Restructuring

Foucault and the Genealogical Turn

The fundamental notions that confront us now are no longer consciousness and continuity...nor are they sign and structure. They are event and series, with the whole set of associated notions: regularity, chance, discontinuity, dependence, transformation.¹

In Foucault’s work, the period from 1969 to 1973 marked a transition. An increasing concern with the role of nondiscursive practices led the philosopher away from an “archaeological” focus on historical épistèmes—and away from the history of science generally—in the direction of “genealogical” analyses that owed more to Nietzsche than to Canguilhem. Works like The Order of Things and The Archaeology of Knowledge, in which the transformation of systems of knowledge was the central concern, gave way to Discipline and Punish, in which the driving concern was power.

As this turn from archaeology to genealogy represents a defining moment in Foucault’s intellectual career, it is a matter of some consequence how we understand it. Why did Foucault stop using the word “archaeology” to describe his researches? Why did he turn his attention to the social context of knowledge?

The traditional answer to these questions has come not from historians, but from philosophers: Foucault, it is said, did not pursue further work under the banner of archaeology because he could not. The project of archaeology was to treat the historical transformation of discourse as a rule-governed phenomenon—one that could be meaningfully studied in isolation from its “nondiscursive” context. This project, once it was rigorously and systematically developed, showed itself to be irrevocably flawed. It suffered from internal contradictions that could be neither tolerated nor resolved. Faced with this failure, the interpretation runs, Foucault searched for a way to recast the archaeological question. He found it in the genealogical approach of Nietzsche, with the result that his analyses moved definitively toward society and power.

This text-driven and internalist approach to Foucault’s career is illuminating, and unquestionably helps us to see a number of conceptual flaws to which he himself was inattentive. As an explanation for the change in his practice of philosophy, however, it is inadequate. Foucault’s altered trajectory cannot be wholly derived from his reasonings; nor can it be understood without once raising our eyes from his writings. The “methodological failure of archaeology” was a necessary, but not sufficient, cause of the so-called genealogical turn.

While the method that Foucault formalized in The Archaeology of Knowledge had logical holes in it, so, it must be said, had each of his prior studies. Far from considering this an indictment of his work, Foucault felt (and repeatedly said) that inconsistency was the natural concomitant of his style of work: by the time he finished a book, he was invariably asking different questions than when he began it. Some questions were simply left in abeyance; some problems could not but receive unsatisfactory solutions. The essential point was to maintain a vigorous questioning. Hence, the fact that archaeology as a doctrine proved less than perfectly coherent, while interesting, tells us nothing about why Foucault turned to genealogy. Conversely, a close look at Foucault’s practice of philosophy—his situated deployment of concepts—promises to tell us a great deal.

On the strength of a wealth of evidence, including books, treatises, essays, talks, lecture courses and interviews, this chapter will offer an alternative account of the genealogical turn. It will argue that, rather than viewing the transition from archaeology to genealogy as a problem-driven
event, we should see it as a *concept-driven* one. In Foucault’s thought, the period after 1968 was characterized by the large-scale importation of concepts. Specifically, Foucault grafted onto archaeology, sometimes well, sometimes clumsily, categories derived from Marxism and from the thought of his philosophical associate Gilles Deleuze. It is a fact that many of these transplanted categories withered on the vine after several years (with the result that their irruption has been largely ignored in the critical literature). But as this chapter will show, it was the use of an essentially alien vocabulary that allowed Foucault to restructure his thought; and it is impossible to follow the path that leads from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to *Discipline and Punish* without recognizing an intervening period of restructuring.

As the foregoing chapter showed, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* offered a summation and elaboration of the method Foucault believed he had created, and responded to prior philosophical currents as well as to particularly disciplinary questions in the history of ideas. Archaeology was meant to be a descriptive enterprise: a way of investigating historical texts making claims to scientificity. The essence of the method—which Foucault felt he had applied, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, in *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things*—was the bracketing of textual meaning in favor of an exclusive focus on description. In a 1969 interview, Foucault called archaeology “the description of this set, this extraordinarily vast, massive and complex mass of things that have been said in a culture—as it happens, in our own culture... that is what, in the large, I understand by archaeology.” Archival description set itself apart from traditional analyses in the history of science by isolating an original domain. That domain was the totality of discursive statements, as distinguished from (logical) propositions and (grammatical) sentences. Rather than tracing the development of scientific disciplines in the familiar terms of influence, tradition, and genius, the archaeologist voluntarily confined himself to evaluating raw statements within so-called “discursive formations.”

No consideration was to be given to statements’ significance or truth-value. They were to be evaluated solely in terms of the objects they deployed, the concepts they utilized, the theoretical strategies in which they participated, and the subjective positions that they allowed. Unlike the historian of science, the archaeologist did not attempt to read the progressive unveiling of truth in the sciences he examined; instead, he sought to establish the conditions that had rendered a given statement, at a given time, scientifically acceptable. This was Foucault’s meaning when he said, as early as 1966, that archaeology’s concern was with “the limits of enunciability.”

*The Order of Discourse*, which was published as a stand-alone volume in 1971, differed markedly in form from its predecessor. It was not a treatise but a speech: Foucault’s inaugural oration at the Collège de France. Unlike *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, which was massive in scope, specific in its aims; and addressed to a narrow professional audience for whom the relevant debates were clear, this work was small in scale, exceedingly broad in its aims, and addressed to a large audience of nonspecialists. Small as it was, however, *The Order of Discourse* allowed Foucault to make three important moves in relation to his prior work. Let us briefly examine each of them in turn.

Firstly, Foucault expressed his supposition that “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures, the role of which is to conjure its powers and dangers.” Examples of such procedures included acts of exclusion (like forbidding a subject), acts of classification (like attribution to an author), and acts aimed at limiting acceptable speakers (like licensing). These procedures had not played any significant role in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, where the emphasis was placed on discursive systems in themselves and not the relationship of society to those systems. Now, however, Foucault implied that only by looking at society’s wish to banish certain dangers could one understand the order of discourse.

Secondly, Foucault made an announcement that would have come as a surprise to even his most devoted readers. He declared his intention to examine the “will to truth” that had dominated the history of the West since ancient Greece. Never, in any of his prior writings, had Foucault shown the slightest inclination to embrace this Nietzschean–Heideggerian notion. Suddenly, he seemed to suggest, our attention was owed to particular events at the dawn of Western history: these events—this “historical break” between Hesiod and Plato—*initiated* the discursive paradigm described in
The Archaeology of Knowledge. The epistemic transformations that had come under scrutiny in The Order of Things were, by this logic, simply moments in the 2500-year evolution of a Western will to truth. Foucault wrote:

Everything happens as if, starting from the great Platonic break, the will to truth had its own history, which is not that of constraining truths; a history of objects to know, a history of functions and positions of the knowing subject, a history of material, technical and instrumental embodiments of knowledge.6

This move engendered two deformations in the archaeological perspective. It placed historical and geographical limits on what had seemed to be a metaphistorical—and hence universally applicable—approach to knowledge. And as the reference to “material, technical and instrumental embodiments,” showed, it put the nondiscursive aspects of knowledge production—that is, the outside world—squarely on the research agenda. Discourse was no longer to be treated, even provisionally, in its autonomy.

Finally, Foucault offered a harsh critique of the history of ideas. He challenged the historiographical tradition that recounted, in the sciences or elsewhere, “the continuous unfolding of an ideal necessity.” The corrective that he proposed demanded that the historian “treat not the representations that might exist behind discourses, but rather the discourses themselves as regular and distinct series of events.”7 Such a critique, as we have seen, was already central to The Archaeology of Knowledge. This was still visibly the same argument: traditional history interprets the representations behind texts, while archaeology seeks to analyze component statements in their coexistence and succession.8 Where the argument differed was in its concepts. Archaeology had put great emphasis upon the ideas of systems (systèmes), discontinuities (discontinuités), series (séries), transformations (transformations), and thresholds (seuils).9 Foucault now shifted the focus to “chance, the discontinuous, and materiality.”10

It is questionable whether Foucault’s audience on December 2, 1970, the day he gave the lecture entitled “The Order of Discourse,” would have been attuned to these subtle changes of position. Many were undoubtedly see-
discipline to an adjacent one) are the traditional domain of archaeology. Modifications that occur outside of the discursive formation (including economic, social, and political changes) were purposely bracketed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, but seem now to be matters of active concern. The joint effect of all three kinds of modifications is described by Foucault as yielding a “[principle] of exclusion and of choice.”

Recapping, we can say that every such modification—whether it takes place within discourse or in the world surrounding it—is treated by Foucault as a limiting factor. Every change is a choice, and excludes other choices. The totality of these exclusions narrows the range of allowable discourse to that with which any given era is actually confronted. These choices, however, do not point back to a chooser. There is no “subject of knowledge” controlling the trajectory of choices and exclusions, no guiding mind “who would invent them or found them at a primary level.” As the foregoing discussion suggested, there is simply an aggregate of events.

The heightened interest in sociopolitical context apart, this is a straight description of the archaeological method. It would be nothing more than that if Foucault did not go on to characterize the aggregate of choices and exclusions as “an anonymous and polymorphous will to knowledge.” This surprising move, which sets *The Will to Knowledge* apart from all of Foucault’s pre-1970 work, radically alters the archaeological equation. For a “will to know,” even one that wells up anonymously from countless material events, remains a will (i.e., a drive) and a will to know (i.e., there is direction to the drive). To say that this will is “susceptible to regular transformations” is to beg the question. Where knowledge is concerned, susceptibility to transformation was the acknowledged starting-point: underlying will is the novelty. Foucault introduces momentum into his system at the expense of an inexplicable teleology.

**Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow**, who worked closely with Foucault during the latter’s California sojourns of the late 1970s and early 1980s, provided the first rigorous analysis of the archaeological method in their 1983 *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Their argument, which has continued to dominate the historiography of Foucault’s early work, was that archaeology represented a valiant effort to transport phenomenological detachment into the study of knowledge; that it had failed, however, to achieve coherence; and that this failure had directly induced the turn to Nietzschean genealogy. This argument was fleshed out with ample citation from Foucault’s major works. The authors made no pretense of looking beyond the texts.

The fatal flaw that Dreyfus and Rabinow observed in archaeology was its unwillingness to maintain phenomenological restraint. Originally committed to a task of pure description, Foucault, they argued, came to conflate the regularities that he observed in statements with rules; the difference, of course, is that the former may merely be said to be observable, while the latter govern. “The peculiarity of this strange alliance between rules as descriptive regularities and as prescriptive operative forces,” they wrote, “becomes obvious when Foucault is led to speak of locating the various regularities that [statements] obey.”

In addressing the causal power of the rules, Dreyfus and Rabinow continued, Foucault “illegitimately hypostasized the observed formal irregularities which described discursive formations into conditions of these formations’ existence.”

The seriousness of this error was compounded by Foucault’s determination to treat discourse as essentially autonomous and undetermined. Since he could not provide a contextual response to the question of what force regulates discursive practices, he was thrown back upon “the strange notion of regularities which regulate themselves.” “[T]he archaeologist,” the authors concluded, “must attribute causal efficacy to the very rules which describe these practices’ systematicity.”

In the “self-imposed silence” that followed *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and lasted until 1975, Dreyfus and Rabinow saw circumstantial evidence for their assertion that the failure of archaeology was apparent to Foucault. The philosopher subsequently showed himself to be, as they put it, “one of those rare thinkers, like Wittgenstein and Heidegger, whose work shows both underlying continuity and an important reversal not because their early efforts were useless, but because in pushing one way of thinking to its limits they both recognized and overcame those limitations.”

Specifically, Foucault extricated himself from the illusion of autonomous discourse by immersing himself in Nietzschean genealogy. The genealogical imperative—to confront the past in the full knowledge that every “eternal truth” is a violently imposed interpretation—allowed Foucault to
situates his formerly free-floating discourses within a conditioning structure of practices. Moreover, they argued, his 1971 essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," presented the thinker’s first halting steps toward a theory of power. Dreyfus and Rabinow were not modest in the value they attached to this piece. "[I]t would be hard to overestimate the importance of the essay for understanding the progression of the work which followed," they wrote; "all of the seeds of Foucault’s work in the 1970s can be found in this discussion of Nietzsche." 17

Dreyfus and Rabinow did not linger over The Order of Discourse, Foucault’s follow-up to The Archaeology of Knowledge. With only one page devoted to it, it received the most cursory treatment of any of Foucault’s books. This is perhaps unsurprising. The argument of Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics stressed Foucault’s self-imposed silence in the wake of archaeology’s failure. The Order of Discourse, which achieved broad circulation and showed clear ongoing commitment to archaeological categories, was a singularly inconvenient piece of evidence.

Critics who have engaged with The Order of Discourse, on the other hand, have tended to view it as fundamentally a programmatic statement—a discourse on method highlighting changes in Foucault’s theoretical apparatus and offering the key to his genealogical works of the 1970s. Its unique place in his oeuvre encourages this interpretation. It was the philosopher’s first publication as a professor of the Collège; his first major work to employ the term “genealogy”; and his first major work not to employ the term “archaeology.” Moreover, inaugural lectures at the Collège de France have the express aim of laying out the method and substance of the investigations that a chairholder intends to undertake in the years to come.

Béatrice Han, one of the most insightful contemporary readers of Foucault, used The Order of Discourse as a road map to Foucault’s later writings. In this, she departed from Dreyfus and Rabinow, whose interpretation she otherwise scrupulously followed. Han argued, like her predecessors and with explicit reference to them, that archaeology rendered itself incoherent by positing self-regulating discursive regularities. 18 She hesitated, however, to attribute Foucault’s genealogical turn simply to Nietzschean thought, noting that Nietzsche played a privileged role in all of Foucault’s work, from start to finish. She wrote: "How, then, can the transition from archaeology to genealogy be understood? The Order of Discourse shows that this Foucauldian ‘turn’ is due to the importation of a specific Nietzschean concept, the ‘will to truth.’" 19

Han argued that the concept of the “will to truth” was doubly useful to Foucault. It enabled him to use Nietzsche’s own method for confronting the will to truth—namely, genealogy—and thereby “to escape the impasses of archaeology by shifting from the study of the discursive to a contextual analysis of all practices.” At the same time, it allowed him, by questioning the historicity of will to truth, to conceptualize the relationship between knowledge and power in a new way. Rather than seeing the two as distinct and isolable, or even seeing one as the instrument of the other, Foucault moved toward a vision of power and knowledge as linked and reciprocal. “Henceforth, to respond to the question of the conditions of possible knowledge," wrote Han, “will involve, not only an archaeology of knowledge, but also the genealogy of this ‘power–knowledge nexus,’ which remains to be defined.” 20

For Han, then, the notion of the will to truth was vitally important. It provided the framework for all of Foucault’s genealogical analyses of the mid-1970s. It stood implicitly behind Discipline and Punish, and explicitly behind the first volume of The History of Sexuality, the French subtitle of which was The Will to Knowledge. Most importantly, it made sense of the radical and abrupt changes that Foucault’s work underwent around 1970.

It will help to look briefly at the nature of those changes. There is no clearer way to observe the metamorphosis of Foucault’s thought during this period than to watch the shift in meaning that one of his key concepts undergoes. “Exteriority,” an idea that plays a critical role in the thinker’s works throughout his career, provides an excellent barometer for the change that is taking place in his philosophy as a whole. Let us examine the distinctive meanings that this single word takes on over the course of three years.

In The Archaeology of Knowledge, we find the following description of the archaeological method:
Another characteristic trait: the analysis of statements treats them in the systematic form of exteriority. . . . In order to restore the statements to their pure dispersion. In order to analyze them in an exteriority that is unquestionably paradoxical inasmuch as it points back to no opposing form of interiority.21

In using the word “exteriority” here, Foucault’s object is to demonstrate that statements can be analyzed as a field without reference to a subject or consciousness that would have produced them. To view statements in their exteriority is to treat them as a system of dispersion. As Foucault himself suggests a few sentences later, “neutrality” would capture just as well the meaning that he wants to convey. Going outside is simply a way of saying that statements have no inside.

The Order of Discourse seems, on the surface, to maintain this concern. Foucault declares that his method is defined by a “rule of exteriority,” and defines that as a commitment not to search for hidden meaning within discourse. This is consistent with the earlier usage. But the relevant section reads:

Fourth rule: that of exteriority: to not go from discourse toward its interior and hidden nucleus, toward the heart of a thought or of a signification that would have manifested itself in it; rather, starting from discourse itself, from its appearance and its regularity, to go toward its external conditions of possibility, toward that which gives rise to the chance series of these events and fixes its boundaries.22

The first thing to notice is that exteriority is no longer a seen as a position vis-à-vis “statements”; the relevant domain is now the more all-encompassing “discourse.” The concern in this passage is to describe a kind of analysis that would move from the observed regularities of discourse to the extrinsic phenomena that have rendered that particular kind of discourse possible. While the meaning of “external conditions” is ambiguous, it is evident that “exteriority” has lost its status as a synonym of “neutrality”: going outside is now, quite literally, the act of looking outside of discourse for the factors that condition it.

The meaning-shift reaches its conclusion in the final lecture of The Will to Knowledge. Foucault finishes the course with a retrospective glance at the principles that have guided his investigation of the will to know. He tells his listeners:

As to the principle of exteriority: I have never tried to do the analysis of the text starting from the text itself. . . . I have attempted to dispense with the principle of textuality by placing myself in a dimension which was that of history. . . . I have tried to mark the discursive events that have their place not in the selfsame interior of the text or of many texts, but which have their place in the fact of the functions or roles that are given to different discourses in the interior of a society. To pass outside of the text in order to rediscover the function of discourse in the interior of a society—that is what I call the principle of exteriority.23

What do we observe in this passage? Foucault continues to use the word “exteriority,” but now given that meaning that is frankly functionalist: to go outside of the text is to find the societal function of the discourse that it represents. Lest he be thought unclear on this point, Foucault says moments later, "I have tried to show how [the] knowledge of the order of things and of the order of man . . . arose only as a pretext in the wake of an economic and political caesura."24 Economics and politics take the front seat. There is no conception of the "power-knowledge nexus" here; there is, instead, the frank subordination of knowledge to a power understood in wholly sociopolitical terms.

How are we to understand this migration of meaning? Why did Foucault begin—suddenly and quite without precedent—to treat knowledge as that which serves a social function? Why, to be clear, did he broaden his archaeological inquiry to include nondiscursive practices, and begin to speak what sounds disturbingly like the Marxist language of ideology?

Throughout the decade of the 1960s, Foucault’s radical opposition to the Marxist conceptualization of knowledge—and to Marxist analysis in general—could not have been more evident. For years after the publication of The Order of Things, he drew the fire of the left for having written that “Marxism resides in the thought of the nineteenth century like a fish in water: which is to say, anywhere else it stops breathing.”25 So far from repudiating the
claim, Foucault self-consciously (and biliously) echoed it in his 1966 attack on Sartre: "The critique of dialectical reason is the magnificent and pathetic effort of a man of the nineteenth century to think the twentieth. In this sense, Sartre is the last Hegelian, and I would even say the last Marxist."²⁶

Foucault repeatedly opposed the structuralist communists grouped around his former teacher Louis Althusser, telling them flatly that "Marx does not represent an epistemological break."²⁷ At the same time, he distanced himself from nonstructuralist communists, calling their thought "a soft, insipid, humanist Marxism."²⁸ At all times, he refused the expedient of class analysis. The extent to which this was the case is manifest when we scan Foucault’s *Dits et écrits*: the words “capitalism” and “proletariat” do not appear in any work by Foucault prior to 1970.

In September of 1968, Foucault returned to Paris after two years in Tunisia. He submitted the manuscript of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in November. In January of 1969, he began his tenure as director of the philosophy department at the newly created Centre universitaire expérimental de Vincennes.²⁹ Vincennes was a highly unusual institution. The brainchild of Minister of Education Edgar Faure, it represented a considerable departure in French higher education. An attentive response to the events and demands of May 1968, the university had been built from the ground up, was largely interdisciplinary, and offered courses in nontraditional fields like psychoanalysis and semiotics.³⁰

Upon his return to France, Foucault had been nominated by the steering committee of Vincennes—a prestigious group which counted among its members Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Georges Canguilhem—to a panel that would make hiring decisions for departmental chairs. Foucault and his colleagues did their work, and then took the unusual step of allowing Foucault to resign his seat on the panel in order to himself stand for the position of chair of the philosophy department. He was elected without dissent.³¹

Faced with the task of creating an entire philosophy department from scratch, Foucault chose to surround himself with individuals whom he knew personally. David Macey cites Foucault’s partner Daniel Defert to the effect that the philosophers’s recruits were alike in “having difficulties of one kind or another with the educational establishment.” It is certainly not surprising that Foucault would have felt an affinity for academic outsiders: he had been one for practically the whole of his professional career. It is striking, however, that Foucault chose to surround himself with colleagues who, taken as a whole, were far more politically radical than he himself was. “Whatever his precise motives,” writes Macey, “Foucault had succeeded in creating a political horns’ nest.”³²

When teaching began in January of 1969, the atmosphere of the new university was, like its faculty, pervaded by the spirit of May 1968. Didier Eribon offers a sense of the prevailing mood with an itemization of philosophy courses on offer during 1969 and 1970: Jacques Rancière’s “revisionism-leftism” and “theory of the second stage of Marxism-Leninism: Stalinism”; Etienne Balibar’s “sciences of social formations and Marxist philosophy”; Judith Miller’s “cultural revolutions” and “third stage of Marxism-Leninism: Maoism”; Alain Badiou’s “ideological struggle” and “Marxist dialectics”; and Henry Weber’s “introduction to twentieth-century Marxism-Leninism: Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolshevik movement.”³³ More than five thousand students entered the “experimental center” ready to imbibe these subjects. A great many were equally ready to continue the university uprising of the preceding spring.

Foucault, who was initially considered a rightist by students because of his earlier writings (and who had, in fact, been out of the country during the May events), was thus operating in an immensely politicized environment. Professionally, he was surrounded by committed Marxists. He taught at a university that would, within a year, be shut down by minister of education Olivier Guichard for the Marxist–Leninist content of its courses. And he quickly found himself in the midst of a social struggle that seemed to vindicate the most hysterical Marxist prophecies.

Outsider status did not keep him from being swept into the political maelstrom. In late January, a mass of students and professors occupied Vincennes in solidarity with struggles then taking place in the Latin Quarter. Foucault was among the two hundred and twenty participants gassed and then apprehended for questioning. In the aftermath, thirty-four students were expelled. In February of 1969, Foucault spoke at a large Latin Quarter rally protesting the authorities’ response and deplored its “calculated repression.”³⁴

Foucault’s status increased within nonestablishment leftist circles, as the philosopher was increasingly seen not as the author of *The Order of Things*,
but as a fellow fighter who had faced arrest. At the same time, his contacts within the left multiplied rapidly. In a remarkable shift, Foucault spoke on the same stage, and for the same cause, as Jean-Paul Sartre. Defert became a member of the Maoist-inspired Gauche Prolétarienne, creating thereby a direct channel of communication between Foucault and one of the most extreme leftist groups then in existence.

The upsurge of a Marxist vocabulary within Foucault's work, just at this particular moment, was swift and unmistakable. It began in February 1969, when Foucault, in a seeming reversal, called Marx a "founder of discursivity": that is, an individual who had established the possibility of a limitless discourse. In an article published at the same time, Foucault wrote of "the civil consciousness of the parliamentary bourgeoisie" in the seventeenth century. This nonironic reference to a class actor, and to the notion of class consciousness, was literally without precedent in Foucault's oeuvre.

Over the ensuing three years, the trend broadened and intensified. A February 1970 interview saw Foucault implicitly link reflection on the Vincennes experience with a newly functionalist perspective on knowledge:

> Now note how recent developments have caused new problems to appear: it is no longer what are the limits of knowledge (or its foundations), but who are those who know? How is the appropriation and distribution of knowledge achieved? How can a form of knowledge take its place in a society, develop there, mobilize resources, and put itself in the service of an economy?

In an autumn interview in Japan, Foucault told his interlocutor that the university students of the West had thus far missed the major lesson of May 1968, namely, that "[their] instruction was ultimately nothing other that the renovation and reproduction of the values and forms of knowledge of bourgeois society." He warned that "the bourgeoisie is a system that has an enormous capacity for adaptation," and lamented that "capitalist society has totally dispossessed literature" of its subversive function. Pointing directly to the Chinese cultural revolution and other revolutionary movements worldwide, he asked, "Is it not now time to move on to truly revolutionary actions?"

Foucault's synchronization of his own project with that of the French far left had serious consequences. His presentation of his work, both past and present, changed dramatically. In a 1971 interview in Brazil, he hinted at theoretical inadequacies in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, saying: "I did not systematize the relations between discursive formations and economic and social formations, the importance of which has been incontestably established by Marxism."

At the same time, Foucault revisited older works in order to present them in a way that was consistent with a thoroughgoing Marxist perspective. The complex theses of *Madness and Civilization* were distilled, in a talk he gave in late 1970, to the notion that the medicalization of madness was brought about for economic and social reasons. If so-called madmen were locked up in 1665, it was because "capitalist industrial society could not tolerate the existence of groups of vagabonds." If so-called madmen were released in 1793, it was because they were deemed "a reserve army of labor power." The madman, rather than a marker for successive eras' confrontation with unreason, was "an avatar of our capitalist societies."

How fully did Marxist categories infiltrate Foucault's thinking? We can glean the extent from his comments in a February 1972 debate. On the subject of penal justice—of which he would later provide such nuanced and multilayered critique—he proclaimed, "Penal justice was not produced by the plebs, nor by the peasantry, nor by the proletariat, but well and truly by the bourgeoisie." The intellectual coherence of the statement is undeniable: the bourgeoisie creates knowledge to serve a sociopolitical function. What is remarkable is its stark simplicity. Foucault's traditional epistemological concerns are wholly absent; his determination to treat knowledge as something more than a stick that authority wields is not yet present.

This, however, was to be the high tide of Marxism in Foucault's work. Over the next three years, it would progressively ebb. By the time *Discipline and Punish* appeared in 1975, the language of class and repression would have vanished entirely; so, too, would the reductionist desire to look at knowledge in terms of its function.

Marxism, then, provided a ready-made and highly productive framework within which Foucault could discuss the relation between knowledge and sociopolitical forces. It also allowed him, just as crucially during the heady
days following May 1968, to participate in the shared idiom of social protest within the French left. What it did not provide, as we have already seen, was any sophisticated way to conceptualize what Han called the “power-knowledge nexus.” Inasmuch as Marxism gave grounds to speak of power at all, it was by treating it as a quasi-object possessed by the ruling class: power and the state were synonymous.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is the way Foucault employed the word power when, in mid-1971, it first appeared in his conceptual arsenal. Speaking on the subject of the prison, he told the readers of Combat that “It is one of the instruments of power, and one of the most excessive. By what right does power keep it secret?”43 The meaning of these sentences is unchanged if we replace the word power (le pouvoir) with state (l’état). Likewise, in a discussion later in the year, Foucault equated the conflicts engendered by power with “the political struggle understood as class war.”44 Yet the philosopher was struggling, even as he made these statements, toward a more inclusive understanding of the exterior forces that acted upon discourse. From his first empirical studies of the early 1960s, he had demonstrated a sensitivity to the existence of power centers that were irreducible to the state and its extremities. Consistent Marxist critique, however, demanded that such institutions—hospitals, asylums, schools, courts, and others—be recognized as instruments of political oppression and class justice.45

It has been noted that the high-water mark of Marxism in Foucault’s work came in February of 1972, and that after that date its vocabulary and conceptual apparatus entered into retreat. It is no coincidence that March of 1972 saw the publication of Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, the landmark text by psychoanalyst Félix Guattari and Foucault’s longtime philosophical collaborator, Gilles Deleuze. The emergence of a recognizably “Foucauldian” model of power was not only contemporaneous with that book’s publication, but was voiced in explicit reference to it.

Anti-Oedipus was an original work, and on many levels a shocking one. Stylistically, it was like nothing before it: giddy, fragmented, frequently obscene, and given to tangents. Thematically, it made the revolutionary leap of suggesting that the major problem confronting modern Western culture was not the one identified by Freud, but rather Freudianism itself.46 Conceptually, it offered a (nonmetaphorical) vision of the world as an aggregation of interconnected machines. “What a mistake,” wrote the authors, “to have ever said the id”; “Everywhere it is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections.”47

To mark the arrival of Anti-Oedipus, the journal L’Arc organized a session during which Foucault would interview Deleuze. The two were a natural pairing. Deleuze and Foucault had united as early as 1966 on a revision of Nietzsche’s works. In 1972, they worked together still as social activists. Foucault and Defert had, in 1971, founded the Group for Information on Prisons, or G.I.P. Headquartered in Foucault’s apartment at 285 Rue Vaugirard, the G.I.P. had as its mission to raise public awareness about what was going on inside France’s prisons, and to provide a forum in which prisoners and ex-prisoners could themselves speak about what they had experienced. Deleuze was immediately attracted to the group’s program, and joined Foucault and Defert in their labs. “I was convinced beforehand,” Deleuze remarked years later, “that [Foucault] was right, that he had indeed created a group of a wholly new type.”48 Throughout the early 1970s, Deleuze and Foucault operated in close proximity, both as activists and as thinkers.

In the course of the L’Arc interview, the two thinkers appeared closely aligned on major theoretical points and intimately familiar with each other’s ongoing work. Deleuze remarked, for instance, upon Foucault’s use of prison-reform texts by Jeremy Bentham, although Foucault was fully three years away from publishing his findings on that topic.49 Foucault, for his part, attributed his very ability to confront the question of power to the work of Deleuze:

If the reading of your books (from the Nietzsche all the way up to what I’ve gleaned of Capitalism and Schizophrenia) has been so essential for me, it’s because they seem to me to go very far in posing this problem: Beneath this old theme of meaning, signified, signifier, etc., finally the question of power, of the inequality of powers, of their struggles. Each struggle develops around a particular site of power.50

Suddenly, “power” was not merely one concern among many for Foucault, but the very nucleus of his concerns as a philosopher. And the idea of searching beneath the “old theme” of meaning, of signified and signifier,
and getting to the question of power: this Foucault attributed to Deleuze. Deleuze had seen that there exist multiple centers of power around which struggles develop, and this was a major breakthrough. It was upon this notion that *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* would be built.

Existing frameworks of thought were useless in dealing with the question of power, Foucault suggested, because they failed to recognize it as such. “We still don’t know,” he told Deleuze, “what power is.” Foucault continued:

And Marx and Freud are perhaps insufficient to help us to know this deeply enigmatic thing, at once visible and invisible, present and hidden, invested everywhere, that is called power. The theory of the State and the traditional analysis of the State apparatus do not, undoubtedly, exhaust the field of exercise of power’s functioning.51

These two sentences contained no fewer than three innovations, each one of tremendous import. Firstly, Marxism’s position as a comprehensive critical theory was called into question. Secondly, analysis in terms of the state and the state apparatus was pronounced unequal to the task of comprehending power in its functioning. Finally, power was described as an enigmatic entity that was visible and invisible, present and hidden, but most importantly, “invested everywhere.” Foucault now spoke of power not in the singular, but in terms of “systems of power” that could be found deeply and subtly interwoven “throughout the network of society.”52 Power was distributed, dynamic, and nodal.

Foucault’s homage to his interlocutor was more than lip service. This conceptualization of power, which represented a radical innovation for Foucault, owed much to Deleuze. As Foucault himself suggested, it relied upon an image of power not as the indivisible possession of a ruling group, but rather as a centerless network of points.53 *Anti-Oedipus*, like many of Deleuze’s shorter essays, offered just this. It also demanded, as Foucault’s use of the expression “functioning of power” hints, a conception of the social field as machinelike in nature. Again, Deleuze had written: “There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only the process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing-machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species life.”54

From 1972 onward, Foucault visibly liquidated the anthropological vocabulary that, for more than a decade, had served him so well. Whereas for years he had spoken in terms of culture, exclusion, and transgression, he now spoke of society, mechanisms, devices (dispositifs), and relays.55 If Foucault was able to make such effective use of the ideas in *Anti-Oedipus*, it was because Deleuzian concepts had, in fact, progressively colonized Foucault’s thought since 1970. Daniel Defert notes that, in the autumn of 1970, Foucault made a study of Deleuze’s work.56 At that time, Deleuze had just published the two most important books of his career to date: *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*. Foucault’s reading went into a laudatory review piece entitled “Theatrum philosophicum,” which Critique printed in November of 1970. Foucault praised the two books as “great among the great,” and speculated, in words that have since become famous, that “one day, perhaps, the century will be Deleuzian.”57

*Difference and Repetition* was a frontal attack on the Hegelian dialectic, an effort to found an ontology rooted in the concept of difference. The crucial element for Deleuze was to think difference in itself—that is, not as an element of negativity to be opposed to identity and sameness, but rather as an element that is already contained in each and every thing. Difference, Deleuze affirmed, is *what we are*; repetition—the complex and dynamic repetition of that difference—is *Being*. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze crafted a logic appropriate to a thinking grounded in difference. The aim was to go to the very origin-point of philosophy’s intoxication with identity, to Platonism, and to overturn it. Overturning Platonism meant, first of all, recognizing the gravity of Plato’s decision to depict Being in terms of the true and the false, the original and the simulacrum.58 This founding act had infected all subsequent Western thought.

Claire Colebrook observes that Deleuze’s critique of Platonic simulacra must be seen simultaneously as an effort to radicalize phenomenology. The phenomenologists had bypassed any formal attempt to conceptualize the “subject,” preferring to leap “to the things themselves,” the *phenomena*. Their efforts would be directed at comprehending the flux of experience. Deleuze carried this imperative a step further. Rather than treating the
onrushing stream of phenomena as appearances of something (i.e., with something else behind them), Deleuze implausibly substituted the Platonic concept of the simulacrum, or the appearance as appearance and nothing more.\(^{59}\) He asked, in essence, that we take only the part of Plato's system that he would have wished us to throw away. This permitted the thinking of a thoroughgoing world-as-appearance, which was crucial to Deleuze's larger project of banishing dualism. A world constructed entirely of simulacra was wholly immanent. Its appearances hid no truer world; it was as it seemed.

Few ideas in *The Logic of Sense* resonated more strongly with Foucault than this one. His review piece lingered over the exploration of simulacra, and held that through this concept new life had been given to metaphysics. Deleuze, wrote Foucault, had not treated metaphysics as an illusion, but instead treated illusion as a metaphysics. That is to say, Deleuze had presented the very idea of "illusion"—of the surface appearance as opposed to the real—as the concomitant of a particular Western metaphysics.\(^{60}\) Instead of once again denouncing metaphysics as the forgetting of being," he wrote, Deleuze had reinvented it as the "discourse of the materiality of incorporeals."\(^{61}\) In *The Order of Discourse*, written the following month, Foucault made this expression a personal rallying cry, advocating that philosophy advance "in the direction, paradoxical at first glance, of a materialism of the incorporeal."\(^{62}\)

It is worth asking what "materialism of the incorporeal" meant. For Deleuze, this was a description of Stoic logic. Unlike most of their philosophical contemporaries—and more importantly, unlike Plato—Stoic thinkers had separated causes from effects, on the principle that the two were incommensurable. Only bodies (like rocks and trees) could be causes; effects (like crushing and flowering), which took place because of bodies, were a distinct class of entities. Effects were thus events that took place at the surface of bodies. They were incorporeal entities that nevertheless manifested themselves in the realm of bodies.\(^{63}\)

For a number of reasons, Foucault found this problem—that of the interrelation of corporeal and incorporeal entities—to be exceedingly productive. He wrote that Deleuze had discovered, through his interaction with Stoic logic, a new way to "think the pure event." Rather than positing a substance that sustains the accidents of events, Deleuze had worked from the event outward: "The event—the wound, the victory-defeat, death—is always an effect: produced, we may be sure, by bodies that collide, intermingle, or separate. But this effect is itself never a kind of body."\(^{64}\)

The concept of the "pure event" had transformative power. Inserted into Foucault's own line of questioning, which was archaeological, it yielded a new way of thinking about the relationship between discourse and external world. This is what Foucault was driving at in his inaugural address when he said, with a clear nod to Deleuze, that, "The fundamental notions that confront us now are no longer consciousness and continuity ... nor are they signs and structure. They are event and series."\(^{65}\)

Foucault here summarized two different ways that contemporary philosophy had attempted to think the history of knowledge. Conscience and continuity were the core concepts of the existentialists and phenomenologists, sign and structure the core concepts of the structuralists. The first group had turned to the idea of a founding subject, while the second had sought to isolate cultural practices that gave rise to meaning. But event and series—the third set of terms—belonged to Deleuze: they were the key concepts of *The Logic of Sense*. The older ways of linking knowledge to the external world, Foucault implied, could be superseded by a kind of analysis that derived from Deleuzian questioning. The essential point was to treat discourse as a series of events. The discourse-event was incorporeal, but had its impact in the realm of bodies. To advance in the direction of a "materialism of the incorporeal" was thus to grapple with the kind of causality appropriate to the interaction between discourse-as-event and the world.\(^{66}\)

The period from 1969 to 1972 was critical in the shaping of the ideas for which Foucault would be best remembered. If his major published works were few, what works there were nevertheless revealed great upheavals within his thought. It was in this stretch of years that the philosopher first turned his attention explicitly to the problem of prisons, first analyzed social and historical questions through the lens of power, and first formulated the outlines of genealogy as a critical program. *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, the thinker's two most forthright works of social criticism, both derived from a thought process that was initiated during this particular moment.
Yet this period that followed so closely in the wake of the events of May 1968 was, viewed from the perspective of his career as a whole, also highly anomalous. During this time, Foucault engaged in a series of openly political activities. He threw himself into the inflamed university situation that, by the end of the decade, would make the names of Vincennes and Nanterre famous beyond France. His work with the G.I.P., his participation in highly visible protests and marches, his occupation alongside colleagues of state facilities, and his adoption of a Marxist-inflected rhetoric of class war and revolution: all of this was uniquely tied to the historical conjuncture of post-1968 France, all of it inseparable from the leftist politics that flourished within the Parisian universities.

For Foucault, this kind of engagement had no clear precedent. While the philosopher always acknowledged that he had, very briefly, been a member of the Communist Party in his youth, he had distanced himself from it in short order. His rise to intellectual prominence had been singularly lacking in the political partisanship that accounted for half the reputation of figures like Althusser and Sartre. Foucault had, with great consistency, shunned group action; he had written not to place himself at the head of movements, but in order, as he noted in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, "no longer to have a face."  

Yet from 1969 onward, Foucault’s face would become iconic within the action committees and groupuscules of the French left. The philosopher transitioned, with great rapidity, from the sun-drenched isolation of Tunisia to the politically charged visibility of the Latin Quarter. He made common cause with his longtime nemesis Sartre. He utilized his notoriety to support and defend the causes of the left. He toiled alongside Deleuze to improve the status of prisoners. At the Collège de France, he taught courses on punishment and penal institutions that meshed seamlessly with his political activity, courses that would provide the essential material for *Discipline and Punish*.

These facts have, for the most part, not been considered critical to the understanding of the emergence of the genealogical method. The primary reason for this, again, is that Foucault’s development of genealogy has been treated almost exclusively as an intellectual event—an internal affair of philosophy in which historical conditions were at best ancillary, and at worst irrelevant. Yet Foucault’s genealogical turn should be seen neither as the result of the methodological failure of archaeology, nor as the result of a sudden interest in Nietzsche. These elements, while present, were not decisive. What was decisive was Foucault’s concrete situation as a practicing philosopher and social activist in post-1968 France. As this chapter has suggested, the elaboration of the concepts that comprise genealogy is unthinkable absent the specific circumstances in which the philosopher worked. Those circumstances included participation in a philosophical community in which the dominance of Marxist categories was unchallenged, as well as collaboration with no less a thinker than Gilles Deleuze.

Engagement with the French far left and its causes provided an opening for the remarkable, if temporary, upsurge of Marxist concepts within Foucault’s thought. It also created the conditions in which, far more so than in the past, it was necessary to situate knowledge in terms of its social function—this being viewed, at first, in class terms. At the same time, a close and mutually productive relationship with Deleuze catalyzed Foucault’s unprecedented deployment—always phased in synchronicity with Deleuze’s works—of concepts that allowed knowledge to be interlaced with the exterior world: power, machines, incorporeals.

These two philosophical streams together provided a conceptual language in which it was not merely possible but necessary to speak about discourse in a way that showed it to be situated, purposeful, and machine-like. In the years that followed, Foucault would do just that—casually jetisoning much that was integral to his earlier thought in the process.

In this regard, no bit of evidence is more telling than the opening lecture of *The Punitive Society*, Foucault’s 1973 course at the Collège de France. Foucault began this course, as was his wont, with a textual citation. Rather than choosing a shocking excerpt from a properly historical work, however, he quoted a passage from Claude Lévi-Strauss’s 1955 *Tristes tropiques*. There is a moment, Foucault declared, late in this work, when Lévi-Strauss playfully suggests that societies have but two solutions for dealing with the hostile force of the criminal:

that is the anthropophagic solution, where absorption permits the simultaneous assimilation and neutralization of this force. The other solution consists of attempting to conquer the hostility of this force. . . .

This practice of exclusion, he calls anthropoemia (from the Greek *emein*,...
to vomit): mastering the dangerous forces of our society means not assimilating them, but excluding them.68

Assimilation or exclusion: here were the two fundamental ways to dispose of the dangerous individual.

For a number of reasons, Foucault continued, this was not the way that he himself would approach the problem of criminality in The Punitive Society. The point of contention was exclusion. "This notion of exclusion," Foucault said, "seems to me, first of all, a notion that is too 'large,' and more importantly, too composite and artificial." To speak about the punishment of criminals in terms of exclusion was to make a double error. Firstly, it was to treat the sequestration of the criminal individual as if it were a simple and transparent event; the idea of exclusion necessarily ignored "the aims, the relations, and the specific operations of power through which exclusion occurs." Secondly, and perhaps more crucially:

in this notion, society in general is made to bear the responsibility for the mechanism by which the excluded individual finds himself excluded. In other words, ... exclusion has the appearance of referring to something like a social consensus that rejects; while behind that there are perhaps a certain number of perfectly specific (and consequently definable) instances of power that are responsible for the mechanism of exclusion.69

The notion of exclusion, that is to say, was too imprecise to permit the fine resolution of social analysis that Foucault hoped to achieve. It ignored the specific processes through which punishment occurred, just as it ignored the specific agencies and institutions that drove the “mechanism of exclusion.”

What was his audience to think? For "exclusion" was not simply Lévi-Strauss’s term: it was a foundational concept in Foucault’s own work. Madness and Civilization was nothing if not an attempt to explain the exclusion of particular persons from society. The Order of Discourse had, as recently as 1970, reaffirmed the continuing importance of the term. But of course, this was the very point that Foucault wanted to confront. Exclusion had been an integral part of his thought, but it would be so no longer.

It was an inadequate concept, unequal to the tasks of genealogy. "I say it all the more," Foucault confessed, "in that I myself have made use, and perhaps abuse, of it."70

The notion of exclusion, and the related notion of transgression, should be thought of, Foucault now argued, "as instruments that had their historical importance." For a time, that is to say, they had allowed us to think differently. But it was increasingly evident that these terms themselves had become a hindrance. Analyses that had been conducted in terms of exclusion and transgression—and here, Foucault was pointing directly at himself—should, in the future, pose the question "of power rather than law, of knowledge rather than representation."71 Lévi-Strauss thus appeared as the representative of an entire conceptual apparatus with which Foucault sought to part. Foucault raised his idol before the crowd only to shatter it in pieces.

The inaugural lecture of the 1973 course explicitly dramatized the transition from one conceptual apparatus to another. Exclusion, transgression, even "culture": these concepts were no longer congruent with the objects of Foucault’s analyses. What were those new objects? As Foucault’s explanation itself revealed, they were societies: societies imagined as machines, performing "functions," carrying out particular "processes" and "operations," generating "mechanisms of exclusion." It was upon the foundation of these latter concepts that Foucault would build The Punitive Society, and later Discipline and Punish. The restructuring was complete.
64. “Permettez-moi... de vous dire comment j’ai entendu votre discours de tout à l’heure. Bien sûr, disiez-vous en sourdine, nous sommes désormais contraints, malgré tous les combats d’arrière-garde que nous avons livrés, d’accepter qu’on formalise des discours déductifs... Bien sûr, il nous a fallu abandonner tous ces discours que nous ramenions autrefois à la souveraineté de la conscience.” Foucault, L’archéologie du savoir, 263.


68. “dh quoi! tant de mots entassés, tant de marques déposées sur tant de papier et offertes à d’innombrables regards... une piétée si profonde attachée à les conserver et les inscrire dans la mémoire des hommes,—tout cela pour qu’il ne reste rien de cette pauvre main qui les a tracées, de cette inquiétude qui cherchait à s’apaiser en elles, et de cette vie achevée qui n’a plus qu’elles désormais pour survivre... Il faudrait admettre que le temps du discours n’est pas le temps de la conscience porté aux dimensions de l’histoire, ou le temps de l’histoire présent dans la forme de la conscience? Il faudrait que je suppose que dans mon discours il n’y va pas de ma survie?” Foucault, L’archéologie du savoir, 274.


71. “Je découvris que le Donateur, dans les Belles-Lettres, peut se transformer en son propre Don, c’est-à-dire en objet pur. Le hasard m’avait fait homme, la générosité me ferait livre; je pourrais couvrir ma babillarderie, ma conscience, dans des caractères de bronze, remplacer les bruits de ma vie par des inscriptions inéfaisables, ma chair par un style, les molles spirales du temps par l’éternité.” Sartre, Les mots (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 160.

72. “Je renais, je deviens enfin tout un homme, pensant, parlant, chantant, tonitruant, qui s’affirme avec l’inertie préemptoire de la matière.” Ibid., 161.

73. “Je fais, je ferai des livres”; “il s’y projette, s’y reconnaît; seul, ce miroir critique lui offre son image.” Ibid., 211.

74. “Il faudrait que je suppose que dans mon discours il n’y va pas de ma survie?”; “les fables même qu’on leur racontait dans leur enfance.” Early in the first section of The Words, Sartre had described the experience of having fables read to him as a child. Sartre, Les mots, 34–35.

75. “ce discours où ils veulent pouvoir dire immédiatement, sans distance, ce qu’ils pensent, croient ou imaginent.” Foucault, L’archéologie du savoir, 274.

76. “sans équipement, sans outillage, je me suis mis tout entier à l’œuvre pour me sauver tout entier. Si je range l’impossible Salut au magasin des accessoires, que reste-t-il? Tout un homme, fait de tous les hommes et qui les vaut tous et qu’un n’importe qui.” Sartre, Les mots, 212–213.

77. “Le discours n’est pas la vie: son temps n’est pas le vôtre; en lui, vous ne vous réconcilieriez pas avec le mort; il se peut bien que vous ayez tué Dieu sous le poids de tout ce que vous avez dit; mais ne pensez pas que vous ferez, de tout ce que vous dites, un homme qui vivra plus que lui.” Foucault, L’archéologie du savoir, 275.


81. In this sense, Ian Hacking partially misrepresents Foucault’s position when, in his 1979 essay “Michel Foucault’s Immature Science,” he describes the discursive regularities that determine systems of possibility as “a sort of depth knowledge.” It is true that the governing principles are not articulated within the system of thought—but neither do they exist outside of it as a conditioning framework. See Ian Hacking, Historical Ontology (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 91–95.


CHAPTER 2. RESTRUCTURING

1. “Les notions fondamentales qui s’imposent maintenant ne sont pas celles de la conscience et de la continuité... ce ne sont pas celles non plus du signe et de la structure. Ce sont celles de l’événement et de la série, avec le jeu des notions qui leur sont liées: régularité, aléa, discontinuité, dépendance, transformation.” Michel Foucault, L’ordre du discours (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 58.
2. "la description de cette ensemble, cette masse extraordinairement vaste, massive, complexe, de choses qui ont été dites dans une culture, en l’occurrence dans notre culture à nous... c’est ça que j’entends en gros par archéologie." Foucault, "Discussion à propos de l’Archéologie du savoir," audio cassette available in the IMEC archive, Paris, France, document C. 120.


4. "dans toute société la production du discours est à la fois contrôlée, sélectionnée, organisée et redistribuée par un certain nombre de procédures qui ont pour rôle d’en conjurer les pouvoirs et les dangers." Foucault, L’ordre du discours, 10-11.

5. In The Birth of Tragedy (1871), Friedrich Nietzsche posited a Socratic rupture in the Greek worldview. Before Socrates, it was both possible and legitimate to interpret existence otherwise than through the categories of critical rationality; after Socrates (and up through Nietzsche’s own time), critical rationality held the field unchallenged. This idea was carried further in Beyond Good and Evil (1886), in which Nietzsche suggested that philosophers are bearers of a malignant “will to truth”—a will that is itself a perverted version of the will to power. Martin Heidegger, in a series of works beginning with Being and Time (1927), lamented the progressive “forgetting of Being” that had overtaken the West in the wake of the post-Socratic conceptualization of Being as “presence.”

6. "partage historique"; "Tout se passe comme si, à partir du grand partage platonicien, la volonté de vérité avait sa propre histoire, qui n’est pas celle des vérités contraignantes: histoire des objets à connaître, histoire des fonctions et positions du sujet connaissant, histoire des investissements matériels, techniques, instrumentaux de la connaissance." L’ordre du discours, 19.

7. "le déroulement continu d’une nécessité idéale"; "traiter, non pas des représentations qu’il peut y avoir derrière les discours, mais des discours comme des séries régulières et distinctes d’événements." Ibid., 61.

8. For comparison, see Foucault, L’archéologie du savoir (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 42.

9. Ibid., 23.


11. "La transformation d’une pratique discursive est liée à tout un ensemble souvent fort complexe de modifications qui peuvent se produire soit hors d’elle... soit en elle... soit à côté d’elles [sic]... Ces principes d’exclusion et de choix... ne revoient pas à un sujet de connaissance (historique ou transcendental) que l’on inventerait successivement ou les fonderait à un niveau origininaire; ils désignent plutôt une volonté de savoir, anonyme et polymorphe, susceptible de Transformations régulières." Foucault, "La volonté de savoir," Annaire du Collège de France, 71, année, Histoire des systèmes de pensée, année 1970-1971, 246. Cited in Foucault, Dits et écrits, t. I, 1109; italics mine.

12. See also Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 266-268. Habermas makes the very similar claim that Foucault’s archaeological method, as deployed in The Order of Things, generated conflicts that could only be resolved through the turn to Nietzsche and the introduction of causality via the external dimension of power.

13. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 81. The italics in the citation from Foucault are Dreyfus and Rabinow’s.

14. Ibid., 83.

15. Ibid., 84-85.

16. Ibid., 100. During the silence in question, it should be noted, Foucault published two books, produced more than seventy shorter published pieces, and delivered four semester-length lecture courses at the Collège de France.

17. Ibid., 106.


19. Ibid., 77.

20. Ibid., 77, 99.

21. "Autre trait caractéristique: l’analyse des énoncés les traite dans la forme systématicque de l’extériorité... Pour restituer les énoncés a leur pure dispersion. Pour les analyser dans une extériorité sans doute paradoxale puisqu’elle ne renvoie à aucune forme adverse d’intériorité." Foucault, L’archéologie du savoir, 158; italics mine.

22. "Quatrième règle: celle de l’extériorité: ne pas aller du discours vers son noyau intérieur et caché, vers le cœur d’une pensée ou d’une signification qui se manifesteraient en lui; mais, à partir du discours lui-même, de son apparition et de son régularité, aller vers ses conditions externes de possibilité, vers ce qui donne lieu à la série aléatoire de ces événements et qui en fixe les bornes." Foucault, L’ordre du discours, 55.

23. "Quant au principe d’extériorité, jamais je n’ai essayé de faire l’analyse du texte à partir du texte lui-même... J’ai essayé de lever le principe de la textualité en me plaçant dans une dimension qui était celle de l’histoire... J’ai essayé de repérer les événements discursifs qui ont leur lieu non pas à l’intérieur même du texte ou de plusieurs textes, mais qui ont lieu dans le fait de la fonction ou du rôle qui sont donnés à différents discours à l’intérieur d’une société. Passer hors du texte pour retrouver la fonction du discours à l’intérieur d’une société, c’est là ce que j’appelle le principe de l’extériorité." Foucault, La volonté de savoir. Cours au Collège de France: 1970-71. Edited and prepared by Jacques Lagrange. Available in printed form, archives of Bibliothèque Générale du Collège de France; italics mine.
24. "J'ai essayé de montrer comment [la] connaissance de l'ordre des choses et de l'ordre des hommes . . . ne naissait que comme prétexte à partir d'une césure économique et politique." Ibid.


26. "La critique de la raison dialectique, c'est le magnifique et pathétique effort d'un homme du XIXe siècle pour penser le XXe siècle. En ce sens, Sartre est le dernier hééhé, et je dirai même le dernier marxiste." "L'homme est-il mort?" Arts et Loisirs 38, June 15–21, 1966, 8–9; reprinted in Dits et écrits, t. I, 569–570.


29. Daniel Defert, "Chronologie," in Dits et écrits, t. I, 44–45; this is now the Université de Paris VII – Vincennes.


31. Ibid., 221.

32. Ibid., 224–225.

33. Didier Erion, Foucault, translated by Betsy Wing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 202–206. Placed alongside these courses, Foucault's own offerings on Nietzsche, "the end of metaphysics," and "the epistemology of the sciences of life" were quaint.

34. Ibid., 206.

35. Macey, The Lives of Michel Foucault, 226.


45. Foucault addresses them accordingly in his preface to the brochure Enquête dans vingt prisons, Paris, "Intolérable" collection, no. 1, May 28, 1971, 3–5; reprinted in Dits et écrits, t. I, 1063: "à travers toutes ces institutions et sous des masques différents, une oppression s'exerce qui est à sa racine une oppression politique. Cette oppression, la classe exploitée a toujours su la reconnaître."

46. This would, of course, be the central argument of Foucault's 1976 History of Sexuality, Volume 1.

47. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 1.

49. Deleuze was an official, if sporadic, participant in the seminar of Foucault’s 1971 course at the Collège de France, Penal Theories and Institutions. (Foucault, "Théories et institutions pénales," Annuaire du Collège de France, 1971–1972, 283–386; reprinted in Dits et écrits, t. 1, 1260.)

50. "Si la lecture de vos livres (depuis le Nietzsche jusqu’à ce que je pressens de Capitalisme et Schizophrénie) a été pour moi si essentielle, c’est qu’ils me paraissent aller très loin dans la position de ce problème: sous ce vieux thème du sens, signifié, signifiant, etc., enfin la question du pouvoir, de l’inhérité des pouvoirs, de leurs luttes. Chaque lutte se déroule autour d’un foyer particulier de pouvoir." "Les intellectuels et le pouvoir," L’Arc 49: Gilles Deleuze, 2nd trimester 1972, 3–10; reprinted in Dits et écrits, t. 1, 1181.

51. "On ne sait peut-être toujours pas, ce qu’est le pouvoir"; "Et Marx et Freud ne sont peut-être pas suffisants pour nous aider à connaître cette chose si énigmatique, à la fois visible et invisible, présente et cachée, investie partout, qu’on appelle le pouvoir. La théorie de l’État, l’analyse traditionnelle des appareils de l’État n’épuisent sans doute pas le champ d’exercice et de fonctionnement du pouvoir." Ibid., 1180–1181.

52. "systèmes de pouvoir"; "dans tout le réseau de la société." Ibid., 1176–1181. Just how completely Foucault called into question suppositions he had until quite recently entertained—and how rapidly he achieved what is recognizably his mature formulation of the concept of power—can be judged from the ensuing excursus: "On sait bien que ce ne sont pas les gouvernants qui détiennent le pouvoir. Mais la notion de ‘classe dirigeante’ n’est ni très claire ni très élaborée. ‘Dominer,’ ‘diriger,’ ‘gouverner,’ ‘groupe au pouvoir,’ ‘appareil d’État,’ etc., il y a là tout un jeu de notions qui demandent à être analysées. De même, il faudrait bien savoir jusqu’où s’exerce le pouvoir, par quels relais et jusqu’à quelles instances souvent infimes, de hiérarchie, de contrôle, de surveillance, d’interdictions, de contraintes. Partout où il y a du pouvoir, le pouvoir s’exerce. Personne à proprement parler n’en est le titulaire."


54. Deleuze, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, 2.


60. The parallels between Deleuze and Nietzsche on this point are evident. As Dreyfus and Rabinov observe of the genealogical method, "[t]he world is not a play which simply masks a truer reality that exists behind the scenes. It is as it appears. This is the genealogist’s insight." (Dreyfus and Rabinov, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, 109) Foucault, who credited Deleuze with "une patience de génalogoiste nietzscheen," undoubtedly recognized the homology. (Foucault, "Theatrum philosophicum," 955) What is noteworthy is that Foucault’s engagement with Nietzsche in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," postdates this long examination of The Logic of Sense and Difference and Repetition by several months. Foucault only looked at the question of immanence from a Nietzschean perspective after having thoroughly explored it from a Deleuzian one. This is why Foucault’s discussion of Nietzsche in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" is riddled with Deleuzian expressions like "le discontinue," "[le] hasard," and "l’âle singulier de l’événement." (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Hommage à Jean Hyppolite, Paris P.U.F., coll. "Épiméthée, 1971, 145–172. Reprinted in Dits et écrits, t. 1, 1015–1016.)


63. Deleuze, Logique du Sens, 13–21.

64. "penser l’événement pur"; "l’événement—la blessure, la victoire-défaite, la mort—est toujours effet, bel et bien produit par les corps qui s’enchevêtrent, se mêlent ou se séparent; mais cet effet, lui, n’est jamais de l’ordre des corps." Foucault, "Theatrum philosophicum," 949. To this difficult notion is appended the further explanation: "imaginons une causalité coudée; les corps, en se heurtant, en se mêlant, en souffrant, causent à leur surface des événements qui sont sans épaisseur, sans mélange, sans passion, et ne peuvent donc plus être cause; ils forment entre eux une autre trame ou les liaisons relevent d’un quasi-physique des incorporels, de la métaphysique."

65. "Les notions fondamentales qui s’imposent maintenant ne sont plus celles de la conscience et de la continuité... ce ne sont pas celles non plus du signe et de la structure. Ce sont celles de l’événement et de la série." Foucault, L’ordre du discours, 58; italics mine.
66. Ibid., 59. Foucault hybridizes the vocabulary of archaeology with that of The Logic of Sense: "Si les discours doivent être traités d’abord comme des ensembles d’événements discursifs, quel statut faut-il donner à cette notion d’événement qui fut si rarement prise en considération par les philosophes? Bien sûr l’événement n’est ni substance ni accident, ni qualité ni processus; l’événement n’est pas de l’ordre des corps. Et pourtant il n’est point immatériel, c’est toujours au niveau de la matérialité qu’il prend effet, qu’il est effet; il a son lieu et il consiste dans la relation, la coexistence, la dispersion, le recoupement, l’accumulation, la sélection d’éléments matériels; il n’est point l’acte ni la propriété d’un corps; il se produit comme effet et dans une dispersion matérielle."


69. "Cette notion d’exclusion me paraît d’abord une notion trop ‘large’ et, surtout, composite et artificielle": "les buts, les rapports, les opérations spécifiques du pouvoir à partir de quoi précisément se fait l’exclusion": "dans cette notion, on laisse porter à la société en général la responsabilité du mécanisme par lequel l’exclusion se trouve exclue. Autrement dit, . . . l’exclusion a l’air de se référer à quelque chose comme un consensus social qui rejette, alors que derrière cela il y a peut-être un certain nombre d’instances parfaitement spéciﬁées et par conséquent, déﬁnissibles, de pouvoir qui sont responsables du mécanisme de l’exclusion." Ibid., 3.

70. "Je le dis autant mieux, que moi-même, j’en ai fait usage et, peut-être, abus." Ibid., 2.

71. "comme des instruments qui ont eu historiquement leur importance"; "du pouvoir plutôt que de la loi, du savoir plutôt que de la représentation." Ibid., 6–7.

Part Two: Power

CHAPTER 3. PLANETARY FORCES


3. Earlier in the year, Foucault accepted the offer of his onetime publisher, Rizzoli, to serve as a regular contributor for the Italian daily Corriera della sera. His desire, briefly realized, was to equip a team of reporter-intellectuals able to travel the world and describe the emergence of ideas out of real events and confrontations. "One must attend at the birth of ideas and the explosion of their force," he wrote, "and thus not in the books that enunciate them, but in the events in which they manifest their force." Foucault, "Les ‘reportages’ d’idées" in Dits et écrits, t. II, 706–707. Other contributors to the resulting series of articles included Alain Finkielkraut and André Glucksman: projected articles by Susan Sontag, Ronald Laing, Jorge Semprun, and Arpad Ajtony never appeared.

4. "depuis dix mois, la population s’oppose à un régime qui est parmi les mieux armés du monde et à une police qui est parmi les plus redoutables. Cela les mains nues, sans recours à la lutte armée, avec une obstination et un courage qui immobilisent l’armée sur place." Foucault, "Une rivolto con le mani nude," Corriera della sera 103, no. 261, November 5, 1978, 1–2; republished as "Une révolte à mains nues," in Dits et écrits, t. II, 701.


7. Quand je suis parti d’Iran, la question qu’on me posait sans cesse était bien sûr: ‘Est-ce la révolution?…’ Je n’ai pas répondu. Mais j’avais envie de dire: ce n’est pas une révolution, au sens littéral du terme: une manière de se mettre debout et de se redresser. C’est l’insurrection d’hommes aux mains nues qui veulent soulever le poids formidable qui pèse sur chacun de nous, mais plus particulièrement, sur eux, ces laboureaux de pétrole, ces paysans aux frontières des empires: le poids de l’ordre du monde entier. C’est peut-être la première grande insurrection contre les
To Edward and Jenifer