical age; knowledge is completely dependent on the representational structure of language, without being able to integrate the process of representation itself (the synthetic performance of the subject doing the representing). Foucault elaborates this limit in his surprising interpretation of a famous picture by Velasquez, *Las Meninas*.[28]

This picture portrays the painter in front of a canvas not visible to the spectator; the painter is evidently looking, as are the two ladies-in-waiting next to him, in the direction of his two models, King Philip IV and his spouse. These two personages standing as models are found outside the frame of the picture; they can be identified by the spectator only with the help of a mirror pictured in the background. The point that Velasquez apparently had in mind is a confusing circumstance of which the spectator becomes aware by inference: The spectator cannot avoid assuming the place and the direction of the gaze of the counterfeit but absent royal pair — toward which the painter captured in the picture gazes — as well as the place and the perspective of Velasquez himself, which is to say, of

the painter who actually produced this picture. For Foucault, in turn, the real point lies in the fact that the Classical picture frame is too limited to permit the representation of the act of representing as such — it is this that Velasquez makes clear by showing the gaps within the Classical picture frame left by the lack of reflection on the process of representing itself.[29] None of the persons who are involved in the Classical scene of a painted representation of the royal pair (of human beings as sovereign) appear in the depiction as the sovereign subject capable of self-representation, or in other words, as subject and object at once, as simultaneously representing and being represented, as an entity present to itself in the process of representation: "In Classical thought, the personage for whom the representation exists, and who represents himself within it, recognizing himself therein as an image or reflection, 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 himself. Before the end of the eighteenth century, *man* did not exist. . . . Of course, it is possible to object that general grammar, natural history, and the analysis of wealth were all . . . ways of recognizing the existence of man. . . . But there was no *epistemological* consciousness of man as such."[30]

With Kant, the modern age is inaugurated. As soon as the metaphysical seal on the correspondence between language and world breaks down, the representational function of language itself becomes a problem. The subject doing the representing has to objectify himself to gain some clarity about the problematic process of representation itself. The concept of self-reflection takes over, and the relationship to self of the subject doing the representing becomes the single foundation of ultimate certainties. The end of metaphysics is the end of an objective coordination of things and representations that is performed by language itself and thus remains unproblematic. The human person, become present to himself in self-consciousness, has to assume the superhuman task of establishing an order of things as soon as he becomes aware of himself as an existence at once autonomous and finite. This is why Foucault regards the modern form of knowledge as marked from the very start by the aporia that the knowing subject raises itself

up out of the ruins of metaphysics in order, in the consciousness of his finite powers, to solve a task requiring infinite power. Kant turns this aporia straightaway into a principle of construction of his epistemology by shifting the meaning of the constraints proper to a finite cognitive capacity into that of transcendental conditions of a knowledge that advances without limit: "Modernity begins with the incredible and ultimately unworkable idea of a being who is sovereign precisely by virtue of being enslaved, a being whose very finitude allows him to take the place of God."[31]

Foucault develops his basic idea that modernity is characterized by the self-contradictory and anthropocentric form of knowledge proper to a structurally overloaded subject (a finite subject transcending itself into the infinite) in a wide arc that stretches from Kant and Fichte to Husserl and Heidegger. Philosophy of consciousness is subject to conceptual constraints under which it must "double" the subject and continually treat it in terms of two contrary and mutually incompatible aspects. The pressure to break out of this unstable to and fro between aspects of self-thematization that are just as irreconcilable as they are inevitable makes itself felt as the intractable will to knowledge and ever more knowledge. This will pretentiously shoots beyond anything the structurally overburdened and overstrained subject is capable of performing. In this way, the modern form of knowledge is determined by the unique dynamism of a *will to truth* for which any frustration is only a spur to the renewed production of knowledge. This will to truth, then, is for Foucault the key to the internal nexus between knowledge and power. The human sciences occupy the terrain opened up by the aporetic self-thematization of the cognitive subject. With their pretentious and never redeemed claims, they erect a facade of universally valid knowledge behind which lurks the facticity of a sheer will to cognitive self-mastery, a will to a boundlessly productive increase of knowledge in the wake of which both subjectivity and self-consciousness are first formed.

Foucault traces the compulsion toward the problematic "doubling" of the self-related subject primarily in connection with three sets of oppositions: between the transcendental and the

empirical; between the act of becoming reflectively aware and the reflectively unsurpassable and irretrievable; and finally between the a priori perfect of an "always already" prior origin and the adventlike future of the still-to-come return of the origin. Foucault would have been able to exhibit these oppositions in connection with Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, since it is precisely a matter of those kinds of conceptual constraints of the philosophy of consciousness that are condensed paradigmatically into the *Tathandlung* [reflective conscious activity] of the absolute I. The I can only take possession of itself and "posit" itself by positing, as it were unconsciously, a not-I and trying gradually to retrieve this thing posited by the I. This act of mediated self-positing can be understood under three different aspects: as a process of self-knowledge, as a process of growing reflective awareness, and as a process of self-formation. In each of these dimensions, European thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sways between theoretical approaches that mutually exclude one another — and in each case the attempt to evade unhappy alternatives ends in the snares of a self-deifying subject consuming itself in acts of vain self-transcendence.

Since Kant, the I assumes simultaneously the status of an empirical subject in the world, where it is available as one object among others, and the status of a transcendental subject over against the world as a whole, which it constitutes as the totality of the objects of possible experience. By reason of this double status,[32] the knowing subject sees itself provoked to analyze the same performances that one time get grasped reflectively as performances of transcendental synthesis, and a second time empirically as a process governed by natural laws — no matter whether our cognitive apparatus is explained in terms of psychology or cultural anthropology, biology or history. Naturally, thought cannot rest satisfied with these irreconcilable alternatives. The attempts at overcoming this dilemma in a discipline uniting both aspects and conceiving the concrete history of the a priori forms as a process of the self-creation of the spirit or of the species reaches from Hegel to Merleau-Ponty. Because these hybrid enterprises chase after the utopia of complete self-knowledge, they flip-flop again and again into positivism.[33]

Foucault uncovers the same dialectic in the second dimension of self-positing. Since Fichte, the I, as the reflecting subject, undergoes the twofold experience of encountering itself in the world "always already" as something that has become itself contingently, as something opaque, on the one hand; but, on the other hand, as being endowed by precisely this reflection with the ability to make that "in itself" transparent and to elevate it into consciousness "for itself." The attempts to advance this process of making oneself conscious of what is pregiven and to find a methodological standpoint from which anything that prima facie resists consciousness as something stubbornly extraterritorial (be it the body, needs and desires, labor, or language) might still be retrieved in reflection, made familiar, and transformed into something transparent, extend from Hegel via Freud to Husserl. Freud puts forward the imperative that where Id is, Ego shall be. Husserl sets pure phenomenology the goal of explaining and bringing under conscious control everything merely implicit, prepredicative, already sedimented, not actually present — in brief, the unthought and hidden foundation of the performing subjectivity. These hybrid attempts at emancipation from what is unconsciously in the background fall prey to the utopia of complete self-transparency and hence flip over into nihilistic despair and radical scepticism.

The desire to elude the third double — of the subject as something originally creative and at the same time as alienated from this origin — leads in the end to the same dialectic. The human being knows itself as the remote product of a history reaching back into the archaic, of which it is not master, even though this history refers in turn to the authorship of producing human beings. The more energetically modern thought pursues them, the further back these origins retreat: "Paradoxically it proposes the solution of advancing even further in the direction of this ever-deepening retreat." To this, the philosophy of history from Schelling via Marx to Lukács responds with the idea of an enriching return from alien lands, of an Odyssey of the spirit; on the other hand, Dionysian thought from Hölderlin via Nietzsche to Heidegger responds with the idea of the God who recedes, "who frees the origin in exactly

that degree to which he recedes."[34] But these hybrid notions of history can only become practical in the form of terror, self-manipulation, and enslavement, since they live from a false eschatological impulse.

Foucault also classifies the human sciences with that anthropocentric thinking which was set in motion by Kant and which, with its utopias of liberation, gets implicated in the practice of enslavement. He cautiously leaves to the experimental natural sciences a special status; they have obviously extricated themselves from the web of practices from which they issued (primarily the practices of the judicial hearing) and have been able to attain a certain autonomy. It is different with the human sciences. Grammar, natural history, and economics, which arose already in the Classical age as taxonomic sciences, were the first to come under the sway of the anthropological turn. General grammar gives way to the history of national languages, tables of natural history to the evolution of species, and the analysis of wealth to a theory that traces use-value and exchange-value back to the expenditure of labor power. A perspective arose in which *the human being* was perceived as a *speaking* and *laboring* creature. The human sciences made use of this perspective; they analyzed the human being as the being that relates itself to objectivations engendered by itself, the speaking and laboring creature. Inasmuch as psychology, sociology, and political science on the one hand, and the cultural sciences and humanities on the other, got involved with object domains for which subjectivity (in the sense of the relation to self of experiencing, acting, and speaking human beings) is constitutive, they found themselves in the wake of the will to knowledge, on the escape route of a boundless productive increase in knowledge. They were delivered up to the dialectic of liberation and enslavement, more defenselessly than the science of history, which at least had control over the sceptical potential of historical relativization; but especially more defenselessly than ethnology or psychoanalysis, for these have (since Lévi-Strauss and Lacan) moved about reflectively in the jungle of the structural and of the individual unconscious.

Because the human sciences — psychology and sociology above all — with their *borrowed* models and *alien* ideals of

objectivity, became involved with a human being that was for the first time turned into an object of scientific investigation by the modern form of knowlege, an impulse could prevail in them unawares, which they could not admit without risking their claim to truth: just that restless pressure for knowledge, self-mastery, and self-aggrandizement with which the subject — metaphysically isolated and structurally overburdened, abandoned by God and self-deifying — of the post-Classical age sought to avoid the aporias of its self-thematization. "We are inclined to believe that man has emancipated himself from himself since his discovery that he is not at the center of creation, nor in the middle of space, nor even, perhaps, the summit and culmination of life; but though man is no longer sovereign in the kingdom of the world, though he no longer reigns at the center of being, the human sciences are dangerous intermediaries."[35] Mere intermediaries because they, unlike the reflective sciences and philosophy, do not directly promote that self-destructive dynamic of the self-positing subject, but get unconsciously instrumentalized for it. The human sciences are and remain pseudo-sciences because they do not see through the compulsion to a problematic doubling of the self-relating subject; they are not in a position to acknowledge the structurally generated will to self-knowledge and self-reification — and thus they are also unable to free themselves from the power that drives them. Foucault already depicted this in *Madness and Civilization* in connection with the example of psychiatric positivism.

What, then, are the grounds that determine Foucault to shift the meaning of this specific will to knowledge and to truth that is constitutive for the modern form of knowledge in general, and for the human sciences in particular, by *generalizing* this will to knowing self-mastery into a will to power per se and to postulate that *all* discourses (by no means only the modern ones) can be shown to have the character of hidden power and derive from practices of power? It is this assumption that first marks the turning from an archeology of knowledge to a genealogical explanation of the provenance, rise, and fall of those discourse formations that fill the space of history, without gaps and without meaning.