Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory
Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale

Editor
Arthur Kroeker (Concordia)

Managing Editor
Marilouise Kroker

Editorial Board
William Leiss (Simon Fraser)  Frank Burke (Queen’s)
Michael Weinstein (Purdue)   Eileen Manion (Dawson)
Deena Weinstein (De Paul)    David Cook (Toronto)
Eli Mandel (York)            Ray Morrow (Alberta)
Andrew Wernick (Trent)       Pamela McCallum (Calgary)

Editorial Correspondents
John Schiller (Berkeley, Calif.)  John Fekete (Peterborough)
Gregory Baum (Montréal)          Russell Jacoby (Los Angeles)
Geraldine Finn (Ottawa)           Daniel Drache (Toronto)
Jean-Guy Vaillancourt (Montréal)
Charles Levin (Montréal)

Subscription information should be addressed to:
CJPST
Concordia University, Department of Political Science
7141 Sherbrooke St. West
Montréal, Québec H4B 1R6

The Journal acknowledges with gratitude the generous assistance of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada/Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines au Canada.

Publication of the Journal has been facilitated by the generous assistance of Concordia University, and in particular by the Department of Political Science, by the Office of the Dean of Social Science, and by the Fonds F.C.A.R..


Member of the Canadian Periodical Publishers’ Association.

© Tous droits réservés 1987 Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory Inc./Revue Canadienne de théorie politique et sociale, Ltée.

Cover Design: Marilouise Kroker   Cover Photograph: Man Ray © Vis-Art.

ISSN 0380-9420 Printed in Canada
Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory

Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale

FRENCH FANTASIES

Volume XI: Number 3: 1987
ROUSSEAU, NATURE, AND HISTORY

ASHER HOROWITZ

A re-evaluation of Rousseau’s cultural and intellectual achievement, in which Horowitz traces the development in Rousseau’s major works of a new, historical view of human nature and society.
Cloth $30.00

LANGUAGES AND THEIR TERRITORIES

J.A. LAPONCE

TRANSLATED BY A.D. MARTIN-SPERRY

In this translation of his acclaimed *Langue et Territoire* Laponce explores the phenomenon of bilingualism from historical, geographic, political, and psychobiological perspectives.
Cloth $35.00, paper $18.95

THE PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

C.E.S. FRANKS

A thoughtful analysis of parliamentary reforms of the past fifteen years, their successes and failures, their impact on public perceptions, and future directions that reform efforts may take.
Cloth $27.50, paper $15.00

AWSON’S THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

SIXTH EDITION

NORMAN WARD

‘A classic in its field ... There is no comparable volume that deals with all these topics in such a satisfactory fashion.’ *Choice* on the fifth edition
In this new edition Ward has brought the material up to date and reorganized it to reflect contemporary students’ approach to the subject.
Cloth $45.00, paper $19.95
**Contents / Sommaire**

**FRENCH FANTASIES**  
of a cynical sex and the disappearing subject

The Games of Foucault  
*Arthur Kroker*  
1

The End/s of Woman  
*N.P. Ricci*  
11

The Question of the Moral Subject in Foucault's  
Analyticsof Power  
*Hwa Yol Jung*  
28

The Limit of Histories: Michel Foucault's  
Notion of Partage  
*Deborah Cook*  
46

When Bataille Attacked the Metaphysical  
Principle of Economy  
*Jean Baudrillard*  
57

Modernity  
*Jean Baudrillard*  
63

**DEBATES**

Ideology, Critique and Contradiction in Marx:  
Answering J. Larrain  
*Gyorgy Markus*  
74

The Politics at Modernism's Funeral  
*John Laffey*  
89

**THE LEGACY OF C.B. MACPHERSON**

C.B. Macpherson (1911—1987)  
*Daniel Drache / Arthur Kroker*  
99

Was John Locke a Bourgeois Theorist?  
A Critical Appraisal of Macpherson and Tully  
*Jeffrey Isaacs*  
107
REVIEWS

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy?

The Nihilism of Resistance & Freedom
Paul Nonnekes 130

Fading Postmodern Subjects
Stephen Pinter 140

Goodbye to all that: Conservative Theories of Ideology
Jeremy Rayner 149

Agency, Unlimited
René R. Gadacz 158

Roderick’s ‘Social’ Amnesia: Habermas
and the Productivist Paradigm
Brian Caterino 164

L’objectivation et la symbolisation
Michel Lalonde 173
Cynical Sex

Cynical sex: this is what we have at the end of the world. For sex no longer exists as a privileged referent of the Real nor as the locus of a suppressed subjectivity, but as postmodern sex, fascinating now only on its reverse side — the Bataillean side of expenditure, waste, and excess. A sacrificial sex, then, that exists only parodically and schizoidly because sex has entered into its third order of simulation: the ideological mise-en-scène where the postmodern body promises its own negation. Here the previously reflexive connection between sexuality and desire is blasted away by the seductive vision of sex without organs — a hyperreal, surrogate, and telematic sex like that promised (but never delivered) by the computerized phone sex of the Minitel system in France — as the ultimate out-of-body experience for the end of the second millenium. Here the terror of the ruined surfaces of the body translates immediately into its opposite — the ecstasy of catastrophe and the pleasure of sex without secretions as a final, ironic sign of our liberation.

In his recent schizo-biography, Jean Baudrillard said this about the invasion of the body, under the double signs of the pleasure of catastrophe and the terror of the simulacrum, by the logic of exterminism — that is, the implosion of the postmodern body into an indifferent sign-slide between the hermetic self and the schizoid ego:

And if reality under our eyes would suddenly dissolve? Not into nothingness, but into a real which is more than real (the triumph of simulation?). If the modern universe of communication, the space of hypercommunication through which we are plunging, not in forget-
fulness, but with an enormous saturation of our senses, would consume us in its success — without trickery, without secrets, without distance? If all this mutation did not emanate, as some believe, from the manipulation of subjects and opinion, but from a logic without a subject where opinion vanishes into fascination? If it would no longer be correct to oppose truth to illusion, but to perceive generalized illusion as truer than truth? And if no other behavior was possible than that of learning ironically how to disappear? If there were no longer any fractures, lines of flight or ruptures, but a surface full and continuous, without depth, uninterrupted? And if all of this was neither a matter of enthusiasm nor despair, but fatal?¹

A 'logic without a subject' in the late 1980s is sex without a body, a sex that is interesting as every advertiser knows when it is about the death of seduction (like the New Look in Paris fashion where what counts is "innocence not experience," or, as Dorothy Vallens says in Blue Velvet about sexual encounters of the hyperreal kind: "you have put your disease inside me"); or, more than this, a sex which is about the liquidation of the body and the cancellation of desire itself — like the TV sex of Videodrome or the "smart sex" of the New York art scene because it's neo-geo to excess in an age of the death of desire and the spreading out everywhere of a pervasive mood of indifference. Hyperreal sex, therefore, is a violent edge between kitsch and decay, between violence and inertia, between cyberspace and hyper-subjectivity. No longer Foucault's "local bodies," "effective history" and "subjugated knowledge," but the ideological production of cynical sex energized from within by subjugated knowledge, by the constant recycling of local histories, and by the endless reprise of difference.

It is ironic. 1986 was the 350th anniversary of the publication of Descartes' Discours de la méthode and, with it, the production of the epistemological menu for the emergence of the modernist, geometrically centered perspective of the thinking head, framed within the discursive space of the liberal body. All of the key tendencies of contemporary French thought — from Michel Serres' bleak vision of Le parasite (where the positions of predator and parasite are the regulatory poles of hypermodern experience), and Bataille's meditations on the solar anus and the pineal eye as the privileged signs of the general economy of excess, to Michel Foucault's early philosophical reflections on madness as an indifferent absence, to, finally, Jean Baudrillard's hologram of the postmodern scene — represent the fatal implosion of the Cartesian subject. No longer the Cartesian thinking self, but fractal subjectivity in a hypermodern culture where panic science is the language of power; not ratiocination to excess, but parallel processing as the epistemological recit of postmodern consciousness; not the local body, but technologies for the body immune as key features of a libidinal economy that
produces toxic bodies and designer aesthetics as its necessary conditions of operation; and not univocal (grounded) perspective anymore, but the fascinating implosion of perspective into the cyberspace of virtual technology. For when we already live beyond gravity (in hyperreal bodies) and beyond representational space (in the mathematical reality of fuzzy sets where individual particles have no determinate meaning apart from their random patterning within larger and more abstract statistical totalities), then the Cartesian self no longer exists except, perhaps, as an optical afterimage of the present condition of the post-Cartesian body as dangling subjectivity in quantum reality.

What, then, of the post-Cartesian body? This is the imploded body of postmodernism that has been traced in all of its detrital residue, in all of its exhaustion as it disappears into the suffocating, dark density of the schizoid sign; the missing body that has been marked as the sutured absence of Derrida's trace, of Lacan's misrecognition, of Irigaray's speculum; the hypermodern body that can be thematised now as the ventilated remainder of dangling subjectivities in quantum reality because its existence has been reduced to the threefold trajectory of a cynical power.

1. Technologically, the postmodern body is both objective remainder and subjective constituent of the technical interpellation of identity by dead and spectral image-systems. Not Foucault's "technologies of the self" whereby the modern self constitutes itself as the ethical subject of its own sexual conduct (although that too), but a hyper-technology of the self to such a point of violent excess that the self is (ideologically) peeled inside out, exteriorizing all of its bodily parts in society as cyberspace. Like the "world strip" of quantum physics, music, images, language, all of the sidereal cultural vibrations, pass through the dead space of hypermodern bodies, making of bodies only a topological and surface feature of hyper-communication. The postmodern body, therefore, is a superconductor for all of the dying energies of the social.

2. Ideologically, the postmodern body is the prime after-effect of its possession by the violent and excessive language of contractarian liberalism. Not contractarian liberalism with its reduction of the meaning of justice to a barren equality in the primary goods of the industrial heartland of North America, but a contractual theory of justice that focusses on body invasion; from the Baby M case where the natural mother is reduced to a "hired womb" and the surrogate father (he was, anyway, always just borrowed sperm) is consecrated anew as the real, living Daddy, to all the recent cases of fetal appropriation whereby the state intervenes (supposedly on behalf of the rights of the unborn baby) to take juridical possession of the body of the mother; and the conflation of the private property principle and genetics, wherein the reproduction of new life forms is rendered a matter of market-determination with the newly legislated power of business to
acquire patent rights on the genetic creation of new life-species.

3. Finally, in the language of fashion, or in the semiotics of visual pleasure and transgression, the postmodern body is tattooed by all of the signs of the death of seduction. In a postmodern culture dominated by the disappearance of the Real and by the suffocation of natural contexts, fashion provides aesthetic holograms as moveable texts for the general economy of excess. If fashion cycles appear to move towards greater and greater speed, violence, and intensity of circulation of signs, that is because fashion, in an era where the body is the inscribed surface of events, is like brownian motion: the greater the violence and circulation of its surface features, the greater the internal movement towards stasis, immobility and interia. A whole postmodern culture, therefore, under the double sign of culture where, as Baudrillard has hinted, the secret of fashion is to introduce the appearance of radical novelty while maintaining the reality of no substantial change. Or is it the opposite? Not fashion as a referent of the third (simulational) order of the real, but as itself the spectacular sign of a parasitical culture that, always excessive, disaccumulative, and sacrificial, is drawn inexorably towards the ecstasy of catastrophe. The fashion scene, and the tattooed body with it, as a Bataillean piling up of the “groundless refuse of activity” because the sign of the Real has now disappeared into appearance. Consequently, the fashion scene, like pornography before it, must also give the appearance of no substantive change, while camouflaging the reality of radical novelty in a surface aesthetics of deep sign continuity. Fashion, therefore, is a conservative political agent complicit in deflecting the eye from fractal subjectivity, cultural dyslexia, toxic bodies, and parallel processing as the social physics of late twentieth-century experience.

Three Games

Even as I speak of the postmodern body as both object and privileged after-image of a colonizing power, the words begin to fade into a laconic and fatal disintegration. I remember, I must remember, the bitter words spoken by Foucault in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* that “(P)ower as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability;” the limit, that is, which makes bearable our instatiation within a cynical and indifferent freedom.

But perhaps it is no longer, as Foucault theorised, the radical play of domination and freedom with the self as a contested space of absence (the famous recovery of an “unspoken subjectivity”), but domination now under the sign of cynical power as a mise-en-scène of the truth of the postmodern body as a Bataillean site of recklessness, discharge, and upheaval. When we have already passed beyond the first two orders of sexuality, beyond organic sex and discursive sexuality, to the third stage of a
FRENCH FANTASIES

hyperreal sex (where the body is doubled in an endless labyrinth of media images, where transgression is the law, and bodies alternate between hermeticism and schizophrenia), then even Foucault’s privileging of the second order of discursive sexuality (where we must pass through what is said about our sexuality, its discourse, in order to finally know the truth of our sex) works now only to suffocate the grisly implications of a hyperreal, cynical sex.

This would be to claim, though, that Foucault’s fate was to be the last and best of all the Cartesians: the theorist who on the clinical grounds of medicine, power, sexuality, and science thought through the bitter analytics of the “thinking subject,” of ratiocination to excess, even as rationality secreted into the very constitution of the ethical subject, and emerged finally as the enucleating horizon of western experience. If Foucault could never think beyond the dark side of Kant, could never escape — whether in his interpretation of science as cynical truth, medicine as cynical power, or the panoptic space as the cynical gaze — the full horizon of the trap Kant had laid for him (just as Nietzsche could never break beyond a modernist entanglement with the question of the death of God); if Foucault could never free himself from a resolutely modernist entanglement with Kant’s nominalism on the question of the death of truth; and if Foucault could not finally avoid the complicity of his own theory with the unfolding disaster of the “games of truth”; this is not to deny that there is everything to be gained, and everything at stake, in meditating anew on the games of Foucault. For the games of Foucault are simultaneously the limit and possibility of his theoretical legacy.

First, a theorist of political transgression par excellence whose meditations on “relational power” could evoke such an impassioned mood of political resistance (the emancipation of subjugated knowledge) because all his reflections on power were leavened with the hard knowledge that transgression, far from representing an experience of rupture, works now only to confirm the impossibility of traversing the limit experience.

Second, a historian of the quantum kind — ironic, ambivalent and paradoxical on the question of the irreality of the historical moment — who could simultaneously refuse historical totalisations as a will to power and nothing besides, and then work to create a double recuperative moment: the famous method of historical genealogy with its privileging of zones of knowledge with low epistemological profiles; and a marked preference for plural histories of local subjectivity, a hyper-materiality of pleasures and desires, not value. Ultimately, Foucault was of that peculiar order of a reluctant historian: a historian who refused history as a game of truth, only to install in its place the game of effective history, a “history which descends.”

And third, an anti-epistemologist who could be so relentless in
tracking down the discursive networking of the "games of truth" — in sexuality, in science, in penology, in psychiatry — since he was all along only the latest of the philosophical exponents of the logic of quantum science, of a quantum epistemology which functions by the mirroring of *code elements* (the constitutive conditions of possibility of a structural sex, a structural power, and a structural madness) and local historical practices. Probably against his own theoretical intentions, Foucault's thought was the breaking-edge of the advanced liberal mind with its full aestheticization of knowledge. His discourse was also that of the dying days of an episteme: the liberal episteme with its relational power, relational truth, and regulatory ethics achieving, finally, self-reflection on itself. A murderer of the old humanist author, Foucault was also an inscribed "local subject" who fulfilled Unamuno's precept: "I am I in the human circumstance and the human circumstance is I."

Foucault's then was the fully modern liberal mind at the height of his times. In him alone you see them all, because this was the aestheticized liberal mind at its most intense and acute point of auto-critique, brilliance, and ambiguity: simultaneously a master parody of the fate of the panoptic body and an ironic meditation on the fate of a relational, sidereal, and topographical postmodern scene. Consequently, in Foucault alone there are to be found all of the key panic sites at the fin-de-millenium:

**Panic Science:** Foucault's early encounter with Canguilhem where science is forced to confess its secret: that it never was anything more than an irreal cosmology, and one in which moreover the object of scientific investigation was, in the deployed form of power/knowledge, a prime after-image and constitutive condition of justification for the scientific episteme itself.

**Panic Medicine:** Foucault's genealogy of the discourse of the clinic revealed the great epistemic shifts in medical discourse for what they always were: the inscription of a shifting social physics and its associated hieratics of the body and exclusionary power strategies onto the purely fictional and topological terrain of what French intellectuals these days like to call — *Quel Corps?*

**Panic Madness:** Not just the suppression into silence of the imagination by the will to truth of psychiatry, not just, that is, Blake's dark dream of the sleep of reason begetting monsters of *Madness and Civilization*, but all of the panic suppressions:

— the *panic power* of *Discipline and Punish* where the prisoner entombed within the gaze of the panoptic is reduced to a silhouette, and the jailer also is entangled in a deep complicity with the eye of power, of which he is also a necessary rhetorical function.

— the *panic gender* of *Herculine Barbin*, the real story of which is not so much about the normalization of sexuality under the patriarchal
medical, religious, and psychiatric gaze (as Foucault will claim), but about a gender and a body — the woman’s body of Herculine Barbin — that is not allowed to be spoken, and about the dream of another sex which must be suicided because it is insurrectionary.

Panic Erotics: Foucault’s last two books — The Care of the Self and The Use of Pleasure about the reduction of the body, in Athens and Rome, to an “aesthetics of existence,” to a tutelary regime of the moral problematization of pleasure — are texts that can be so disappointing to some because they recover (brilliantly) the erotic subject only to reveal this erotic subject as a panic site. For Foucault’s erotic subject is colonized from within by the publicisation of dream life in Artemidorus, where dreams are also empty sign-systems waiting to be inscribed by all the primitive myths; inscribed from without by an aphrodisia — an “aesthetics of experience” — that was regulatory not only of the care of the bodily humours, of pleasure under the sign of high aesthetics, but also of marital relations and the erotic régits of “boys loving boys.” The Care of the Self and The Use of Pleasure are texts about panic erotics: that moment when the body disappears into an empty sign, interpellated by all the ideologies, tattooed by the pleasures of a fully aestheticized sexuality, and inscribed by the languages of medicine, philosophy, and oneiroheureutics.

Waiting for Augustine

In short, Panic Foucault: a thinker, whose particular brilliance is that he actually becomes what he sought to describe: a sliding signifier, oscillating between the suffocating antinomies of modernist discourse, sliding between a grisly and clinical examination of the production of cynical power, cynical truth, cynical sex, and cynical language; and a famous, but ultimately futile, attempt to recover the truth of sexuality in a meditation on Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem. Like Freud’s Michelangelo before him, Foucault woke to find himself in the midst of the nightmare he thought he was only dreaming. He was a thinker, in the end, with no exit. Because in his meditations on the truth of sexuality (an aesthetics of pleasure), Foucault could never think through, finally, the truth of the Christianity of Augustine. Like the Roman stoics before him, and that peculiar strain of Greek skepticism before them, Foucault ended his life with the melancholy resignation of intellectual futility; that is, the consciousness of much but no exit from the nightmare of the infolded technologies of self to which he had awoken.

Fourth century Christianity was not a continuation of Greek and Roman theories of the self, nor their simple and abrupt reversal, but, at least in the writings of Augustine, a solution to a fundamental crisis of the self that neither the Greeks with their “aesthetics of existence” nor the Romans with their reduction of the self to a purely juridical and corporative
concept rooted in _dominium propertium_ could resolve.

What Foucault in his last writings avoids, and as a fallen-away Cartesian must avoid, is that neither rationalised ethics nor materialistic conceptions of bodily pleasures could provide a directly experienced mediation of the antinomies of existence.

Consequently, when calamities arose, whether in the form of the Athenian plague of the fifth-century B.C. or the failure of the Democritean ideal of democracy or the bitter sense of fatalism and intellectual futility that swept the Roman imperium when, at the height of its power, the corrosive question arose: now that we have conquered an empire, now that we have become the sign itself of empire for whom the spear is our symbol, a restless will to survive at any cost is our dominant psychology, and the acquisite spirit of private possession our most cherished belief, what are to be the ultimate ends of empire? How, that is, and why go on willing when there are no longer substantive purposes to the ends we choose, in a universe indifferent to the choices we will in full freedom?

While the Greeks and the Romans moved ultimately in the grip of fatal necessity, the Christians, and Augustine specifically, solved the crisis by making the self an _individual psychology_; and, moreover, producing a vision of the self, not just the confessing self but also the ecstatic self, as a directly experienced mediation for summoning into a new _episteme_, a new unity, all the divided antinomies of the classical experience of Athens and Rome. Against Athens and Rome with their purely _external principles_ of unity — the moral problematisation of the pleasures into an aesthetics of experience on the one hand, and the reduction of the self to an instrument of private property on the other — the early Christian thinkers held out the possibility of a hyper-material theory, not only of bodily pleasure, but also of bodily suffering. In their eschatology, the principle of the unity of western experience was finally rendered internal to the psychology of self. Indeed, in the Augustinian vision, metaphysics _secrates_ into the bodily tissues, making the body a _will_ and nothing besides. It was from Jerusalem, not Athens or Rome, that the self as a constitutively nihilistic will to power began to spread out. Foucault’s “confessional self” as an early warning system of panopticism misses the whole point of the Christian negation that subordinated the body — will, intelligence, and feelings — to the exterminist sign of the trinity. Ultimately, the directly experienced trinitarian body — the western body — with its breaking of the will into itself, with its new starting-point in individual psychology, is the real truth of Christianity, of which Foucault’s theses on the confessing self and the panoptic are sociological diversions, reflecting as they do only the reified manifestations of the already exterminated body.

Because Foucault missed the secret of the truth of Christianity (reading the Christian body under the sign of the panoptic, the “confessing
FRENCH FANTASIES

self”), he was condemned to recapitulate in his own life and death the fatal necessity, the tragic sense of futility, and the last dark laughter of the parodist, of Greek enlightenment. If The Care of the Self could end bleakly by noting the sterility of the philosopher’s virtue for “boys loving boys,” this was because Foucault’s mind was, once again, an outbreak of the (classical) dialectic of enlightenment. In his thought, the melancholy play of chance that ultimately dashed the best intellectual hopes of the Athenians and made intellectually futile the militant and imperial ambitions of the Roman stoics is recapitulated with such intensity that Foucault must have known that he was only awaiting another Augustine.

The game of Foucault was a daring and brilliant one. As a philosopher whose thought transgressed the white space of indifference, Foucault always said that his intention was

to examine both the difference that keeps us at a remove from a way of thinking in which we recognize the origin of our own, and the proximity that remains in spite of that distance which we never cease to explore.5

This is the game of the intellectual imagination, of life and death, to such a point of melancholic excess and brilliant intensity that thought begins to fold in on itself, making of Foucault a marker of the postmodern fate.

His is the self-confession of the fully exhausted late modernist mind, the mind of the dying days of aestheticized liberalism, which functions only to confirm the impossibility of the mythic legacy of the dialectic of enlightenment. If, for example, Foucault could end his life with two texts on the constitution of the sexual self as an ethical subject and an analytics of sexual austerity, this is because, in these last works, Foucault finally came home to his Kantian self. Permitting himself the discontinuity he had always permitted others, Foucault’s meditation returned to the project which runs through all of his theorisations on medicine, science, power, and psychiatry: that is, studying intently the “conditions of possibility” for our enucleation within the will to truth, the will to sexuality, and the will to power as our own primal.

Having reflected on cynical power and cynical truth too deeply ever to be content with the phenomenological reductions of Merleau-Ponty and too much a tragician on the matter of the discursive infolding of power ever to make his peace with Sartre’s moralising historicism, and too much a floating signifier to be content with Irigaray or Cixous, Foucault, finally, was that rarity: an unfinished, radically discontinuous, and ambiguous thinker.

The lasting fascination and seduction of the games of Foucault is less philosophical or political than, perhaps, purely literary. It may someday be
written that reading Foucault is perceiving how the liberal mind at the fin-de-millenium liked to think of its history (genealogical, but with possibilities for rupture), its epistemology (nominalist, but later nomist), its ethics (a little cynicism, a little piety), its theory of politics (the Kantian regulators), its power (relational and topological), and its theory of the self (trapped in a continuing debate among Athens, Rome and Jerusalem).

Foucault's legacy would then be that he is the latest of the elegant tombstones of the dying days of aestheticized liberalism. If he could be so deeply evocative, it is because his entire theorisation with its brilliant meditations on the cynical analytics of power, sexuality, truth and madness is also a clonal after-image of an age that has already ceased to exist.

Political Science
Concordia University

Notes
As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*

With the disappearance of man, what happens to woman? Having only recently gained a voice as women, feminists are now confronted with the proposition that to speak as a woman is merely to reinscribe oneself within the logic of an androcentric epistemology, the very logic, in other words, which feminists have been trying to combat. The decentering of the subject advocated by Michel Foucault and other French theorists has moved us, apparently, beyond sexual identity, into a new landscape where men can be women and women men, and where subjects are simply proper nouns. But if the disappearance of 'man,' the dissolution of the sovereign Cartesian ego, ensures that "Men will no longer speak for mankind[, s]hould women, by implication, no longer, i.e. *never* speak as women?" While writers like Foucault have provided women with the tools required to 'deconstruct' the systems of power that have oppressed them, doesn't the current eliding of sexual identity require from feminists a note of skepticism, a wariness that the new polemic does not simply reauthorize old injustices?

I: Subjects and Subjection

The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.

Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*
The question of identity, and hence of sexual identity, arises out of the general poststructuralist critique of humanism and Western metaphysics. In current theory, identity — individuality, subject-hood — is held to be a construct complicitous with certain modes of restrictive logic. What French theorists have been trying to do — writers like Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes — is to wear away the ontological ground which has traditionally accrued around the "I" of discourse, to question the self-presence of the speaking subject, to show how subjects are spoken rather than speak — that is, how they are constituted by a web of forces of which consciousness is the effect rather than the point of origin.

The most thoroughly historical critique of the subject, and perhaps the one most useful to feminists, is that of Michel Foucault. Though Foucault does not specifically pose the question of sexual identity, his work on the subject's historical constitution lays out the terms in which such a question might take form. Throughout his research, Foucault has been concerned to show how the individual is constituted "as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge." In a Foucauldian framework, then, the question of woman comes down to a question of knowledge and power.

In his analysis of penal reform in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault shows how "a refinement of power relations" in the nineteenth century helped foster the growth of those sciences known (aptly, feminists have noted) as "the sciences of man." At the center of these new sciences stood a new object of knowledge, the individual, invested through and through by the systems of power which had created it. Hence the recent vintage of "man": in Foucault's view, "individuality" is a social construction whose origins are traceable to the institution of a new technology of power. By creating new forms of knowledge, power constitutes its own objects; and the objects which power has thus constituted then become the elements of its own articulation. "It is a double process, then: an epistemological 'thaw' through a refinement of power relations; a multiplication of the effects of power through the formation and accumulation of new forms of knowledge" (*DP*, 224). Thus the human sciences, which grew out of a web of power relations spanning everything from medicine, psychiatry and education to military training and penal reform, helped perpetuate those very relations by constituting the individual as a new object of knowledge.

Foucault's perspective on subject-hood, then, is decidedly polemical: to become subject means to be subjected. "We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects" (*P/K*, 97). The human sciences, by reordering our ways of knowing and focussing our attention on the individual, have made it possible for power to entrench itself more firmly into the social body. Foucault gives the example of the homosexual, who arose as 'a species' at the point where homosexuality was characterized.
"less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility" — when, in other words, emphasis shifted from the act to the individual. But it has been this very sort of shift, according to Foucault, through which individuality has been constituted. Around this new object arise new discourses — in the realm of medicine, psychiatry, criminology — and through them "power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourse, learning processes and everyday lives" (P/K,39).

But in Foucault’s view it would be wrong to imagine that power simply acts against individuals, in the form of prohibition and oppression. On the contrary, "individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application" (P/K,97); in other words, power passes through individuals, using them to further its own ends. Thus the “I” which power and knowledge have jointly constituted is also the “eye” of power and knowledge, that which subjects everything to its normalizing, hierarchizing gaze. To become subject, then, also means to subject, to give priority to identity, to authorship, to ownership, to situate consciousness at the origin of truth while excluding everything that is different and 'other'.

It is this aspect of the subject which Foucault attacks in his critique of traditional historicism. In his preface to The Order of Things, Foucault dissociates himself from the "phenomenological approach" to history, that "which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity — which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness" (OT,xiv). The same technology of power which has created individuals as objects of knowledge also situates them as subjects of knowledge. This "sovereignty of the subject" has led to what Foucault calls "continuous history":

Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject — in the form of historical consciousness — will once again bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode.6

Totalizing and totalitarian, continuous history, the history of "transcendental consciousness," strives to situate itself at the privileged source of truth, and so "to preserve, against all decenterings, the sovereignty of the subject, and the twin figures of anthropology and humanism" (AK,12).

Thus the subject emerges in Foucault’s work as the nexus of certain
"mechanics of power" — as both effect and vehicle of power, as that which subjects and is subjected. Foucault's task has been to write a history without a subject, "to get rid of the subject itself" (P/K,117), and so to expose the complicities of knowledge and power which have led to the subject's historical constitution.

II: Foucault and Feminism

Interviewer: Do you feel that your 'History of Sexuality' will advance the women's question? I have in mind what you say about the hysterisation and psychiatrisation of the female body.

Foucault: There are [a] few ideas there, but only hesitant ones, not yet fully crystallised. It will be the discussion and criticism after each volume that will perhaps allow them to become clarified. But it is not up to me to lay down how the book should be used (PK,192).

Foucault's critique of humanism and of the subject offers obvious points of convergence with feminist interests. Throughout his work, Foucault has been concerned with marginal groups, the insane, the delinquent, the sexually perverse — groups which, like women, have been traditionally silenced by the powers-that-be, and excluded from the privileged realm of "truth." But truth, in Foucault's view, as the end point of knowledge, "is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (P/K,133) — thus those groups which are barred from it will always be forced to the margins of discourse. Women have traditionally occupied that margin, and the androcentric humanism which Foucault deconstructs — with its "universals," its canons, its privileging of (an overwhelmingly male) tradition — has certainly been one more link in a long history of women's oppression.

But a thoroughly Foucauldian analysis would have to proceed at the level of the "micro-techniques of power" through which woman has not only been silenced, but constituted as object of power and knowledge, much as delinquents, the insane, and the sexually perverse have become "species" which power has used for its own ends. What historical determinants have moulded what we understand by the term "woman"? What nexus have women occupied in the web of power relations within a given episteme, what functions have they served? Foucault gives the example of how the creation and medicalisation of female sexuality served part of a larger strategy for the policing of families and populations.

It is worth remembering that the first figure to be invested by the deployment of sexuality, one of the first to be 'sexualized,' was the
FRENCH FANTASIES

'idle' woman. She inhabited the outer edge of the "world," in which she always had to appear as a value, and of the family, where she was assigned a new destiny charged with conjugal and parental obligations (HS,121).

A Foucauldian history of women, then, would begin at the point where "woman" is revealed to be a social construction.

But it would be wrong, therefore, to see in Foucault merely a project for the reclamation of lost voices. While Foucault's own studies are often exempla of the recuperation of marginal or seldom considered materials, feminist histories which concentrate solely on filling in the gaps and lacunae of traditional history, on giving a voice to women's silenced "sisters," may find themselves firmly reinscribed within the tenets of humanistic historicism, substituting, for example, a "great women's" history for that of the "great men." One of the buzz words of humanism which Foucault deconstructs in The Archaeology of Knowledge is "tradition." "The problem," writes Foucault, "is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations" (AK,5). Once "woman" is seen as a social construction, the question of "tracing a line," of reclaiming women's lost history, becomes somewhat anachronistic.

But on what "new foundation," then, is feminism to build its abode? As feminists begin to examine their own work in the light of a Foucauldian critique, they are finding that what Foucault may offer is not so much an extension of works-in-progress as a change in direction.

III: De-sexualisation

The real strength of the women's liberation movements is not that of having laid claim to the specificity of their sexuality and the rights pertaining to it, but that they have actually departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality. These movements do indeed emerge in the nineteenth century as demands for sexual specificity. What has their outcome been? Ultimately a veritable movement of de-sexualisation, a displacement effected in relation to the sexual centering of the problem, formulating the demand for forms of culture, discourse, language and so on, which are no longer part of that rigid assignation and pinning-down to their sex which they had initially in some sense been politically obliged to accept in order to make themselves heard (PK,219-220).

Among French women theorists, the writer who seems to have come
closest to Foucault's ideas on de-sexualisation is Julia Kristeva. In her article "Women's Time," Kristeva isolates two phases in the women's movement's strategies for dealing with women's traditional exclusion from the social contract. In the first, women "aspired to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and history" (WT, 36) — in other words, to right the fact of their exclusion by making central what had been marginalized, by bringing women in, on an equal footing with men, to a system which would not be fundamentally changed by the fact of women's inclusion. In the second phase, "linear temporality has been almost totally refused, and as a consequence there has arisen an exacerbated distrust of the entire political dimension" (WT, 37). In this phase women have rejected traditional sociopolitical and cultural models as inimical to women's needs, since such models are permeated through and through by the male libidinal economy which has created them. Instead, women of this second generation have sought alternative cultural models which will be more expressive of a unique feminine identity.

The danger of these strategies — and I think Kristeva and Foucault would agree here — is that both can be easily reappropriated by the systems of power they struggle against. The first most clearly, since it strives not so much to change the system as to find a place for women within it. But the second also, despite its rejection of male-centred models, since in positing a feminine identity it tends to elide the question of social construction and take refuge in a precarious essentialism. Proponents of a unique feminine identity have usually had to resort to a theory of biological difference which triumphs female sexuality as the basis for the subversion of male-dominated systems. But it has been precisely on the basis of biological difference that women have been traditionally oppressed; any theory which resorts to such difference as its ground merely reinscribes itself within an old logic and risks perpetuating old stereotypes. And Foucault's analysis of the deployment of sexuality should alert feminists to the dangers of seeing any great liberating potential in female sexuality; sexuality itself, according to Foucault, is a social construct, one which has been deployed for the ends of power. "The irony of this deployment," Foucault writes in the last lines of The History of Sexuality, "is in having us believe that our 'liberation' is in the balance" (HS, 159).

An essentialist position can only perpetuate an oppositional logic which many French theorists — most notably Jacques Derrida — have been trying to undo. Such a position posits a notion of "difference" as "absolute otherness" rather than as an "alterity" which can be shown to be internal to the system which has excluded it. Traditionally, oppositions like speech/writing, presence/absence, culture/nature, man/woman, have implied a hierarchy, with privilege being given to the first term. A notion of alterity, however, displaces the hierarchy by showing the second term to be the
necessary condition of the first — not as absolute other, but as a difference at the very heart of the privileged first term. In Foucauldian terms, hierarchized oppositions can be seen as another instance of the complicity of knowledge and power. Thus woman's constitution as man's other — passive rather than active, emotional rather than rational, secondary rather than primary — has served to solidify male domination. The problem with essentialist views which emphasize the positive qualities of "woman" against the repressive aspect of male-centred systems is that they tend to reverse the hierarchy without displacing it — that is, they place "woman" in the privileged position — and thus remain caught up in the very logic they are trying to subvert, a logic which is complicit with the systems of power that have traditionally silenced women.

Kristeva recognizes the necessity of these first impulses of the women's movement — both the attempted insertion into the system and the rejection of that system in the name of absolute difference; they may be seen to correspond roughly to what Foucault calls "that rigid assignation and pinning-down to their sex which women had initially in some sense been politically obliged to accept in order to make themselves heard." But Kristeva sees herself as part of a "third generation" — existing in parallel rather than chronological relation to the other two — for whom "the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to metaphysics. What can 'identity,' even 'sexual identity,' mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?" (WT, 51-52). Here is the "movement of de-sexualisation" which Foucault identifies as the most positive element of the women's movements, the "displacement effected in relation to the sexual centering of the problem." This displacement pushes the issue of "woman" outside the restricted logic of metaphysics and opens it up to the question of social construction, to questions of knowledge and power. But is this, then, the end of woman? 9

IV: New Woman/Old Stereotypes

The Germans are like women. You can never fathom their depths. They have none.

Friedrich Nietzsche

...Nietzsche revives that barely allegorical figure (of woman) in his own interest. For him, truth is a woman. It resembles the veiled movement of feminine modesty.

Jacques Derrida, Spurs

We enter now the new landscape, beyond sexual identity. How have
things changed? For one thing, Nietzsche now looks like a proto-feminist — at least in the treatment he receives in Derrida’s *Spurs*, where he appears to have pre-figured woman as the “untruth of truth,” as that which undermines truth from within (*Spurs*, 51). But after all it is not biological women Derrida is talking about here; woman for Derrida is the supplement, différance, the lack at the center which displaces the center, and if there is any body involved in all of this, as Alice Jardine points out, it is the body of the text as *écriture*.

Woman, then, has not disappeared in the poststructuralist landscape, though she has apparently changed her form. For one thing, she has shed her body; for another, she is no longer the absolute other but precisely the point of alterity, the internal exclusion which undermines the system. Simply speaking, woman has become, under several headings — supplement, *écriture*, feminine jouissance, seduction, the unconscious, the *vœel* — a trope, a metaphor for that which bursts through the boundaries of traditional codes.

Of course, in this new order of things, biological women have not entirely dropped out of the scene. Precisely because they have been traditionally marginalized, women may have special access to what has been now coded as a “feminine operation,” the act of subversion. For Kristeva, for instance, women, because of their incomplete accession into the social order, are always “le *sujet-en-procès*,” the subject in process/on trial, on the threshold between selfhood and its dissolution; they are thus in a privileged position to question the social construction of identity. But it is not a biological difference which thus distinguishes women, only a social one.

The case with someone like Hélène Cixous is more problematic. At times she tends towards a biological essentialism, suggesting that women’s bodies are the basis for a subversive practice: “women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve discourse . . .” (*NFF*, 256). Yet she is willing to allow that someone like a Genet can write from the feminine (*NFF*, 255), and she shows an allegiance to a Derridean deconstruction of opposites: “sexual opposition, which has always worked for man’s profit to the point of reducing writing, too, to his laws, is only a historico-cultural limit” (*NFF*, 253; see also *NFF*, 90ff). Nonetheless, it would seem that women, that is women with bodies, are in a better position to take hold of feminine writing than men. “More so than men who are coaxed toward social success, toward sublimation, women are body. More body, hence more writing” (*NFF*, 257).

But despite the recoding of the feminine as “the untruth of truth,” as that which bursts “partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes,” we might ask, as Jardine has, in what ways the New Woman — with or
FRENCH FANTASIES

without a body — is so different from the old. Though Derrida's woman, for example, is (as one expects with Derrida) highly problematic, there are sentences in *Spurs* which wrench as sharply as any of the old stereotypes. "A woman seduces from a distance," Derrida writes. "In fact distance is the very element of her power. Yet one must beware to keep one's own distance from her beguiling song of enchantment" (*Spurs*, 49). Here, certainly, is a depiction of woman as old as Genesis: woman as seductress, woman as sorceress. And again: "Because woman is (her own) writing, style must return to her. In other words, it could be said that if style were a man (much as the penis according to Freud is the 'normal prototype of fetishes'), then writing would be a woman" (*Spurs*, 57). The problem with this equation of woman with text is that it exactly reiterates a paradigm which has long helped keep women silent: woman is she who is written, not she who writes. "The model of the pen-penis writing on the virgin page," writes Susan Gubar, in another context, "participates in a long tradition identifying the author as a male who is primary and the female as his passive creation — a secondary object lacking autonomy, endowed with often contradictory meaning but denied intentionality." But finally Derrida also has a word or two for the feminists: "And in truth, they too are men, those women feminists so derided by Nietzsche. Feminism is nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man... Feminism too seeks to castrate" (*Spurs*, 65).

We have to ask: does Derrida's deconstructive intent justify comments that in another context might be seen as blatant chauvinism? Granted it may be unfair to take Derrida's statements out of context, but perhaps to do so demonstrates the potential danger of this new appropriation of woman. To pose a very Foucauldian question, to what old uses might these "new" representations of woman be put? Whose interests do they serve? What are the dangers of a theory of woman that can elide Nietzsche's blatant misogyny? Even if Derrida is not referring to "real" women when he uses that name in his writing, Nietzsche (despite all the theoretical baggage that accrues around a word like "real" nowadays) certainly was. And for all the rigours of Derrida's thought, the line between deconstruction — the wearing away of old ontological ground — and reconstitution — the point at which subversive concepts crystallize into essences — is often rather thin. One need only look at the American appropriation of the Derridean concept of *mise en abyme* to see how radical concepts can be used to justify old institutions.

Even Cixous's depiction of the New Woman sounds suspiciously like an old tale. For Cixous, woman is "a giver": "She doesn't 'know' what she's giving, she doesn't measure it; she gives, though, neither a counterfeit impression nor something she hasn't got. She gives more, with no assurance
that she’ll get back even some unexpected profit from what she puts out” (NFF,264). Elsewhere, woman is a mother: “In women there is always more or less of the mother who makes everything all right, who nourishes, and who stands up against separation; a force that will not be cut off but will knock the wind out of codes” (NFF,252). Woman as giver, woman as mother — Cixous might be describing a positive ethos, but what is troubling is that she doesn’t question the social construction of these two fairly standard depictions of woman, or look at them in terms of what role they have served in perpetuating women’s oppression. Perhaps it is not enough simply to assert that the mother in women “will knock the wind out of codes.”

One of the ironies of this postructuralist reappropriation of woman is that most of the leading theorists of the feminine — apart from Derrida, there is Lacan, Barthes, Baudrillard — are male. Even Kristeva and Cixous take their basic framework from male theorists — Kristeva from Lacan and Cixous from Derrida — and both of them, when invoking paradigms of subversive or “feminine” writing, refer back to a male tradition (typically Mallarmé, Genet and Joyce). If these facts are not suspicious, they are certainly curious. Where, in fact, are women in the midst of all this talk about woman? It seems men, on top of everything else, are even better at being women than women are. And what, for example, does history look like when we get beyond sexual identity, and “woman” becomes an attitude rather than a signature?

V: Women and History

What is a woman? I assure you I do not know. I do not believe you know.

Virginia Woolf

From the perspective of those who have moved beyond sexual identity, feminism, as a women’s movement, cannot help but seem outdated, “nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man” — who, in other words, remains caught up in the systems of power defined by the ruling (predominantly male) hegemony. Feminists are thus faced, as Peggy Kamuf admits, with “the erosion of the very ground on which to take a stand.” If feminism rests on a biological distinction, it remains open to charges of essentialism: the “feminine,” writes Derrida, should not “be hastily mistaken for a woman’s femininity, for female sexuality, or for any other of those essentializing fethishes which might still tantalize the dogmatic philosopher, the impotent artist or the inexperienced seducer who has not yet escaped his foolish hopes of capture” (Spurs,55). But if feminism rests on a social distinction, then it becomes very difficult to say who, under what
circumstances, is a woman. Feminists who try to have it both ways will find themselves tangled in thorny methodological problems.

To take one example: in an article on the image of Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Christine Froula, alluding to a passage from Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, defines "woman" as someone who divines "the priest" of cultural authority, and so calls that authority into question.

This definition identifies 'woman' not by sex but by a complex relation to the cultural authority which has traditionally silenced and excluded her. She resists the attitude of blind submission which that authority threatens to imprint upon her; further, her resistance takes form not as envy of the 'priest' and desire to possess his authority herself but as a debunking of the 'priestly' deployment of cultural authority and a refusal to adopt that stance herself. Women, under this local rule, can be 'men,' and men can be 'women.'

But one problem with such "local rules," clearly, is that they are self-serving: if definitions of woman are up for grabs, there is little to stop one from choosing a definition that is tailor-made to fit one's own arguments. Another problem, within the specific context of *Paradise Lost*, is that one might conceivably make a case — though Froula's definition does seem to be trying to avoid this possibility — for Satan as a woman. And one could certainly make a case for the author of "On the New Forcers of Conscience Under the Long Parliament" and *Areopagitica* — that is, for Milton himself. Perhaps, after all, Milton was of woman's party without knowing it, and he might take his place next to Nietzsche as one of history's misogynists reclaimed for the feminist ranks by new definitions of woman.

Little attempt has been made to show what a "history of women" would look like from beyond sexual identity. We have to ask, in fact, whether such a history would be possible. If we take Foucault as a model, then much of the historical work which has been done by feminists to date — the tracing of a women's heritage, the establishment of a women's "canon" — would have to be regarded as caught up with an old, essentially self-defeating, historicism. Jeffrey Weeks has outlined some of the problems confronting a history of homosexuality conducted within a Foucauldian frame; a history of women would face the same kinds of problems. If "woman" is a social construction, then women can claim no universal essence which has united them through the ages, no "tradition" they can claim to follow in the line of. And in fact, even any synchronic movement based on a common sexual bond would have to be seen as rooted in an outmoded concept of sexual identity. Hence the move among some women in France today towards "anti-feminism," i.e. the rejection of a stance which takes sexual solidarity as its base.
Yet it is Foucault himself who has made us sensitive to the subtle machinations of power, to the way power almost seems to plan ahead for the reappropriation of its own failures — as Foucault demonstrates, for example, in his analysis in *Discipline and Punish* of the “failure” of prison reform: prison reform has failed, in Foucault’s view, not through an inefficiency of power, but as a strategy of power, as a means of creating a class of “delinquents” which power can then use for its own ends. So it would be timely to ask what interests this “beyonding” of sexual identity might serve. Why is it, for instance, that sexual identity is being elided at the very point at which women, after centuries of subjugation, have been emerging as a potent political force? Certainly any move which could effectively undermine women’s solidarity could easily be reappropriated by the very systems of power which have traditionally worked to oppress women. And the “new” representations of woman which have arisen as a result (as a symptom?) of this eliding of sexual identity should also be examined in the light of a Foucauldian critique. We might ask of the new discourse on woman the questions which Foucault poses at the end of “What is an Author?:

What are the modes of existence of this discourse?
Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?
What placements are determined for possible subjects?
Who can fulfill these diverse functions of the subject?

There is no guarantee that the new discourse will be “liberating” for women. Foucault himself warns that discourses can “circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy” (*HS*,102) — for example, from a strategy of subversion to one of suppression.

But this logic also suggests — and Foucault’s own analyses, despite his call for “de-sexualisation,” support this argument — that resistances can also operate *within* a given discourse. Thus Rosalind Coward, for instance, is not quite correct to say that Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, in denying that there has been any sudden change from repression to liberation over the past century in the discourse on sexuality, implies also a denial of the important changes in representations of female sexuality which have occurred during recent years.25 “We must make allowance,” Foucault writes, “for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy.” Foucault again gives the example of homosexuality, which “began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturality’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified” (*HS*,101). A similar analysis would pertain,
certainly, to the women's movement and its fight for changes in the representation of female sexuality.

One matter I have not yet addressed is the shift which occurs in Foucault's later work, when he moves away from the classical period in France to classical antiquity. In this later work, we find a continuing concern with the question of the subject, but while Foucault speaks of the subject in relation to the Greeks, speaks, for example, of "the mode of subjection" by which "the individual establishes his relation to [a] rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it in practice," of a Greek boy's attempts to transform himself from "object of pleasure into a subject who was in control of his pleasures," of Greek ethics as "the elaboration of a form of relation to the self that enables an individual to fashion himself into a subject of ethical conduct," it seems he is talking here of a fundamentally different phenomenon than the subject he earlier defined as a product of the human sciences.26 "Because no Greek thinker ever found a definition of the subject and never searched for one," Foucault has said, "I would simply say that there is no subject."27 The Greeks, in Foucault's view, had developed what he calls an "aesthetics of existence," a system of ethics which allowed more room for individuality and self-creation than the later juridical ethics of Christianity. It is in the dawning of Christianity that Foucault sees the first move towards subject-hood, with the beginnings of a code-oriented morality which specified much more distinctly the limits of ethical behaviour, with the introduction of confession as a means of subjecting the very soul of an individual to the gaze of authority, and with the development of conscience as a way of turning that authoritarian gaze inward, of turning self against self as a mode of subjection.

But if we follow Foucault in this formulation of the subject's genealogy, then some limits in a feminist appropriation of his critique of the subject as a point of entry for analyzing woman's construction as "other" become apparent. As Nancy Miller points out, "society did not wait for the invention of man to repress 'woman' or oppress women"28 — did not wait, in other words, until the subject was constituted by humanism before creating the categories of gender opposition which have served to solidify male domination. While Foucault's analysis of homosexual relations in ancient Greece, for example, shows they were viewed then in a fundamentally different light than in the modern era, his considerably less thorough and less satisfying analysis of women in that society reveals what seems to be a fundamental continuity: women were viewed by the Greeks as inferior by nature, to be ruled over and controlled, much as they were viewed later by the Christian church fathers, and much as they have been viewed almost up to the present day. Foucault does suggest a point at which representations of gender identity may have undergone an important shift, when the emphasis on the relationship between men and boys as "the most active
focus of reflection and elaboration” in classical Greek thought gave way, in the Roman and early Christian era, to the emphasis on relations between men and women, on virginity, and on “the value attributed to relations of symmetry and reciprocity between husband and wife” (Use, 253). But even taking into account such a shift, an important residue remains. If Greek women were not “subjects” in Foucault’s sense of the word, they were certainly subjected, and the main terms of that subjection — that is, a fundamental gender split, and a hierarchical organization of that split — are the same ones that feminists are dealing with today. The history of women, then, may in some respects be a continuous one, in that both the fact of their oppression, and the theoretical terms which have been used to justify that oppression, have demonstrated a tremendous staying power from era to era.

But Foucault’s theories do not necessarily preclude this kind of continuity. Foucault himself has bemoaned the emphasis which commentators have placed on his notion of discontinuity:

My problem was not at all to say, ‘Voilà, long live discontinuity, we are in the discontinuous and a good thing too,’ but to pose the question, ‘How is it that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge, there are these sudden take-offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm, continuist image that is normally accredited? (P/K, 112).

Yet only recently has the status of women shown signs of being in the process of a fundamental transformation, one which is shaking the roots of sexual differentiation and discrimination. And while it would be reductive to deny that any changes have occurred in the image of woman from era to era, many of these changes — for example, the “medicalisation” of the female body which Foucault has pointed to — have merely served to reaffirm women’s marginal status. Thus while relations of power may alter according to the kinds of major transformation which Foucault has noted, certain strands in each era’s web, specifically those which have accrued around gender oppositions, have remained strong throughout the long history of women’s oppression. The forces which have held these strands in place will also have to be looked at before we have finished with the question of woman.

VI: Intellectuals and Power

The intellectual no longer has to play the role of advisor. The project, tactics and goals are a matter for those who do the fighting. What the intellectual can do is provide the instruments of analysis (PK, 62).
FRENCH FANTASIES

Foucault’s “toolkit” view of theory should help put him in perspective for feminists. While he seems to sympathize with the move “beyond” sexual identity, his work still provides tools for those feminists still fighting, as women, in the trenches, where the battle is far from over. As Biddy Martin points out with respect to the current eliding of sexual identity, “the projects of male” (and, I would add, some female) “critics and feminist critics are necessarily non-synchronous despite commonalities.” Feminists have only just begun the work of reclamation and production necessary to guard against women’s being eclipsed once again at the very moment of their emergence into history. Would a move away from sexual oppositions towards a more epistemologically “correct” position imply, for instance, that women academics should stop lobbying to get more women’s work included on course lists? That reading Joyce (whose own views on women are far from trouble-free) may bring one closer to the “feminine” than reading, say, Virginia Woolf? Someone like Derrida (after all a man) may rejoice in the subversive potential of a woman who is “a non-identity, a non-figure, a simulacrum” (Spurs, 49); but such “non-identity,” as countless feminist analyses have shown, has been precisely the status of women since time immemorial, and this status — for all its supposedly subversive potential — has been the main source of their oppression.

I am not suggesting that feminists reject the new discourses on “woman” out of hand, or that they ignore the epistemological concerns which have prompted those discourses. Instead they should get the lay of the land, see what old faces lurk in the new landscape, judge what is germane to the political reality they face. Next to the Marxist “always historicize,” we might add the very post-modern “always problematize.”

At the end of The Order of Things, Foucault writes that if the arrangements which led to the birth of the human sciences were to disappear, “then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” (OT, 387). But before that happens perhaps woman’s face will have to be etched firmly beside it, if only as a network of scars on a once-smooth surface.

Department of English
Concordia University

Notes

N.P. RICCI


9. Among American critics, Peggy Kamuf has used a specifically Foucauldian framework to arrive at a position similar to Kristeva's. See her article, "Replacing Feminist Criticism," *Diacritics*, 12, No. 2 (1982), 42-47. Though Kamuf does not acknowledge any debt to Kristeva, she also seems to see herself as part of a "third generation"; she isolates two feminist strategies, strikingly similar to the two "phases" Kristeva identifies, which are doomed to perpetuate the system women have been trying to subvert: "on the one hand an expansion of institutions to include at their center what has been historically excluded; on the other hand, the installing of a counter-institution based on feminine centred cultural models" (Kamuf, p. 45).


12. Derrida, anticipating objections to his rather "eccentric" reading of Nietzsche, summarizes his own position thus: "Must not these apparently feminist propositions be reconciled with the overwhelming corpus of Nietzsche's venomous anti-feminism? Their congruence (a notion which I oppose by convention to that of coherence), although ineluctably enigmatic, is just as rigorously necessary. Such, in any case will be the thesis of the present communication" (Spurs, 57). It is impossible to do justice to the rigours of Derrida's analysis here; what concern me more are the potential uses of that analysis.


23. Jardine discusses French anti-feminism in "Gynesis."


The question of ethics has preoccupied Michel Foucault throughout the different stages of his thought. Ethics and politics are for him inseparable. In his early major work, The Order of Things, he asserted that "[the] knowledge of man, unlike the sciences of nature, is always linked, even its vaguest form, to ethics or politics."¹ In his 1983 interview in Berkeley he reiterated his interest in "politics as an ethics."²

There is one phrase that marks the distinguishing characteristic of Foucault's thought: the ubiquity of power. "A society without power relations," he declares, "can only be an abstraction."³ In Foucault's thought, power may be said to be the kingpin of all social relations in connecting everything to everything else. It is embedded in all human events and institutions, not just in what has traditionally been called "government," the "state," or political institutions. From beginning to end, the thematics of power have been the leitmotif of Foucault's investigation of differing topics. By its ubiquity, power attains an ontological status, as it were, in Foucault's thought. It is everywhere and comes from everywhere: it is "always already" here and there. The most seminal insight of Foucault is the idea that power exists as relations, and this relational mode of investigating power is called by him the analytics of power. For power is regarded not as a static substance (res) in the Cartesian tradition, but as an ensemble of dynamic relations. Foucault writes:

Power in the substantive sense, "le" pouvoir, doesn't exist. What I mean is this. The idea that there is either located at — or emanating from —
a given point something which is a "power" seems to me to be based on a misguided analysis, one which at all events fails to account for a considerable number of phenomena. In reality power means relations, a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations.4

In confluence with the French structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and Louis Althusser, Foucault rejected the notion of the subject. While in The Savage Mind,5 which is a polemic against Jean-Paul Sartre, Lévi-Strauss enunciated the "dissolution of man," Foucault wrote the following requiem in the concluding sentence of The Order of Things: "man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."6 It is in his introductory remarks to The Archaeology of Knowledge that we find the sharpest reaction to subjectivity which could be construed narrowly as phenomenological or broadly as post-Cartesian or post-phenomenological:

If the history of thought could remain the locus of uninterrupted continuities, if it could endlessly forge connexions that no analysis could undo without abstraction, if it could weave, around everything that men say and do, obscure synthesis that anticipate for him, prepare him, and lead him endlessly towards his future, it would provide a privileged shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness. Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; 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, and find in them what might be called his abode. Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are the two sides of the same system of thought. In this system, time is conceived in terms of totalization and revolutions are never more than moments of consciousness.7

It seems that what is crucial in the context of our discussion on the moral subject of power is not the question of whether Foucault is a philosopher of continuity or discontinuity but of how the idea of continuity or discontinuity funds the movement of the historical subject.8 Here Foucault's argument concerning the necessary and sufficient connection between the sovereignty of consciousness and historical continuity falters and is short-circuited in several ways.
First of all, a critique of phenomenological subjectivity requires the consideration of phenomenology as the constitution of meaning — including, of course, the constitution of internal-time consciousness in terms of "retension" and "protension" — by the transcendental ego to attain the apodicticity of knowledge. In short, it needs a critique of phenomenology as a "metaphysics of presence."

Second, Foucault fails to take into account Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological idea of the "instituting subject," so as to avoid the "egological" predicament of the "constituting subject." To quote fully Merleau-Ponty’s own words:

If the subject were taken not as a constituting but an instituting subject, it might be understood that the subject does not exist instantaneously and that the other person does not exist simply as a negative of myself. What I have begun at certain decisive moments would exist neither far off in the past as an objective memory nor be present like a memory revived, but really between the two as the field of my becoming during that period. Likewise my relation to another person would not be reducible to a disjunction: an instituting subject could coexist with another because the one instituted is not the immediate reflection of the activity of the former and can be regained by himself or by others without involving anything like a total recreation. Thus the instituted subject exists between others and myself, between me and myself, like a hinge, the consequence and the guarantee of our belonging to a common world.

In addition to overcoming the impasse of conceptualizing intersubjectivity or coexistence as the relation between the self and the other, the advantage of this ontological hinge is at least threefold. (1) It overcomes both the overdetermination and the underdetermination of the self over the other or, ethically speaking, the polarization of total power and total freedom, or total submission and absolute freedom. (2) It offers a judicious balance between innovation and tradition as sedimented meanings. And (3), it gives us the conception of human plurality as a dialectical complicity of distinction and equality. Here we are turning to the language of Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition*, where human plurality as the basic condition of both speech and action is conceived of as having the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, she explains, there would be no common ground for communicating or acting; if men were not distinct, on the other hand, there would again be no need to communicate or act. Distinction — individual differences — thickens the density of human plurality. Similarly, Emmanuel Levinas maintains that pluralism is not a multiplicity of numbers, it is predicated upon "a radical alterity of the other."
Third and last, if history is viewed as more or less continuous, Foucault must by logical necessity recognize some form of subjectivity as sovereign; that is, he harbors or shelters the privileged status of consciousness. If, on the other hand, history is viewed as discontinuous, he is compelled to abandon the sovereignty of consciousness. Contrary to Foucault's own argument, moreover, the sovereignty of consciousness becomes the precondition for the thesis that history is discontinuous because history changes, that is, becomes discontinuous only by virtue of the sovereign agency of consciousness itself. In the end, the question of whether history is continuous or discontinuous would be dissolved by itself if we entertain the idea of historical transformation as "transgression," in Georges Bataille's sense, or "destruction," in Heidegger's sense. Then and only then, continuity and discontinuity are the two sides of the same historical process. For transgression is not only the overstepping of what is prohibited but it is also delineated by what is prohibited by tradition. Similarly, by "destruction" Heidegger means "a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn."12

In Foucault's later writings, the retrieval of the subject or the habilitation of a "new subject" makes his legacy with phenomenology tenuous, perhaps more enhancing, and all the more ambivalent. We would be remiss if we failed to notice his 1982 discussion of "The Subject of Power" that attempts to go "beyond structuralism" — the structuralism that dissolves 'man' as subject. He now attempts to habilitate subjectivity in his analytics of power, which is linked at the same time to freedom. As he declares:

... [the] political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes these actions by the government of men by other men — in the broadest sense of the term — one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains.13

From the perspective of phenomenology, Foucault must not go unchallenged and unanswered. Our primary contention against him is that
his *architectonic* of power is built on the shaky grounding of social ontology whose pillars in different sizes and shapes are free, individual subjects. We are reminded here of Henrik Ibsen's play *The Master Builder*, whose main plot is the story of a man who, having dreamt of building a church tower that "points straight up in the free air — with the vane at a dizzy height" and "a real castle-in-the-air" on a firm foundation, plunges in the end into a ghastly death because he has built too tall a house on too shallow a foundation. The phobia of the subject in Foucault’s analytics of power is, unfortunately, like teaching how to swim by continuously teaching aquaphobia. Yet worse, his late addendum — "free subjects" and "new forms of subjectivity" — is like urging someone to swim on dry land! There is, however, a way of constructing social ontology which has a place for the subject but is not subjective, i.e., the conception of the *subject as relational*.

Merleau-Ponty contended that "In Sartre there is a plurality of subjects but no intersubjectivity . . . The world and history are no longer a system with several points of entry but a sheaf of irreconcilable perspectives which never coexist and which are held together only by the hopeless heroism of the I." To reject the "heroism of the I" is for Merleau-Ponty to decenter the subject toward the affirmation of intersubjectivity. In the analysis of language, the *act of speaking* (*parole*) and the *structure of language* (*langue*) are mutually dependent. For him, therefore, "language makes thought, as much as it is made by thought." According to the linguist Emile Benveniste, "language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse." Paul Ricoeur, whose hermeneutical phenomenology has been influenced by the linguistic theory of Benveniste, forces the issue against the structuralist, subjectless theory of language by formulating concisely the "habitation of the world" as "a trader between the system and the event" and by asserting that the speaking being of man and the spoken being of the world are two interdependent categories. By the same token, all interpretation is the dialectical movement of transmission and renewal. The structure without the event is useless, while the event without the structure is powerless. In the end, the subject who is capable of asserting *I* is never absolutely sovereign and completely isolated: he/she is always already social or intersubjective.

To confirm the desubstantialized, rational analysis of power without subject-phobia and without sacrificing the idea of novelty and "free subjects," we should resort to auditory metaphors and models against visual ones, whose chronotopical unity is arranged in terms of the primacy of time over space or the "utopia" (*ou/topos*) of time. In the first place, the auditory "tympanizes" social ontology because the ear is, as Jacques Derrida puts it, "the distinct, differentiated, articulated organ that produces the effect of proximity." In the second place, it enables us to *displace* and *conceptualize*
FRENCH FANTASIES

power as polyphonic. Yet the conception of power as polyphonic relations preserves the "otonomy" of the self which arrests hermetically sealed independence at one extreme and totalistic subjugation at the other. Musically speaking, mood as dis/position is the attunement of an individual existence to the world as a being-in-the-world. As Heidegger observes: "Mood is never merely a way of being determined in our inner being for ourselves. It is above all a way of being attuned, and letting ourselves be attuned in this or that way in mood. Mood is precisely the basic way in which we are outside ourselves. But that is the way we are essentially and constantly."23

There is, moreover, a further analogy to be drawn between the ubiquity of power and that of sound. There is a qualitative difference in human experience between the visual and the acoustic. Color does not separate itself from the object, whereas sound separates itself from its source (e.g., voice or the sound of a musical instrument). In other words, color is a dependent attribute of an object, sound is not. While the color we see is the property of a thing itself and we confront color in space, the tone we hear is not the property of anything and we encounter it out of or from space. Color is locatable and localizable in one single position with the object, whereas sound, once separated from its source, has no definite topological property or determination although its source is locatable. Most importantly, sound travels in no one particular direction, it travels in all directions. Musical tones have no locatable places: they are everywhere or ubiquitous.24 The ubiquity of sound does not imply, however, that the language, message or meaning of music as the organized movement of sound in time is inexact and imprecise. Its meaning or message is played out, just as speech is uttered or enunciated.

Ethics or the ethics of power must be grounded firmly in social ontology — the ontology of social relations.25 To be specific, by the basic model of social relations we mean the "neighborhood" or "gathering" in multiple forms of the I (ipseity) and the other (alterity) as equiprimordial in the shared field of time and space. We shall designate as proximity this chronotopically shared field of the self and the other as equiprimordial in which the sense of "otonomy" is preserved. By proximity, therefore, we refer to what the social phenomenologist Alfred Schutz calls the consociational relationship (Umwelt) or we-relationship (Wirbeziehung) in which two (or more) persons share together or simultaneously both a section of time and a sector of space, that is, chronotopical immediacy. It may be called the "paramount" relationship because it is the basic modus by which all other types of social relationship are determined and understood.26

Foucault's ethics of power, however, lack an ethics of proximity or, as it were, an ethics with a human face.27 To put it more forcefully, there cannot be any ethics of proximity in it. It cannot be otherwise because his thought
HWA YOL JUNG

is allergic to the subject, while the basic condition of proximity demands the confirmation of the self and the other as two interdependent subjects. In order to avoid both extremes of individualizing and totalizing tendencies, we need a third term which has primacy over both ipseity and alterity but does not exclude them as the conditions of its existence: dialogue, conversation, communication, or community — that is, the we as the union of ipseity and alterity governed by the sense of mutual participation and attunement. It works as the maieutic between the atomization of the individual and the depersonalization of institution.

The literary theorist Denis Donoghue defines conversation as the best form of verbal and responsive communication in a circle of proximity. It resembles a theatrical performance before a small friendly audience — a sonorous space in which the voice resonates the epitome of human presence. Ideally, conversation is more than communication: it is "communion" because what really matters in it is the presence of the desire to be with others and to share each other’s experience — the processual rite of giving and receiving rather than what is said, and the encoding and decoding of its message. Conversation as communion is compensated for its openness and incompleteness: "The validity of the words in a conversation is their continuous participation in communication. In a conversation, the two voices are making a music of desire, varying its cadences, tones, intensities."

The ethics of proximity is an embodied phenomenon which Foucault's "bio-power," too, presupposes. While the Cartesian body as "substance" is the body-object, the ethics of proximity is grounded in the body-subject. The incarcerated body as the object of the Panopticon depicted so forcefully by Foucault in Discipline and Punish exemplifies the body-object. It is the object of discipline and punishment. In contrast, the body-subject is an active, living agent of communication with the world of others (Mitwelt): "the body answers the world by authoring it." Although the body seems distinctively characteristic of Foucault’s new subjectivity, particularly in his historical analysis of human sexuality, he seems nonetheless unaware of, if he does not reject, the body as subject. At any rate, he fails to deal with it systematically. Thus, unfortunately, Foucault's analytics of power can offer no ethics of proximity. It was indeed a "defacement" or an "effacement" of the body-subject when he spoke poetically of the erasure of man as "a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."

The ethics of proximity as an embodied phenomenon is characteristic uniquely of Emmanuel Levinas's phenomenology of the face (visage) which is an ethics of the I who is capable of facing the other as "you." The face to face with the other may be called — following Levinas himself — an "interface." To insert the name of Levinas into a phenomenological critique of Foucault's ethics of power is no accident. For Levinas is the social
ontologist (or "meontologist") and ethicist par excellence, in whose thought "Being" and "value" are chiasmic twins. We can go even further: the primacy of the ethical constitutes a common tie between Levinas and Foucault. For Levinas, the idea of "totality" is purely theoretical, while "infinity" is an ethical category. Foucault's analytics of power or power/knowledge intertwinement, with an accent on the formation of discursive practices, may be regarded as a consolidation in form, as it were, of Levinas's "theoretical" and "ethical" concerns subsumed under the category of infinity without totality.

In Levinas's social ontology, which accentuates the primacy of the ethical, subjectivity is affirmed never for itself (i.e., never monologic or egocentric) but for another (pour l'autre) (i.e., dialogic or heterocentric). Subjectivity comes into being as "heteronomic": "It is my inescapable and incontrovertible answerability to the other that makes me an individual 'I.'" Thus the notion of responsibility or answerability that coincides with the ethical or the ethics of proximity is, first and foremost, the confirmation of the I which is what Levinas calls the "meontological version of subjectivity," based on the face as its most basic modus. He writes, therefore, that responsibility is:

the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity. For I describe subjectivity in ethical terms. Ethics, here, does not supplement a preceding existential base; the very node of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility.

Martin Buber, too, propounded the ethics of responsibility. According to him, there are two primary words: the "I-Thou" and the "I-It." The subject I must be the I of either "I-Thou" or "I-It," or else it is nothing at all: "There is no I taken in itself, but only the I of the primary word I-Thou and the I of the primary word I-It." In either case, the I is always already relational or dialogical through and through; where there is reality, there is sociality. In responsibility lies the we as the midterm between the isolated I and the No-body (das Man or the "anonymous Other," to use Heidegger's word). Only in reference to the we does responsibility constitute the ethical condition of language itself. The question of "who is speaking" is never entirely subjective. Nor is language totally a subjectless structure for the simple reason that, as Edith Wyschogrod puts it tersely, it "does not float emptily in social space."

Now, for Levinas, the face epitomizes the ethics of proximity. It not only establishes the direct and immediate contact with the other but also is solicited by and gravitated to the other. The face to face is, Levinas tells us, "the primordial production of being on which all the possible collocations of the terms are found." The face is indeed an ethic, a human ethic: "the
epiphany of the face is ethical." As the face speaks (in silence), speaks uniquely from and for each individual, it is an ethical discourse. By the same token, its look is not and cannot be determined by the objective color of an eye. In the final analysis, the face is an ethical hermeneutic of the body or the human as embodied.

What is the ultimate telos of human plurality or intersubjectivity as polyphonic? For Levinas, it is peace (or harmony). With the idea of peace the question of the ethical merges with that of the political (res publica). In the tradition of phenomenology — including of course the ethical phenomenology of Levinas, Hannah Arendt40 has developed a public philosophy with a focus on the specificity of power as political. Despite their differences, some of which separate them radically, there are parallels and intersections between Arendt's and Foucault's thought.41

Power is defined most generally by Foucault as "the multiplicity of force relations," which is omnipresent in and all-pervasive to every level and dimension of human relationship. This view, however, produces a mixed result because it both dismantles and obfuscates the established notion of power as specifically political. On the one hand, power is regarded as not an exclusively political concept. Rather, it — like Foucault's definition of "government" — is extended to encompass a variety of nonpolitical human relationships including knowledge-claims and such institutions as the clinic, the asylum, the prison, the school, the church, and the family. As power is "decentered," everything we do is political or contains an element of politextuality. On the other hand, Foucault's view obfuscates the specificity of power as political, although the conceptual configuration of power as such denies no specificity.

The question of the subject is what puts Foucault and Arendt a world apart. Arendt offers an answer to Foucault's enigmatic question on the subject of power: the primary subject of power is the human, moral subject. Her definition of action and power based on the conception of human plurality provides us with the midworld which avoids the Scylla of individualizing and the Chrybdis of totalizing tendencies without abandoning the human, moral subject. For Arendt, the faculty of action alone — not the faculties of labor and work — makes man a political animal. Human plurality is the existential and ethical condition of both power and action. Above all, it is an association (koinonia) of equals as humans who are all capable of acting. Foremost, however, it is an association of subjects — that is, in Arendt's language, "distinct and unique persons." Human plurality defined as such polyphonically defies the "antipolitical" thought of uniting many into one (homonoia).

However, her defense of the human, moral subject in the context of human plurality and politics as polyphonic is not a subjectivist one. For action and isolation are antithetical or mutually exclusive terms. For
Arendt, power is human potential “to act in concert” (for the common good) and as such it is impossible in isolation. Thus power is not something in the possession of an individual, a group of individuals, or an organization. True to the existential and phenomenological tradition, on the other hand, Arendt’s unwavering defense of the human, moral subject, as is linked to the civility of power, is directed against the undesirable political consequences of the anonymous, faceless One (das Man), of “ochlocracy” — to use her own phrase. The exemplar of this “anonymous One” is Adolf Eichmann — the paragon of “thoughtlessness” who appeared to be “terrifyingly normal.” It is important to note that Arendt does not argue for the death penalty for Eichmann on the basis of the presence or absence of his intention to kill. Her argument against the “banality of evil” rests on the “de-subjectivized” ethics of consequences, i.e., on the ethics of responsibility, rather than on the ethics of pure intentions. As Arendt argues, politics is not the nursery, because in it obedience and support are one and the same; and where all are deemed or held guilty, nobody is. For her, in brief, political ethics make sense only when there is the human subject, the specific individual, who must be held responsible for the consequences of his “thoughtless,” yet violent crimes. It was in the name of the moral solidarity of human plurality that she concluded in the last paragraph of her own “verdict” on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem: “...just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations — as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world — we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang.”

Arendt’s “consensualist” conception of power (and action) as human potentiality to act in concert for the common good includes the existential, Nietzschean idea of initium (the initiative) or, to use the phrase of Merleau-Ponty, the “instituting subject” who embarks on something new at his/her birth. Being political is metaphorically conceived of as “a second birth.” I say “metaphorically” because birth, as the initial insertion of the self into the world, is always already a de facto, if not de jure, political act. To be born and to act politically are two steps in the same act. What is so interesting about Arendt’s discussion is the linkage between natality and (political) action. She writes that “Philosophically speaking, to act is the human answer to the condition of natality. Since we all come into the world by virtue of birth, as newcomers and beginnings, we are able to start something new; without the fact of birth we would not even know what novelty is, all ‘action’ would be either mere behavior or preservation.” For Arendt, natality, freedom, and action are the inalienable birthrights of men and women as human. Natality is the sacrosanct occasion for a distinct subject
each in his or her own unique way — to embark on something new or novel. By virtue of it, human existence is invested as freedom (to use the expression of Levinas who implicitly refutes Sartre's conception of human existence as condemned to freedom). For that matter, a nation, which is the modern designation of the ultimate political unit, is, etymologically speaking, the "birthplace" of a people and as such it symbolizes a common system of institutions. The investiture of human existence as freedom, however, can never be absolute: there is no unconditional freedom insofar as we, the individuals, inhabit and share the same political arena or universe. "Political theory," writes Levinas, "derives justice from the undiscussed value of spontaneity; its problem is to ensure, by way of knowledge of the world, the most complete exercise of spontaneity by reconciling my freedom with the freedom of the other." Nor is politics a zero-sum game between power and freedom. The dialectical complicity of power and freedom tells us that freedom is not the "end of power," and power is not the "end of freedom."

Most significantly, we should not lose sight of initium as the human gift in consortium with others to transform rather than just to preserve. The direction of transformation, however, is not predetermined or preordained. In other words, the future course of human action is unpredictable or — as Arendt put it — "incalculable." The reverse side of unpredictability is irreversibility. In terms of the human faculty, they are called the capacity of "promising" and "forgiving," respectively, which marks off human existence from animal life. Arendt goes out of her way to emphasize the "unequaled clarity" of Nietzsche on "the connection between human sovereignty and the faculty of making promises," whose relation to Nietzsche's "will to power," according to her, is often overlooked by Nietzsche scholars. Be that as it may, Arendt shows the indeterminacy of power as political action in terms of its etymological derivation from Greek, Latin, and German: dynamis, potentia, and Macht — the "potential" character in particular of Macht being rooted in mogen and möglich. The following passage from The Human Condition sums up the qualities and attributes of power as the essence of political action: "Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities."

What is sadly missing from Foucault's account of power is the idea of initium as freedom to transform old realities and create new ones by each subject in concert with others. Being "compatriotic" to power, Foucault's formulation of resistance is ironically — I say "ironically" because his analytics of power in form and tone is agonistic — too undialectical to function effectively as the agent of historical and social change. To use the
existentialist language of Simone de Beauvoir, Foucault’s formulation allows no genuine “ethics of ambiguity,” that is, the *ambiguity* particularly between power and resistance.

By way of conclusion it should be emphasized that the primary subject of power is the human, moral subject who is capable of activating — and activating anew — meaning and value in words and deeds for both himself and others. As human interexistence is the existential and axiological condition of power, so is social ontology the presupposed ground for the analytics of power. There is the dialogical way of thinking human intersubjectivity which neither overdetermines nor underdetermines the power of the subject. Since we are concerned primarily with the *intelligibility* of power in history and society, there is no easy escape from the notion of subjectivity. Human subjects are called “self-interpreting animals,” by virtue of which, as Foucault himself readily acknowledges, the sciences of man are differentiated from those of nature. To paraphrase the phenomenological thought of Merleau-Ponty: to be reflective, to be self-interpreting, philosophy must interrogate the set of questions wherein he who questions is himself implicated by the question. Not only would history remain unintelligible and intransigent, but also historical change would be, at best, enigmatic without the subject who triggers it. Defaced man at the edge of history and politics is condemned to nihilism. Once power is left to itself without the subject, the moral subject, it subverts or even destroys the very ground and rationale of what defines power as an ensemble of multiple relations. In the end, Foucault’s analytics of power is fractured and scarred by the radical discontinuity between the end and the nascence of the (new) subject. In other words, his idea of new subjectivity is left ungrafted to the analytics of power. And yet to give credence to the idea of historical continuity is to harbor or shelter the sovereignty of consciousness. To translate the same issue into the problematical context of literary theory today: in Foucault’s thought, the author dies, without the birth of the reader who is capable of fusing the horizons of the past and the future or mediating the continuity and discontinuity of the world and history as text or intertext. This, I submit, is the ultimate, unresolved dilemma, if not blackhole, of Foucault’s analysis of knowledge, politics, and history. Yet as long as there are traces and tracks of knowledge, politics, and history, it is premature to renounce, abandon, or write a requiem for the moral subject.

Department of Political Science
Moravian College
Notes


8. Many, if not all, commentators on Foucault have come to view the idea of discontinuity as one of the most radical features of his thought. Foucault himself addresses the question of continuity and discontinuity in one of his interviews: "Power and Truth" (1977). See *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 111-13. According to Paul Rabinow, Foucault is a philosopher of both continuity and discontinuity. Rabinow comments that "Indeed, Foucault has often mistakenly been seen as a philosopher of discontinuity. The fault is partially his own; works such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things* certainly do emphasize abrupt changes in the structures of discourse of the human sciences. But Foucault has also stressed, in other contexts, the longer-range continuities in cultural practices. The sharp lines of discursive discontinuity in the human sciences and the longer lines of continuity in non-discursive practices provide Foucault with a powerful and flexible grid of interpretation with which to approach relations of knowledge and power. It should be underlined, however, that this is not a philosophy of history which for some mysterious reason glorifies discontinuity" ("Introduction," in *The Foucault Reader*, p. 9).


13. "Afterword: The Subject and Power," pp. 216 and 212. Interestingly, Sartre's taped dialogue with Pierre Victor would be titled *Power and Freedom* — a treatise on morality which is, according


20. Cf. Alfred Schutz, "Making Music Together," *Collected Papers, II: Studies in Social Theory*, ed. Arvid Brodersen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), pp. 159-60: "a study of the social relationships connected with the musical process may lead to some insights valid for many other forms of social intercourse, perhaps even to illumination of a certain aspect of the structure of social interaction as such that has not so far attracted from social scientists the attention it deserves."

This cardinal insight of Schutz has still not been tapped fully by the human sciences. Arguing against classical mechanics cloaked and masked in visual and spatial models, Milic Capek proposes that auditory models are better suited to explain the dynamics of contemporary quantum physics. He writes: "In the musical experience of melody or polyphony, the situation is considerably different. The quality of a new tone, in spite of its irreducible individuality, is tinged by the whole antecedent musical context which, in turn, is retroactively changed by the emergence of a new musical quality. The individual tones are not externally related units of which the melody is additively built; neither is their individuality absorbed or dissolved in the undifferentiated unity of the musical whole. The musical phrase is a successive differentiated whole which remains a whole in spite of its dynamic wholeness. Like every dynamic whole it exhibits a synthesis of unity and multiplicity, of continuity and discontinuity; but it is not the unity of an undifferentiated simultaneous whole nor is it the plurality of juxtaposed units; it is neither continuity in the mathematical sense of infinite divisibility nor is it the discontinuity of rigid atomic blocs." *Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961), pp. 371-72.

In this context, at the risk of going beyond his own intended formulation, let me extrapolate and speculate on the seminal insight of Foucault's analytics of power as a cluster or an ensemble of dynamic relations. For it transforms political thinking from the age of classical mechanics to that of quantum physics, from the closed, static world to the infinite, dynamic universe of power. Foucault's is the quantum field of power whose dynamic quality derives from the temporalization (dynamization) of matter and motion, while classical mechanics was obsessed with "timeless" spatialization. Power associated with "free subjects" may be said to be a relational field of quanta governed by the principle of indeterminacy.


22. The neologism *otonomy* is patterned after Jacques Derrida's discussion of Nietzsche under the playful title "otobiographies" (oto/biographies) in place of "autobiographies." By "otonomy," I wish to preserve the double meaning of "autonomy" without being subjective and the
sensibility of the "associative ear" rather than the "collecting eye" — to use Eric Havelock's phrases. See Jacques Derrida, "Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name," trans. Avital Ronell, in The Ear of the Other, ed. Christie V. McDonald (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), pp. 1-38. Of course, we cannot afford to ignore the (musical) aestheticism of Friedrich Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967). Music is for Nietzsche one way to make the aesthetic intelligible and grasp it directly: "Quite generally, only music, placed beside the world, can give us an idea of what is meant by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon" (ibid., p. 141). Social and political philosophy has yet to come to terms with the radical, immensely important implications of Nietzsche's transgression of Platonism, part of which is the opposition of aesthesis to theoria.

23. Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche, vol. 1: The Will To Power as Art, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 99. In Poetic Thinking: An Approach to Heidegger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), David Halliburton describes the encompassing circle of a musical performance that captures Heidegger's sense of mood, attunement, and proximity: "In the performance of a symphony, for example, responsibility may be seen in the interconnecting indebtedness of each constituent: the musicians, as users of equipment (instruments, chairs, music stands, and the like), together with their skills; the artisans responsible for the preparation of the equipment; the members of the audience, together with their capacity to hear and to sustain attention; the score, a being with a thingy character that allies it with equipment even as it carries an already constituted inclination (the totality of the composer's notations); the composer, as one who brings forth within the same order as the artisan; that artisan who is the printer of the score; the manner (in the sense of melody, timbre, tone) of the score as performed; the space of time in which that manner emerges through the concerted composure of performance; the space of time of the tradition without which the music could not move into its own articulation — without which, as the temporal structure that preserves the reciprocal responsibility of all the constituents, it would not be music; and finally, the space of time which is the world play's manner of moving, through all that is thus indebted, to its own disclosure" (p. 217).

24. For a detailed discussion of the nature of music as the organized movement of sound in time, see Victor Zuckerkandl, Sound and Symbol (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956). Cf. Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, The Medium Is the Message (New York: Banam, 1967), p. 111: 'The ear favors no particular 'point of view.' We are enveloped by sound. It forms a seamless web around us. We say, 'Music shall fill the air.' We never say, 'Music shall fill a particular segment of the air.' We hear sounds from everywhere, without having to focus. Sounds come from 'above,' from 'below,' from 'in front of us, from 'behind' us, from our 'right,' from our 'left.' We can't shut out sound automatically. We simply are not equipped with earlids. Whereas a visual space is an organized continuum of a uniformed connected kind, the ear world is a world of simultaneous relationships."

25. For a critical, extensive account of social ontology in the phenomenological movement, see Michael Theunissen, The Other, trans. Christopher Macann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).


Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 175. Here I cannot resist quoting this passage which describes the role of the lived body in Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy. For Bakhtin, dialogism is to monologism what Copernican heliocentrism is to Ptolemaic geocentrism. His sensitivity to the lived body, which is not unlike Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh, is rooted deeply in Russian Orthodoxy's belief in the corporeality of Christ and kenosis or the potential holiness of matter. The implications of Bakhtin's dialogism for social, political, and moral philosophy is enormous since it, according to Clark and Holquist, "is not intended to be merely another theory of literature or even another philosophy of language, but is an account of relations between people and between persons and things that cuts across religious, political, and aesthetic boundaries" (*Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 348).


*Totality and Infinity*, p. 83. This work of Levinas as a treatise on political philosophy is yet to be explored.

"Dialogue with Levinas," p. 27.


Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, 2nd ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1958), p. 4. It should be noted here that Levinas contends that Buber's "I-Thou" is the relation of "a symmetrical copresence" (Levinas and Kearney, "Dialogue with Levinas," p. 31). Levinas's contention should be clarified and may be called into question.


41. For example, the triological thematics of Foucault’s *The Order of Things* by way of life, labor, and language and Arendt’s *The Human Condition* in the forms of labor, work, and action go beyond the casual matchings of their keywords. Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* and Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966) pay attention to the totalitarian framework of power and the political evils of Western society particularly by means of the “instrumentalization” of the world and humanity.


46. *Totality and Infinity*, p. 83.


50. Cf. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 188: “Perhaps his interest in rules is part of the reason why Foucault is unable to deal with, or provide an account of, historical change.”

51. Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel Press, 1962) is a rare and classical treatise in the development of existentialist ethics. By ambiguity, she means the existential condition of choice. She contends that “the existentialist doctrine permits the elaboration of an ethics, but it even appears to us as the only philosophy in which an ethics has its place. For, in a metaphysics of transcendence in the classical sense of the term, evil is reduced to error; and in humanistic philosophy it is impossible to account for it, man being defined as complete in a complete world ... Nothing is decided in advance, and it is because man has something to lose and because he can lose that he can also win” (*ibid.*, p. 34).

In the context of Schelling’s philosophy, Heidegger discusses the notion of freedom as the capacity of both good and evil: as he writes, “Rather, freedom is freedom for good and evil. The ‘and,’ the possibility of this ambiguity and everything hidden in it is what is decisive. That means that the whole concept of freedom must change” (*Schelling’s Treatise*, p. 97).

FRENCH FANTASIES

contemporary philosophy. It is central to a thesis about the sciences of man, and what differentiates them from the sciences of nature, which passes through Dilthey and is very strong in the late twentieth century. It is one of the basic ideas of Heidegger's philosophy, early and late. Partly through his influence, it has been made the starting point for a new skein of connected conceptions of man, self-understanding and history, of which the most prominent protagonist has been Gadamer. At the same time, this conception of man as self-interpreting has been incorporated into the work of Habermas, the most important successor of the post-Marxist line of thought known somewhat strangely as critical theory." (ibid., p. 45).

53. Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, In Praise of Philosophy, trans. John Wild and James M. Edie (Evaston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), pp. 52-53: "History has no meaning, if this meaning is understood as that of a river which, under the influence of all-powerful causes, flows towards an ocean in which it disappears. Every appeal to universal history cuts off the meaning of the specific event, renders effective history insignificant, and is a nihilism in disguise."

54. Cf. Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism (London: Verso, 1983), p. 54: "... once structures were freed from any subject at all, delivered over totally to their own play, they would lose what defines them as structures — that is, any objective coordinates of organization at all... Structure therewith capsizes into its antithesis, and post-structuralism proper is born, or what can be defined as a subjectivism without a subject." In Towards Deep Subjectivity (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), Roger Poole, too, contends, albeit in a different context, that "Positivism in fact weakens the case of objectivity by refusing to consider the hidden structures of subjectivity" (p. 73). In Foucault, Marxism and History (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), Mark Poster raises some important questions concerning Foucault's notion of the subject. For a general discussion of the subject in reference to literary theory, see David Carroll, The Subject in Question (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

The Limit of Histories: Michel Foucault’s Notion of Partage

Deborah Cook

The work of Michel Foucault is marked by much the same ruptures and discontinuities which Foucault claimed constituted history. Reading through his work from one end to the other leaves one with the distinct impression that Foucault simply failed to find a single method for the analysis of history. On the other hand, one might be led to believe that Foucault progressively modified his method and, “in the end,” managed to unify his working hypotheses. Whatever one’s conclusions, however, it might be of value to analyse what each of Foucault’s works offers on its own in terms of such concerns as the problem of method. That Foucault could constantly reinterpret his working hypotheses, especially those in his earlier work, indicates perhaps that this work contains more insights than have been formulated in any of his explicit statements on the subject. In this paper, I wish to address one of the more important and methodologically interesting notions found in the Histoire de la Folie à l’âge classique: that of the partage. I shall also comment on the broader outlines of that history — more particularly, on the nature of the division between reason and unreason which results from the partage. Only when the specific contexts in which the partage makes its appearance are analysed and clarified is it possible to consider the broader methodological significance of the partage in the corpus of Foucault’s work. At the end of the paper, I shall address some of the methodological issues raised by this notion.

Before I discuss the notion of partage, a few brief comments ought to be made about the differences between Folie et Démon: Histoire de la Folie à l’âge classique — the first edition of the Histoire published by Plon — and Gallimard’s second edition: Histoire de la Folie à l’âge classique. The corpus of these works remains unchanged with the exception of some very minor revisions. The first edition, however, contains a preface in which Foucault
describes the aim or intent of his history. This preface, which Derrida has
criticised in "Cogito et Histoire de la Folie,"\textsuperscript{3} does not appear at all in the
second edition. One can only speculate on the reasons that led Foucault to
suppress it. It is, for example, entirely possible that Derrida's criticism of
Folie et Déraison, which focusses, though not exclusively, on some remarks
Foucault made in his preface, so offended Foucault that he did not wish to
see it published in the second edition. It is also possible that Foucault's own
later criticism of this work in terms of its intent indicates that he believed
his first statement of purpose to be inadequate. Because the preface is
important for its description of the notion of partage, I shall make reference
to it here.

A second difference between the two editions can be found in the
addition of an appendix to the second edition. This appendix is entitled "La
Folie, l'absence d'oeuvre" and was originally published in La Table ronde in
May of 1964. In it, Foucault extends his analysis of madness in terms of the
form of exclusion peculiar to the classical age. Subsequent reprints of
Histoire de la Folie do not contain this appendix. Once again, one may only
speculate as to why this is the case. Since, however, the appendix is not
crucial for an understanding of the partage nor for the characterisation of
the particular form of exclusion exercised in the classical age, it will not be
quoted in this paper.

The notion of partage which Foucault introduces to his historical
account of madness in the classical age is qualified by a number of different
terms in both the preface and the corpus of Folie et Déraison. It is the degree
zero of history (FD, p. i), constitutive of history (FD, p. i), a caesura (FD,
p. ii) and it lies on the confines of history (FD, p. iv). Throughout the text
proper, it is used interchangeably with the term "geste" (gesture). Further,
the word "partage" has, in French, two distinct meanings or usages. Both of
these are found in Foucault's history. It has both the active sense of division
or dividing and the passive sense of share or allotment. Used inter-
changeably with the notion of gesture, it is the active sense that prevails.
The history of the classical age can be said to have begun with an anonymous
act which separated the institutions, concepts and laws of the Renaissance
from those of the classical age. The passive sense of partage can be found in
the form of exclusion which results from the active gesture and is en-
capsulated in the classical age in the distinction between reason (raison) and
unreason (déraison).

This view of history which ascribes it to the effect of a partage lying on
the confines of history already assumes a number of traits which may be
discovered in Foucault's later views of history. I shall briefly comment on
them here, although I would also point out that there are differences in the
later formulations that must be respected. First, the idea that history is
constituted by a partage, or by an abrupt event or experience, already
DEBORAH COOK

anticipates Foucault's later thesis that history is discontinuous. "The classical experience of madness is born" (HF, p. 53). It emerges suddenly on the scene preceded by the partage which itself is preceded by nothing. An anonymous act lies at the origin of any historical period, and that period is not, therefore, explicable with reference to other events in previous histories. The anonymity of this gesture of division in the Histoire de la Folie is that gesture's more perplexing attribute. One may be able to describe the effects of the partage and have some, though not unequivocal, sense of its historical significance. Nevertheless, the partage itself, apart from its instantiation in the classical age, is not defined. What it does, however, is to force a radical break with the past.

The discontinuity which characterises Foucault's idea of history throughout his work is thus found from the beginning in his notion of partage. While a particular epoch may exhibit its own form of continuity, it is not part of some larger and universal History which would precede it and explain it. Foucault's histories begin with a discussion of the limits or partages that divide one age from another.

One might write a history of limits — of those obscure gestures, necessarily forgotten as soon as they are accomplished, by means of which a culture rejects something that would be external to it; and all throughout its history, this hollowed void, this white space which isolates it, designates it as much as its values. For it receives and maintains its values in the continuity of history; but in that region of which we wish to speak, it exercises its essential choices, it creates the partage which gives it the face of its positiveness. To interrogate a culture about its limit experiences, is to question it on the confines of history, on a rupture which is like the birth itself of its history (FD, pp. iii–iv).

Ruptures, confines, and limits lie at the outer edges of any age. History is, in Foucault's Histoire de la Folie and elsewhere, constituted in these limit experiences or events. In his later work, these limits become the limits of language and, later still, those of power and desire. Thus, the earlier anonymity of the partage gives way to a more positive qualification.

Another idea entailed by this notion of partage is that of aléa, chance or accident. The Petit Robert defines "aléa" as an unforeseeable event, an unforeseeable turn that events might take — hasard. The partage is not something that can be predicted on the basis of prior events which might, otherwise, be assumed to have led up to it. It is neither determined nor the result of the choice of subjects with free will. Its emergence on the scene is as unpredictable as the roll of a dice. The partage is an event which can never be anticipated. Thus neither reason nor unreason could appear such as they
were without the entirely inexplicable gesture that constituted the classical age. In question, then, is the rationality of history and a rational origin for historical periods. It is this refusal to see the real as rational which plants Foucault squarely in the tradition of Nietzsche. Although the word “chance” is not used in *Histoire de la Folie*, it is clear that Foucault’s later description of it in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” is applicable to that earlier work. In this article on Nietzsche, Foucault approvingly quotes Nietzsche’s view in *Die Morgenröte* that sees history as “… the iron hand of necessity shaking the dicebox of chance.”

The final point to be made about the notion of *partage*, which links it to Foucault’s later work, concerns the problem of origin. It is here that Foucault’s view of the *partage* stands in need of correctives if one wishes to correlate it with Foucault’s later ideas. In the preface of Foucault’s history, one reads:

> What is constitutive is the gesture that divides madness, and not the science which is established: this division [*partage*] which, once it is made, returns to the calm. What is originary is the caesura which establishes the distance between reason and unreason… It will therefore be necessary to speak of this primitive debate without supposing a victory nor a right to victory, to speak of those gestures regurgitated in history…, of these cutting gestures, of this distance taken (*FD*, pp. i-ii).

The problem with this notion of *partage* as origin has been well formulated by Jacques Derrida, who otherwise misreads Foucault. In “Cogito et Histoire de la Folie,” Derrida writes: “… if this great division is the possibility itself of history, the historicity of history, what does ‘writing the history of this *partage*’ mean here?” What is the nature of the origin Foucault posits with his notion of *partage*? In *L’Ordre du Discours*, where he links it with the will to truth and power and desire, it is clear that Foucault means something historical by it. In *Histoire de la Folie*, however, the *partage* appears at once to lie outside of history as that which makes it possible and to be the result or effect of a *partage*. The ambiguity of that word with respect to its two senses is perhaps no more evident than here.

The ambiguity in Foucault’s notion of *partage* as origin is a problem that is not resolved in the *Histoire de la Folie*. Can something that is constitutive of history itself be historical? If not, then one is confronted with a gesture that shares much in common with the creative and uncaused act of a divine being. In the beginning was the *partage*. On one interpretation, then, it would be the unmoved mover or uncaused cause of history. Apart from a few vague remarks on the relationship between the *partage* and history, Foucault does not define the status of that gesture that initiates
history. Only later, when he links the \textit{partage} to power and desire, will one find a characterisation of its status as an historical one. Commenting on his history in \textit{L'ArcheologieduSavoir}, Foucault states that he came "... close to admitting an anonymous and general subject of history." This attempt at self-criticism seems particularly apt in light of the difficulties with Foucault's idea of history sketched here.

What the \textit{partage} divides is, as has already been noted, itself a \textit{partage}. In the classical age, what is divided is the realm of reason from unreason. Foucault further claims that the active \textit{partage} which creates this division is an ethical one. This philosophical account of the nature of the \textit{partage} and of its effects is the next topic I shall treat in this paper.

Foucault opens his discussion of the classical age with an interpretation of Descartes. In the stage of natural doubt — before he advances the possibility of total deception with the evil genius hypothesis — Descartes excludes madness as a stage in the process of rational doubt. Doubting the senses is rational because the senses sometimes deceive me. Doubting that I am awake is rational because I sometimes dream that I am awake when I am in fact asleep, but doubting my sanity is an extravagance which the process of rational doubt makes impossible. Along the road to the truth of the \textit{cogito}, madness must be excluded. If one were to entertain the hypothesis that one was mad, there would be no ground for asserting any truth whatsoever. Madness is thus excluded \textit{de ovo} from the rationality of the doubting process that leads to truth. It is simply presumed to be too extravagant to warrant serious consideration.

This summary exclusion of madness from rational doubt in the stage of natural doubt is not the only exclusion madness suffers in Descartes' work. At a later stage in his analysis, Foucault comments on the exclusion found in Descartes' rejection of the evil genius hypothesis. Foucault interprets the holding of this hypothesis as a final attempt to include madness in the process of rationality that leads to truth. While I object to this interpretation of the hyperbolic hypothesis as a form of madness on the grounds that Descartes advanced reasons for entertaining it, Foucault does manage to show that even the possibility of total deception is excluded from the truth of the \textit{cogito}. His interpretation, however, does not underestimate the force of the evil genius hypothesis.

It is true that the \textit{cogito} is an absolute beginning; but one must not forget that the evil genius comes before it. And the evil genius is not the symbol in which are resumed and systematized all the dangers of those psychological events which are dream images and sensible error. Between God and man, the evil genius has an absolute meaning: in all his rigor he is the possibility of unreason and the totality of its powers... And it is not because the truth which the \textit{cogito} illuminates
ends up masking the shadow of the evil genius that one must forget his continually dangerous power; this danger will underlie Descartes' procedure up until the existence and the truth of the external world (HF, p. 175).

With the cogito, the possibility of complete deception is eliminated. The evil genius may deceive me as much as he wants, he will never arrange it so that I am nothing when I think that I exist. The certitude of my own existence protects me from that danger that lurks in the shadow of the lumen naturale: the possibility that I may be utterly deceived. The power of the evil genius does not extend to that absolute beginning that assures me of my own existence. It is in the truth of the cogito alone that his power is dispelled.

What Foucault hopes to illustrate with this philosophical account of exclusion is, firstly, the nature of the partage itself and, secondly, the new relationship which results from it between reason and unreason in the classical age. What Descartes' spontaneous act of excluding madness from the process of rational doubt exemplifies is a will to rationality that may not be breached by an appeal to extravagant or hyperbolic hypotheses. Foucault writes that "... the will to doubt has already excluded the involuntary enchantment of unreason and the Nietzschean possibility of becoming mad" (HF, p. 157). The gesture that divides reason from unreason is therefore an ethical one. Doubt is assumed to be the act of a free subject which, by virtue of being rational — i.e. free — may lead to truth. In the act of will which impels doubt and sustains it, one has already voluntarily excluded the possibility of madness. The will to doubt already implies a decision to excommunicate madness.

If I doubt, I cannot be mad. If I am mad, I do not exist. The form of exclusion practiced in the classical age on the basis of its ethical partage is a radical one. Facing the Cartesian subject — the philosophical counterpart of our classical forebears — is a world of unreason and madness which this subject rejects out of hand as lacking rationality, and thus existence altogether.

Confronting those insensate beings who imagined themselves as pitchers or as having bodies of glass, Descartes knew immediately he was not at all like them... The inevitable recognition of their madness arose spontaneously in a relation established between them and oneself: the subject who perceived the difference measured it against himself (HF, p. 199).

The insane, and those grouped with them under the rubric of unreason, were immediately perceived as ethically nul and void and were thus interned in houses of correction where they were punished for their moral turpitude.
The ethical division leads, by the force of the rationality it spawns, to the positing of a realm of unreason.

The mid-seventeenth century saw the sudden birth of internment throughout Europe and Great Britain. The places in which the insane were housed were designed for the moral castigation of misery and unreason. "If, in the seventeenth century, madness was virtually desanctified, it is because misery has undergone this sort of fall which means that it is now perceived on a moral horizon alone" (HF, p. 74). The insane are not socially useful, moral subjects. Insanity has been created as a form of unreason by virtue of that ethical division which creates both reason and unreason. Given the will to doubt, a whole category of people including the indigent, the libertines, those with venereal diseases, sodomites, the debauched and others, are abruptly shut out of the ethical order. Thus it is not madness itself, or a madness that would preexist the classical age and persist in our own which is excluded.  

Foucault makes this point quite explicitly. Madness, and the forms of unreason associated with it, are designated as ethically void in the classical age alone.

... one did not intern, in about 1657, one one hundredth of the population of Paris to save oneself from the "asocial element." The gesture undoubtedly had another dimension: it did not isolate misunderstood strangers who had been hidden for too long under the mask of custom; it created them, changing familiar faces in the social landscape to make of them bizarre faces no one could recognise any more ... In a word, one might say that this gesture was creative of alienation (HF, p. 94).

The creation of madness as a moral fault can thus be attributed to the partage which, inasmuch as it is ethical, divides madness from the cogito, reason from unreason and being from not-being. "[R]eason is born in an ethical space" (HF, p. 157). And unreason is born in the same space. Reason resides in the free will and the sense of responsibility it entails. Unreason resides in the involuntary behaviour of an animal which lacks even the most nominal sense of guilt. Foucault goes on to claim that reason and unreason confront each other in the classical age as being confronts non-being. It is this final description of the passive form of the partage which I shall consider in my concluding remarks.

What distinguishes the classical age from any other is the new relationship established in it by virtue of its ethical partage to what it deemed unreason or insanity. Foucault asserts that no other age has experienced the sort of division found in the classical age between reason and unreason. Never has an age so stringently distinguished what it designates as insanity. With the birth of houses of internment, those considered insane were...
opposed to the ethical and rational subject of the classical age as non-being (non-être) to being (être).

Descartes "... banishes madness in the name of the person who doubts and who can no more be irrational than not think or not be" (HF, p. 58). The madman was thus designated "... abruptly and without further ado by his presence alone in the visible — luminous and nocturnal — partage of being and non-being" (HF, p. 547). An ethical, and therefore, rational subject, who exercises his or her free will, has already, and by virtue of those acts, joined the ethical community. An insane being has failed to exercise the right to choose which is given with free will. As unfree and irresponsible, the insane must be excluded. They form "... the other side of a choice which opens to humankind the free exercise of its rational nature" (HF, p. 159).

That unreason in the classical age does not partake in the existence of the ethical community is not, however, to say that it does not exist at all. It means that no truth is guaranteed to the existence of unreason. The insane do not have any assurance of their own existence. And the ethical order which implicitly recognizes their existence in the practice of internment does not validate it. The existence of the ethical order is guaranteed in the truth of the cogito. The existence of unreason is assured by the ethical community that recognizes it but refuses to accord it any status in the realm of rationality and therefore of ethics. Thinking, or the rationality given in the exercise of free will, may well be the hall-mark of existence, but existence itself may take other forms which are not rational. It may, and in fact does, take the form of unreason in the classical age.

In the Histoire de la Folie, Foucault attempts his first description of an age in terms of a notion that he will progressively revise as he continues his studies of history. The partage is central not only to Foucault's early work, but is cited in the later work as well, as a form of "exclusion, limitation, appropriation" which must be studied in what he terms a critical analysis of history. It is an integral part of what Foucault means by archeology. Nevertheless, after we have examined its role in the Histoire de la Folie, the nature of the partage, apart from its specific (ethical) instantiation in the classical age, remains uncertain. That the classical age should have been constituted by a partage which distinguishes it from other ages brings one no closer to understanding what the partage itself might be. Indeed, even when it receives a more positive qualification in the later work, it is just its protean capacity to take different forms in different ages which is emphasized by Foucault.

One thing is clear, however. In Foucault's view, it is necessary that historians relate the practices of an age back to their "origin" in a partage. The partage represents a kind of historiographic imperative. If histories are constituted by such ruptures, and it is certain that Foucault believes this,
then, in order to write history, one must refer the practices, institutions, laws, and discourse of an age back to the partage which limits it and determines it. Yet, and once again, while the necessity of referring the practices of an age back to the partage is amply illustrated by Foucault’s entire corpus, neither Foucault nor his commentators have clarified its status. If “[o]ne must accept the introduction of the aleatory as a category in the production of events,” how this should be understand remains a mystery.

Perhaps the partage is nothing apart from its instantiations in particular ages. If this were the case, one would be obliged to view the partage as historical. However, such an historical interpretation does not agree with Foucault’s characterization of the partage as the degree zero of history. On the other hand, it might be easier to caricature the notion, by comparing it to the Adamite theory of naming. The creation of an entirely new world of objects which is attributed to a partage resembles nothing more than the theory according to which the world was created in the word. Indeed, in such works as The Archeology of Knowledge, the partage has a peculiarly linguistic character which lends itself easily to such a caricature. In either case, it is clear that what Foucault demands of his readers is simply to accept (or reject) the notion that history is constituted in a series of ruptures or partages. No arguments are advanced to defend it; we are simply told (in The Archeology of Knowledge, for example) that a new analysis of history which borrows much from Georges Canguilhem, has begun to transform traditional historiography. The validity of this new form of historiography is never demonstrated. Its usefulness to historians is only illustrated by the actual histories produced under the aegis of the methodological principle of referring the “essential choices” of an age back to the partage which constituted them. That this methodology and the notion implied by it remain unexamined and undefended is one of the central weaknesses of Foucault’s historiography.

In one of his later programmatic statements, found in L’Ordre du Discours, Foucault further articulates the notion of partage. Systems of exclusion are given a more detailed treatment, and Foucault isolates three which were found in a confused form in the Histoire de la Folie. Procedures of exclusion include the interdict (l’interdit), rejection, and the will to truth, which excludes falsity. These are historically conditioned forms of exclusion which ultimately refer to power and desire, and to the institutions, laws, etc., which are maintained by power and desire. In order to analyse a society, it is necessary to refer its discourse back to these forms. As in the Histoire, then, the analysis of history requires that the exclusionary events which constitute it be identified and characterized. Nevertheless, only if one accepts the view that history is discontinuous, and that this discontinuity is conditioned by partages, will Foucault’s historiography be practicable. More
acceptance will not validate it however. To defend Foucault, it is necessary to find not only illustrations, but arguments, to support this methodological principle.

Department of Philosophy
Queens University

Notes
8. Although Jacques Derrida has advanced a powerful argument against Foucault's interpretation of Descartes in "Cogito et Histoire de la Folie," I shall treat Foucault's interpretation as unproblematic in this paper. In fact, it can be shown that Derrida completely neglects to take into account the rational character of Descartes' doubt. This oversight, along with a questionable interpretation of the evil genius hypothesis, flaws his criticism, and thus Foucault's account remains the more acceptable one.
9. Another standard interpretation of Foucault that appears in Derrida's work and others suggests that Foucault is attempting an ontology of madness. As I hope to show in this paper, however, madness in the Histoire de la Folie is an historical phenomenon constituted by a partage whose nature is ethical but whose status in terms of history is uncertain.
11. Ibid., p. 61.
Theory Culture & Society caters for the resurgence of interest in culture within contemporary social science. It provides a forum for articles which theorize the relationship between culture and society.

TCS builds upon the heritage of the classic founders of social theory and examines the ways in which this tradition has been re-shaped by a new generation of theorists.

TCS also publishes theoretically informed analyses of everyday life, popular culture and new intellectual movements such as postmodernism.

The journal continues to feature papers by and about the work of a wide range of modern social and cultural theorists such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Baudrillard, Goffman, Bell, Parsons, Elias, Gadamer, Luhmann, Habermas and Giddens.

'TCS carries some of the liveliest and most stimulating articles currently being published in social science. The review articles contain theoretical commentary and controversy at the cutting edge of intellectual development. And the production maintains a sharpness of style, complete with multimedia illustration, that can hardly be found anywhere else.' — Randall Collins, UCLA Riverside

'TCS has in a very short period of time established itself as a major new presence. Its contributors include scholars of the highest international prestige' — Anthony Giddens, Cambridge University

Theory, Culture & Society will be published quarterly in February, June (Double Issue) and November

Subscription Rates, 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Institutional</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one year</td>
<td>£43.00 ($64.50)</td>
<td>£15.00 ($22.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two years</td>
<td>£85.00 ($127.50)</td>
<td>£30.00 ($45.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single copies</td>
<td>£12.00 ($18.00)</td>
<td>£6.00 ($9.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Published by SAGE from 1987

Editor
Mike Featherstone
Teesside Polytechnic, UK
WHEN BATAILLE ATTACKED THE METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMY

Jean Baudrillard

Translator’s Note

Interest in the work of Jean Baudrillard has continued to grow: the impressive critical analyses of the early work, such as For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign (Telos, 1981; orig. 1972); the middle polemics, such as Forgetting Foucault (Humanities in Society, Winter, 1980; orig. 1977); the McLuhanesque fatal strategies of late, such as In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities (Semiotexte, 1983; orig. 1982). The name Baudrillard, as with that of Deleuze and Lyotard, has gained currency — or ‘sign-value’ to use Baudrillard’s appellation — in the exchange that is coming to be referred to as the modernist-postmodernist debate.

At the same time, interest in the work of Georges Bataille (a name long known in France and in French studies) is gaining momentum outside these geo-political and intellectual boundaries. Even that zealous defender of modernity, Jürgen Habermas — in his recently published collection of interviews Autonomy and Solidarity (New Left Books, 1986) — makes a point, in passing, of criticizing Bataille. In North America, this gathering interest has been facilitated by the recent English-language publications of selections of Bataille’s work in Visions of Excess (Minnesota, 1985) and more recently in the journal October (Spring, 1986).

It seems apropos, in light of this unique juncture of interests, to make available the following translation of Jean Baudrillard’s review of the seventh volume of the Œuvres complètes — the collected works — of Georges Bataille (Gallimard, 1976). The review is of particular interest at this juncture for the light it sheds on the role played by Bataille’s works in the continuing development (or developments) of Baudrillard’s thought. It is of further interest in that it helps clarify Baudrillard’s elusive notion of
symbolic exchange, a notion derived in large part from Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (Norton, 1967; orig. 1925), as well as from Bataille's reflections on, and appropriation of that work. I might also note that Baudrillard's 'criticism' here of Bataille's naturalizing the gift-exchange is of particular interest in light of what appears to be his own naturalizing of it, under the guise of "seduction," in the "prodigious metaphysical spiral" that characterizes his own later work (see, for example, his comments in "Game with Vestiges" in *On the Beach* [Winter, 1984]).

David James Miller
Purdue University
FRENCH FANTASIES

WHEN BATAILLE ATTACKED THE METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMY

Jean Baudrillard

Continuity, sovereignty, intimacy, immanent immensity: a single thought in the work of Bataille, a single mythic thought behind these multiple terms: "I am of those who desine men to things other than the incessant growth of production, who incite them to the sacred horror."

The sacred is par excellence the sphere of "La part maudite" [the accursed share] (the central essay of this seventh volume of Bataille's works), sphere of sacrificial expenditure, of wealth [luxe] and of death; sphere of a "general" economy which refutes all the axioms of economy as it is usually understood (an economy which, in generalizing itself, overruns [brûle] its boundaries and truly passes beyond political economy, something that the latter, and all Marxist thought, are powerless to do in accordance with the internal logic of value). It is also the sphere of non-knowledge [non-savoir].

Paradoxically, the works collected here are in a way Bataille's "Book of Knowledge," the one where he tries to erect the buttresses of a vision which, at bottom, doesn't need them; indeed, the drive [pulsion] toward the sacred ought, in its destructive incandescence, to deny the kind of apology and discursive rendition contained in "La Part Maudite" and "La Théorie de Religion." "My philosophic position is based on non-knowledge of the whole, on knowledge concerned only with details." It is necessary, therefore, to read these defensive fragments from the two antithetical perspectives [sur le double versant] of knowledge and non-knowledge.

The Fundamental Principle

The central idea is that the economy which governs our societies results from a misappropriation of the fundamental human principle, which is a solar principle of expenditure. Bataille's thought goes, beyond proper political economy (which in essence is regulated through exchange value), straight to the metaphysical principle of economy. Bataille's target is utility, in its root. Utility is, of course, an apparently positive principle of capital: accumulation, investment, depreciation, etc. But in fact it is, on Bataille's account, a principle of powerlessness, an utter inability to expend. Given that all previous societies knew how to expend, this is, an unbeliev-
able deficiency: it cuts the human being off from all possible sovereignty. All economics is founded on that which no longer can, no longer knows how to expend itself [se défendre], on that which is incapable of becoming the stake of a sacrifice. It is therefore entirely residual, it is a limited social fact; and it is against economy as a limited social fact that Bataille wants to raise expenditure, death and sacrifice as total social facts — such is the principle of general economy.

The principle of utility (use value) blends with the bourgeoisie, with this capitalist class whose definition for Bataille (contrary to Marx) is negative: it no longer knows how to expend. Similarly, the crisis of capital, its increasing mortality and its immanent death throes, are not bound, as in the work of Marx, to a history, to dialectical reversals [péripéties], but to this fundamental law of the inability to expend, which gives capital over to the cancer of production and unlimited reproduction. There is no principle of revolution in Bataille's work: "The terror of revolutions has only done more and more [de mieux en mieux] to subordinate human energy to industry." There is only a principle of sacrifice — the principle of sovereignty, whose diversion by the bourgeoisie and capital causes all human history to pass from sacred tragedy to the comedy of utility.

This critique is a non marxist critique, an aristocratic critique, because it aims at utility, at economic finality as the axiom of capitalist society. The Marxist critique is only a critique of capital, a critique coming from the heart of the middle and petit bourgeois classes, for which Marxism has served for a century as a latent ideology: a critique of exchange value, but an exaltation of use value — and thus a critique, at the same time, of what made the almost delirious greatness of capital, the secular remains of its religious quality: investment at any price, even at the cost of use value. The marxist seeks a good use of economy. Marxism is therefore only a limited petit bourgeois critique, one more step in the banalization of life toward the "good use" of the social! Bataille, to the contrary, sweeps away all this slave dialectic from an aristocratic point of view, that of the master struggling with his death. One can accuse this perspective of being pre- or post-Marxist. At any rate, Marxism is only the disenchanted horizon of capital — all that precedes or follows it is more radical than it is.

What remains uncertain in the work of Bataille (but without a doubt this uncertainty can not be alleviated), is to know whether the economy (capital), which is counterbalanced on absurd, but never useless, never sacrificial expenditures (wars, waste . . .), is nevertheless shot through with a sacrificial dynamic. Is political economy at bottom only a frustrated avatar of the single great cosmic law of expenditure? Is the entire history of capital only an immense detour toward its own catastrophe, toward its own sacrificial end? If this is so, it is because, in the end, one cannot not expend. A longer spiral perhaps drags capital beyond economy, toward a destruction
of its own values; the alternative is that we are stuck forever in this denial of the sacred, in the vertigo of supply, which signifies the rupture of alliance (of symbolic exchange in primitive societies) and of sovereignty.

Bataille would have been impassioned by the present evolution of capital in this era of floating currencies, of values seeking their own level (which is not their transmutation), and the drift of finalities [la dérive des finalités] (which is neither sovereign uselessness nor the absurd gratuitousness of laughter and death). But his concept of expenditure would have permitted only a limited analysis: it is still too economic, too much the flip side of accumulation, as transgression is too close to the inverse figure of prohibition. In an order which is no longer that of utility, but an aleatory order of value, pure expenditure, while retaining the romantic charm of turning the economic inside out, is no longer sufficient for radical defiance [au défi radical] — it shatters the mirror of market value, but is powerless against the shifting mirror [le miroir en dérive] of structural value.

Bataille founds his general economy on a “solar economy” without reciprocal exchange, on the unilateral gift that the sun makes of its energy: a cosmogony of expenditure, which he deploys in a religious and political anthropology. But Bataille has misread Mauss: the unilateral gift does not exist. This is not the law of the universe. He who has so well explored the human sacrifice of the Aztecs should have known as they did that the sun gives nothing, it is necessary to nourish it continually with human blood in order that it shine. It is necessary to challenge [défier] the gods through sacrifice in order that they respond with profusion. In other words, the root of sacrifice and of general economy is never pure and simple expenditure — or whatever drive [pulsion] of excess that supposedly comes to us from nature — but is an incessant process of challenge [défier].

Bataille has “naturalized” Mauss

The “excess of energy” does not come from the sun (from nature) but from a continual higher bidding in exchange — the symbolic process that can be found in the work of Mauss, not that of the gift (that is the naturalist mystique into which Bataille falls), but that of the counter-gift. This is the single truly symbolic process, which in fact implies death as a kind of maximal excess — but not as individual ecstasy, always as the maximal principle of social exchange. In this sense, one can reproach Bataille for having “naturalized” Mauss (but in a metaphysical spiral so prodigious that the reproach is not really one), and for having made symbolic exchange a kind of natural function of prodigality, at once hyper-religious in its gratuitousness and much too close still, a contrario, to the principle of utility and to the economic order that it exhausts in transgression without ever leaving behind.
It is "in the glory of death" [à hauteur de mort] that one rediscovers Bataille, and the real question posed remains: "How is it that all men have encountered the need and felt the obligation to kill living beings ritually? For lack of having known how to respond, all men have remained in ignorance of that which they are." There is an answer to this question beneath the text, in all the interstices of Bataille's text, but in my opinion not in the notion of expenditure, nor in this kind of anthropological reconstruction that he tries to establish from the "objective" data of his day: Marxism, biology, sociology, ethnology, political economy, the objective potential of which he tries to bring together nevertheless, in a perspective which is neither exactly a genealogy, nor a natural history, nor a hegelian totality, but a bit of all that.

But the sacred imperative is flawless in its mythic assertion, and the will to teach is continually breached by Bataille's dazzling vision, by a "subject of knowledge" always "at the boiling point." The consequence of this is that even analytic or documentary considerations have that mythic force which constitutes the sole — sacrificial — force of writing.

Notes


2. Editor's note: Only two pieces from this seventh volume have been translated into English — "Le sacrifice" (dated 1939-1940), a portion of La Limite de l'utile (an abandoned version of La Part Maudite); and "Notice autobiographique" (dated 1958). Both pieces have been translated by Annette Michelson and appear in October (Spring, 1980) respectively as "Sacrifice (pp. 61-74) and "Autobiographical Note" (pp. 107-110).

A number of Bataille's works have been translated into English. In addition to Visions of Excess (Minnesota 1985), translated by Alan Stoekl, these include: Literature and Evil (Urizen Books 1985; orig. 1957), translated by Alastair Hamilton, and Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo (Arno Press, 1977; orig. 1957).

3. The "Puritan mania of business" (money earned is earned in order to be invested ... having value or meaning only in the endless wealth it entails), in that it still entails a sort of madness, challenge, and catastrophic compulsion — a sort of ascetic mania — is opposed to work, to the good use of energy in work and usufruct.

4. Destruction (even gratuitous) is always ambiguous, since it is the inverse figure of production, and falls under the objection that in order to destroy it is first necessary to have produced, to which Bataille is able to oppose only the sun.

MODERNITY*

Jean Baudrillard

Modernity is neither a sociological concept, nor a political concept, nor exactly a historical concept. It is a characteristic mode of civilization, which opposes itself to tradition, that is to say, to all other anterior or traditional cultures: confronting the geographic and symbolic diversity of the latter, modernity imposes itself throughout the world as a homogeneous unity, irradiating from the Occident. Nevertheless, it remains a confused notion, which connotes in a global manner any historical evolution and change of mentality.

Inextricably myth and reality, modernity specifies itself in all domains: modern State, modern technique, modern music and painting — as a sort of general category and cultural imperative. Born of certain profound upheavals of economic and social organization, it becomes concrete at the level of custom, style of life, and the quotidian — even to the point of caricaturing itself. Shifting in its forms, in its contents, in time and in space, it is stable and irreversible only as a system of values, like myth — and, in this sense, it should be written with a capital: Modernity. In that, it resembles Tradition.

As modernity is not an analytic concept, there can be no laws of modernity: there are only traits of modernity. There is no theory of it either: only a logic of modernity and an ideology. As the canonical morality of change, it opposes itself to the canonical morality of tradition, but it is nevertheless just as wary of radical change. It is the "tradition of the new" (Harold Rosenberg). Though linked to a historical and structural crisis, modernity is really only a symptom of it. It does not analyze this crisis, it

expresses it in an ambiguous fashion, in a continual flight before it. It acts as
an ideational force and principal ideology, sublimating the contradictions
of history in the effects of civilization. It makes crisis a value, a contradictory
morality. Thus, as an idea in which a whole civilization recognizes itself,
modernity assumes a regulatory cultural function and thereby surrepti-
tiously rejoins tradition.

Genesis of Modernity

The history of the adjective 'modern' is longer than that of 'modernity'.
In any cultural context, the 'ancient' and the 'modern' alternate signifi-
cantly. But there does not exist a universal 'modernity,' that is to say, a
historical and polemic structure of change and of crisis. The latter can only
be spotted in Europe from the 16th century, and only acquires its full
meaning in the 19th century.

The Renaissance

School textbooks make modern times [les Temps modernes] follow upon
the Middle Ages, from the date of the discovery of America by Christopher
Columbus (1492). The invention of printing and the discoveries of Galileo
inaugurate modern Renaissance humanism. On the level of the arts, and
particularly of literature, the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns
develops and culminates in the 17th and 18th centuries. Profound echoes of
the division of modernity are also heard in the religious domain: the
Reformation (in Wittenberg, on October 31, 1517, Luther posts his 95
theses opposing the indulgences) and the rupture it inaugurates for the
Protestant countries, but also the repercussions of this on the Catholic
world (Council of Trent, 1545-1549, 1551-1552, 1562-1563). The Catholic
Church is already undertaking an updating, making itself, with the Society
of Jesus, modern, worldly and missionary; perhaps this explains why the
term modernity will have a more current, more significant reception in the
countries which have kept the Roman traditions, rites and customs, even
while progressively renovating them. In fact, the term only takes on
strength in countries with a long tradition. To speak of modernity scarcely
has meaning in a country without tradition or Middle Ages, like the United
States. Inversely, modernization has a very strong impact in Third World
countries with strong traditional cultures.

In countries touched by the Catholic Renaissance, the conjunction of
lay and secular humanism with the more worldly ritualism of traditional
Catholic forms and customs lends itself better to all the complexity of
social and artistic life which the development of modernity implies than
does the strict alliance of rationalism and moralism in Protestant culture.
FRENCH FANTASIES

Modernity is not just the reality of technical, scientific and political upheavals since the 16th century; it is also the play of signs, customs, and culture which translates these structural changes at the level of ritual and social habitus.

The 17th and 18th Centuries

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the philosophical and political fundamentals of modernity are set in place: individualistic and modern rationalist thought, of which Descartes and the philosophy of the Enlightenment are representative; the centralized monarchical State, with its administrative techniques succeeding the feudal system; the foundations of a physical and natural science, which lead to the first effects of an applied technology (Diderot's Encyclopédie). Culturally, it is the period of the total secularization of the arts and of the sciences. The quarrel of the Ancients and of the Moderns traverses this whole period, from Perraut (Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes, 1688) and Fontenelle (Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes, 1688), who derived a law of progress of the human spirit, up to Rousseau (Dissertation sur la musique moderne, 1750) and Stendhal (Racine et Shakespeare, 1823), who conceived of 'romanticism' as a radical modernism, taking as his theme daily customs and subjects borrowed from national history. This quarrel defines an autonomous movement, free from any 'Renaissance' or imitation. Modernity is not yet a way of life (the term does not then exist). But it has become an idea (linked to that of progress). It has taken on a liberal bourgeois tonality which will continue to mark it ideologically.

The Industrial Revolution and the 20th Century

The Revolution of 1789 established the modern, centralized and democratic, bourgeois State, the nation with its constitutional system, its political and bureaucratic organization.

The continual progress of the sciences and of techniques, the rational division of industrial work, introduce into social life a dimension of permanent change, of destruction of customs and traditional culture. Simultaneously, the social division of work introduced some profound political cleavages, a dimension of social struggles and of conflicts which will echo through the 19th and 20th Century.

These two major aspects, which will add to demographic development, urban concentration, and the gigantic development of the means of communication and information, will mark modernity, in decisive fashion, as a social practice and way of life articulated on change and innovation — but also on anxiety, instability, continual mobilization, shifting subjectivity,
tension, crisis — and as an ideal representation or mythology. In this context, the date of the appearance of the word itself (Theophile Gautier, Baudelaire, 1850 or so) is significant: it is the moment when modern society realizes itself as such, thinks itself in terms of modernity. The latter becomes a transcendent value, a cultural model, a morality — a myth of reference present everywhere, and concealing in part the historical structures and contradictions which gave birth to it.

The Logic of Modernity

Techno-scientific Concept

The prodigious expansion, particularly for the last 100 years, of science and technique, the rational and systematic development of the means of production, their management and organization, marks modernity as the era of productivity: an intensification of human labour and of human domination over nature, both reduced to the status of productive forces and to the schemas of efficacy and maximal output. This is the common denominator of all modern nations. If this 'revolution' of productive forces has not changed life, because it leaves the relations of production and social relations relatively unchanged, at least it modifies the conditions of life from one generation to the other. It institutes today a profound mutation in modernity: the passage from a civilization of work and progress to a civilization of consumption and leisure. But the mutation is not radical: it does not change the productivist finality, the chronometric cutting up of time, the forward-looking and operational imperatives which remain the fundamental coordinates of the modern ethic of the productive society.

Political Concept

"The abstraction of the political State as such belongs only to modern times [Temps modernes], because the abstraction of private life belongs only to modern times [Temps modernes] . . . In the Middle Ages, the life of the people and the life of the State are identical: man is the real principle of the State . . . modern times [Temps modernes] are the abstract dualism, the abstract reflected opposition" (Marx, Critique de la philosophie de l'État de Hegel).

It is in fact the abstract transcendence of the State, under the sign of the Constitution, and the formal status of the individual, under the sign of private property, which defines the political structure of modernity. The (bureaucratic) rationality of the State and that of private interest and of private consciousness converge in the same abstraction. This duality marks the end of all anterior systems, where political life was defined as an
integrated hierarchy of personal relations. The hegemony of the bureaucratic State has only grown with the progress of modernity. Linked to the extension of the field of political economy and other organizational systems, it invests all sectors of life, mobilizing them to its own advantage, rationalizing them in its image. What sometimes obstinately resists these tendencies (affective life, traditional languages and cultures), may now be deemed residual. However, one of the essential dimensions (if not the essential dimension) of modernity, the abstract centralized State, is perhaps also in the process of faltering. The hegemonic constraint of the State, the bureaucratic saturation of social and individual life, are no doubt preparing great crises in this domain.

Psychological Concept

In contrast to the magic, religious, symbolic consensus of traditional (communal) society, the modern era is marked by the emergence of the individual, with his status of autonomous consciousness, his psychology and personal conflicts, his private interest — indeed, his unconsciousness; the individual is drawn increasingly into the network of media, organizations, and institutions, which give rise to his modern alienation, abstraction, loss of identity in work and leisure, incommunicability, etc., which a whole system of personalization through objects and signs is intended to compensate.

Modernity and Time

In all its dimensions, modern temporality is specific.

The chronometric dimension: this is time which is measured, and by which one measures ones activities; as that which highlights the division of labor and social life, this abstract time belongs to the imperative of productivity, and is substituted for the rhythms of work and celebration. Bureaucratic temporality regulates even "free" time and leisure.

The linear dimension: "modern" time is no longer cyclical, it develops according to a past-present-future line, according to a supposed origin and end. Tradition seems centered on the past, modernity on the future, but, in fact, only modernity projects a past (time gone by), at the same time that it projects a future, according to a dialectic which is proper to it.

The historic dimension: especially since Hegel, history has become the dominant instance of modernity. At the same time as the real becoming of society and as transcendent reference allowing a glimpse of its final accomplishment.

As measurable, irreversible, chronometric succession or dialectical becoming, modernity has secreted an entirely new temporality. This is a
JEAN BAUDRILLARD

crucial feature of modernity — an image of its contradictions. But at the interior of this time, which is indefinite, and no longer knows any eternity, one thing distinguishes modernity: it always wants to be 'contemporary,' i.e., it seeks global simultaneity. After first privileging the dimension of progress and the future, it seems to confound itself more and more today with the present, the immediate, the everyday — the reverse, pure and simple, of historical duration [durée].

The Rhetoric of Modernity

Innovation and Avant-Garde

In the sphere of culture and custom, modernity is translated, in formal opposition, but also in fundamental relation to bureaucratic and political centralization, the homogenization of forms of social life, through an exaltation of depth subjectivity, passion, singularity, authenticity, the ephemeral and the ineffable — in short, through breach of rules and irruption of personality, conscious or not.

Baudelaire's "painter of modern life," the bridge between romanticism and contemporary modernity, marks the departure of this quest for the new, this drifting of the subjective: "There he goes: he runs, he seeks. What is he looking for? Surely this man, such as I have depicted him, this recluse with an active imagination, travelling across the great desert of men... seeks that something we can call modernity."

At all levels, modernity gives rise to an aesthetic of rupture, of individual creativity, of innovation marked by the sociological phenomena of the avant-garde (whether in the domain of culture or in that of fashion) and by the always more extensive destruction of traditional forms (genres in literature, rules of harmony in music, laws of perspective and of representation in painting, academicism and, more generally, the authority and legitimacy of the received models of fashion, sexuality, and social conduct).

Mass Media, Fashion and Mass Culture

This fundamental tendency has been especially active since the 20th century, through the industrial diffusion of cultural means, the extension of mass culture, and the gigantic intervention of the media (press, cinema, radio, television, advertising). The ephemeral character of form and content has been accentuated, one loses count of the revolutions of style, fashion, writing, custom. In radicalizing itself thus in a change of perspective, in a continual dolly-shot, modernity changes meaning. Bit by bit, it loses all the substantial value of progress which underlay it at the beginning, in order to
become an aesthetic of change for change's sake. It abstracts itself and deploys itself in a new rhetoric, it inscribes itself in the play of one or multiple systems of signs. At the limit, it merges purely and simply with fashion, which is at the same time the end/aim (la fin) of modernity.

The reason for this is that modernity enters into a cyclical process of change, where all the forms of the past (archaic, folkloric, rustic, traditional) are dredged up, drained of their substance, but idealized as signs in a code where tradition and neo, ancient and modern, become equivalent and function as alternates. Modernity no longer has the value of rupture at all: it nourishes itself on the vestiges of all cultures in the same way that it does from its technical gadgets or from the ambiguity of all values.

Tradition and Modernity in Third World Societies

Destruction and Change

The distinctive traits, the ferments, the problematic and the contradictions of modernity reveal themselves with the most force where its historical and political impact is the most brutal: in colonized tribal or traditional societies. Apter sees in colonialism a "modernizing force," a "model by which modernization has been universalized."1

Older systems of exchange are dismantled by the rise of money and the spread of the market economy. Traditional systems of power are swept aside under the pressure of colonial administrations or the new indigenous bureaucracies.

However, in the absence of a political and industrial revolution in depth, it is often the most technical, the most exportable features of modernity which touch the developing societies: the objects of industrial production and consumption, the mass media. It is in its technical materiality, and as spectacle, that modernity first invests these societies, and not through the long process of economic and political rationalization peculiar to the West. However, the fallout of modernity has its own characteristic political repercussion: it accelerates the destruction of the indigenous way of life and precipitates social demands for change.

Resistance and Amalgamation

If, therefore, modernity appears here also as rupture, the more precise analysis begun since the Second World War by political anthropology (Balandier, Leach, Apter, Althabe) shows that things are more complex.2 The traditional system (tribal, clanic, lineal [lignager]) offers the strongest resistance to change, and the modern structures (administrative, moral,
religious) intertwine with these forces through the most curious compromises. Modernity always emerges in this context through a resurgence of tradition, though the latter will have lost its conservative meaning. Favret even describes how the peasants of the Aures reactivated traditional political mechanisms as a demand for progress, in order to protest the lagging spread, in their region, of the instruments and signs of modernity.3

This is important: the terrain of anthropology shows, more clearly than European history, the truth of modernity, namely, that it is never radical change or revolution, but always arises in implication with tradition in a subtle cultural play, in a debate where the two are hand in glove, in a process of amalgamation and adaptation. Thus, analyses based on a dialectic of rupture must give way to an approach which recognizes the dynamic of amalgamation.

Ideologies as Signs of Modernity

The analysis of decolonized societies uncovers another specific expression of modernity: ideology. Ideologies (national, cultural, political) are contemporaries of detribalization and of modernization. Imported from the West and impregnated with rituals and with traditional beliefs, they nevertheless constitute, more than the economic infrastructure, the locus of change and conflict, of the upheaval of values and of attitudes. Here it is even more a matter of the rhetoric of modernity, deployed in all its ambiguity in societies where it compensates for real backwardness and non-development.

Such observations help define the paradox of modernity. Destruction and change, but also ambiguity, compromise, amalgamation: modernity is paradoxical, rather than dialectical. If ideology is a typically 'modern' concept, if ideologies are the expression of modernity, no doubt modernity is itself only a vast ideological process.

Ideology and Modernity

Conservatism through Change

Thus the dynamic of modernity reveals itself, in the West as well as the Third World, as both the locus of emergence of factors of rupture and as a compromise solution with respect to factors of order and tradition. The mobility that it implies at all levels (social, professional, geographic; marriage, fashion, sexual liberation) only defines the portion of change tolerable by the system, without essentially changing it. Balandier says of the countries of Black Africa: "political confrontations express themselves in a large measure, but not exclusively, through the debate on the traditional and the
modern: the latter appears especially as their means and not as their principle cause." Similarly, one can say that in developed countries, modernity is not a force that retraces social structure or history: it is rather (in its play with tradition), the place where the social rises to the surface in order to be masked, the place where the dialectic of social meaning is blurred in the rhetorical and mythical code of modernity.

A Spectacular Ambiguity

Changes of political, economic, technological, and psychological structures are the objective historical factors of modernity. They do not constitute modernity in themselves. The latter would be defined rather as the denial of these structural changes, at least as their reinterpretation in terms of cultural style, mentality, way of life, everydayness.

Modernity is not technologic and scientific revolution, it is the play and the implication of the latter in the spectacle of private and social life, in the everyday dimension of the media, of gadgets, of domestic well-being or the conquest of space. Neither science nor technology are themselves "modern," but the effects of science and technology are. Though founded on the historic emergence of science, modernity lives only at the level of the myth of science.

Modernity is neither the rationality nor the autonomy of individual consciousness, which however found it. It is, after the phase of the triumphant ascension of liberties and individual rights, the reactionary exaltation of a subjectivity threatened everywhere by the homogenization of social life. It is the recycling of this subjectivity lost in a system of "personalization," in the effects of fashion and controlled aspiration.

Modernity is not a dialectic of history: it is the eventness, the permanent play of the present moment, the universality of news blurs through the media.

Modernity is not the transmutation of all values, it is the destruction of all former values without surpassing them, it is the ambiguity of all values under the sign of a generalized combinatory. There is no longer either good or evil, but we are not for all that "beyond good and evil" (cf. Nietzsche's critique of modernity).

Modernity is not revolution, even if it hinges on revolutions (industrial, political, computer revolution, revolution of well-being, etc.). It is, as Lefebvre says, "the shadow of the failed revolution, its parody ... Situated in the interior of the inverted world and not put back on its feet, modernity accomplishes the tasks of the revolution: the surpassing of art, of morality, of ideologies ..." One could add: mobility, abundance, liberations of all sorts. But it accomplishes them by means of a permanent revolution of forms, in the play of change, finally in a cycle where the open breach in the world of tradition closes up.
Tradition was nourished by continuity and real transcendence. Modernity, having inaugurated rupture and discontinuity, is now closed into a new cycle. It has lost the ideological drive of reason and progress, and confounds itself more and more with the formal play of change. Even its myths turn against it (technology, once triumphant, is today full of menace). Its ideals and human values have escaped it. Modernity is characterized more and more by the abstract transcendence of all powers. Liberty is formal, people become masses, culture becomes fashion. Once a dynamic of progress, modernity is slowly becoming an activism of well-being. Its myth covers over the growing abstraction of social and political life, under which it boils down bit by bit into a culture of daily events.

Notes


