

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

THE WILL TO TRUTH OF MAN

A STUDY OF POWER IN THE MODERN AGE

BY

LESLIE PAUL THIELE

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Will to Truth of Man: A Study of Power in the Modern Age," submitted by Leslie Paul Thiele in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

*Barry Cooper*

-----  
Chairman, Dr. Barry Cooper  
Department of Political Science

*Thomas Flanagan*

-----  
Dr. Thomas Flanagan  
Department of Political Science

*A.W. Frank*

-----  
Dr. Art Frank  
Department of Sociology

Date 18 April 1985

## ABSTRACT

Over the last thirty years Michel Foucault developed theories of power. His works provide an understanding of power in the modern age as being productive and boundless. Once power allied itself with truth and formed relations with knowledge, it was no longer restricted to the roles of repression and constraint that traditional analyses had allotted it. Thirty years ago Hannah Arendt wrote a book on totalitarianism. It asserted that totalitarianism was a completely new form of rule. In trying to realize the truth of their ideologies, totalitarian regimes were attempting to alter radically the human condition. By means of terror, organization, and ideological indoctrination, totalitarian regimes generated the power and produced the force that could achieve their goal.

The Will to Truth of Man: A Study of Power in the Modern Age does three things. First, Foucault's theories of power and the analytical tools and methodology he used are discussed. Second, Foucault's genealogical method becomes the author's own means of examining totalitarianism (using Arendt's study). Third, with the relevant concepts and theories of Foucault and Arendt wed, the union and its ensuing results are said to provide an understanding of totalitarianism

as the apogee of the modern development of power-truth relations.

The marriage of Foucault's theories and methodology with Arendt's historical research and concepts may be thought difficult to maintain. Its purpose, however, is not to force Arendt and Foucault into a relation they may not have wanted but simply to utilize their works to arrive at a better understanding of totalitarianism. The only valid tribute Foucault hoped to pay to Nietzsche's thought, which provided Foucault with his tactics and much of his inspiration, was "to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest." The Will to Truth of Man attempts to use Arendt's and Foucault's thought in much the same manner. The author hopes that the new understanding of totalitarianism and the insights to the modern development of power that his study proposes are the most valid tribute possible.



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## NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION OF FOUCAULT'S WORKS

In this thesis I have taken quotations both from Foucault's original works and from English translations of these. An effort was made to find and use the published English version when possible. However, many of Foucault's works, especially his articles and interviews, have no published English translation. All quotations in the text that have a French reference are my own translations, for which I must assume responsibility.

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Events, past and present--not social forces and historical trends, nor questionnaires and motivational research, nor any other gadgets in the arsenal of the social sciences--are the true, the only reliable teachers of political scientists, as they are the most trustworthy source of information for those engaged in politics.

Hannah Arendt

Theories of government and the traditional analyses of their mechanisms certainly don't exhaust the field where power is exercised and where it functions. The question of power remains a total enigma.

Michel Foucault

## INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault was a theorist of power. His writings are products of his research and experiments--thought experiments if you will--into the nature and development of the mechanisms of power. He was convinced that the traditional analyses of political science do not account for the fecundity of power. They are inadequate, not because they are not persistent enough in their search, but because they start off on the wrong foot, or perhaps in the wrong direction. Foucault offered his hypotheses as alternatives, radical alternatives that were presented by their own terminology and perspective. The following pages offer an analysis, continuation, and application of Foucault's work on power.

Foucault's work extended beyond the bounds of politics. He wrote on literature, art, and all of the social sciences. However, even his non-political writings revolved around, or directly approached, a theory of power. Reflecting on his earliest works on the history of madness and health, Foucault said in 1977:

When I think back now, I ask myself what else it was that I was talking about in Madness and

Civilization and The Birth of the Clinic but power?  
 Yet I am perfectly aware that I scarcely even  
 used the word and never had such a field of analyses  
 at my disposal.<sup>1</sup>

Looking ahead to his upcoming research and writing, Foucault foresaw the same focus. His projected six volume History of Sexuality, of which only three volumes were completed before his death, was also to have power as the central theme. For Foucault, "the whole point of the [History of Sexuality] project [lay] in the reelaboration of the theory of power."<sup>2</sup>

What allows Foucault to state that his writings have all concerned themselves with power is his rejection of traditional methods of its analysis. The study of power, according to Foucault, can not restrict itself, for example, to the analysis of class dynamics or institutional roles. We must instead search for the mechanisms of power in their "capillary" forms (the "specificities" of power), where they emerge, before they become coordinated or "colonized" into oppressive class relations or institutional domination. Power must be investigated where it forms its most basic relation, namely, its relation with knowledge. Here the incipient workings of power may be charted because one may account

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

for the transformations of knowledge. Power, said Foucault, produces truth. Through the analysis of truth, or of systems of knowledge, the most basic effects of power are discovered. Hence Foucault's explorations into the 'truth' of insanity, health, economics, history, grammar, punishment, and sexuality are also analyses of the effects of power. They are investigations of the forms power employs to yield these truths, investigations into the systems of knowledge that might harbour and nurture the corresponding mechanisms of power.

Foucault was concerned with knowledge and truth, because they were inseparable from the study of power. Accordingly, the power-knowledge-truth relation brings a coherence to Foucault's writings during the last three decades. Looking back on his work, Foucault found that this relation formed the basis of his analyses because it permeated the subjects of his studies. He held that from the early 1950s to his latest works his writings could "be summed up in two words: power and knowledge."<sup>3</sup> After a retrospective analysis Foucault claimed a continuity to his work. Once his theory of the power-knowledge-truth relation was refined and articulated he said:

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

If I wanted to assume the position and cloak myself in a somewhat fictitious coherence, I would say to you that this has always been my problem: the effects of power and the production of "truth".<sup>4</sup>

If there need be any justification for my treatment of Foucault as if he concerned himself with little else but power and its relation to truth, it is thus to be found in his own words.

The following sketch of the form and substance of the following chapters is intended to orient the reader. The first chapter focuses on Foucault's concept of power and its relation to truth. Here the reader is introduced to genealogy, Foucault's method to explore relations of power. The concerns and problems of the genealogist are discussed in Chapter Five. Chapter One also introduces a concept that is subsequently elaborated in Chapter Two: the will to truth. As with genealogy, Foucault borrowed the concept, the will to truth, from Nietzsche, and used it as an analytical tool to explore the power-truth relation. In turn, I borrow the will to truth from Foucault, and along with his theory of power, it forms the foundation for my analysis of totalitarianism in Chapters Three and Four. In this application of Foucault's theories to totalitarianism I rely heavily on the writings of Hannah Arendt. A brief foreshadowing of

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<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, "Non au sexe roi," (interview in) Le Nouvel Observateur, 12 March 1977, p. 105.



Arendt's insights into totalitarianism will serve to explain why I chose totalitarianism, and more specifically Arendt's treatment of it, as a subject for a Foucaultian study of power.

Arendt understood that totalitarianism was an attempt to alter radically the human condition. By attempting to eliminate (and not simply suppress) human plurality, spontaneity, and freedom, totalitarianism sought nothing less than the reconstitution of man. Its goal was to realize truth in this world, to achieve a totalized system of truth that would have as its subject totalitarian Man. For this purpose totalitarian Man had to be created, and his creation entailed the destruction of everything hitherto known of the human condition--including power itself. There is the contradiction of totalitarianism: it marks the end of human plurality and freedom, and hence, in Arendt's analysis, of power, even though it is the product of the modern development of power. Power, basic to human plurality and dependent on human freedom, could have no place in the truly totalitarian regime.

Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism coupled with Foucault's theories of power allows us a new understanding both of totalitarianism and of the modern development of power. Foucault showed us that power gained new capacities when it allied itself with truth. The development of

power-truth relations received its impetus from the modern will to truth, which focused itself upon Man. The search for the truth of Man was, at the same time, the development of power over the life of Man. We learn from Arendt that totalitarianism claimed to have attained the truth of Man; his truth was being realized each day in the totalitarian regime. The development of power also reached a hiatus. The totalitarian regime, driven by the imperatives of truth, sought to transcend power so that it could achieve a total domination over its members. Power had to transform itself to escape its own limitations. The essence of totalitarianism, displayed so vividly in Arendt's writings, is that power and truth undergo a sort of fusion. Thus totalitarianism signifies both the apogee and the metamorphosis of power in the modern world. From this vantage point, looking back on the unique and dramatic transformation of power that occurred in totalitarianism, the development of power that Foucault sought to explain achieved its clearest expression and most brutal coherence.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF POWER

At bottom, despite the differences in epochs and objectives the representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy. In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the King.<sup>5</sup>

This is Foucault's challenge to his readers. To free ourselves from the spell of monarchical power, to join Foucault in his discourse, we must carry out acts of revolution. Heads must roll. Indeed there will be more decapitations than the King's. Man must also be sacrificed; so too the behemoth of History. From today's political thinkers Foucault is asking no less than three revolutionary acts. Revolutionary is certainly the correct adjective. The King, Man, and History are not merely to be stripped of their medals and denied their achievements; they are to be destroyed. At least, this is Foucault's challenge, and it must be met by those who wish to understand him.

There are historical reasons for all three executions. From Folie et déraison (1961) to Histoire de la sexualité (volume one, 1976) Foucault's historical writings focus on

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<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, vol.1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 88,89.

two periods, each spanning about a century and a half. Most of his work concentrates on the "Classical Age", which began in the mid-seventeenth century and ended at the start of the nineteenth. The "Modern Age" takes us to the middle of the twentieth century. What characterizes these epochs is an ever-increasing power over life, an infusion of power into life. "Starting in the seventeenth century," said Foucault, "this power over life evolved in two basic forms" that constituted "two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations."<sup>6</sup> The first centered on the body as a machine,

the optimization of its capabilities, the extraction of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body.<sup>7</sup>

The second form of "bio-power" focused on the species body. The regulation of the population was the rubric under which power invested itself in the control of biological processes: "propagation, birth and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause them to vary."<sup>8</sup> Thus, from the seventeenth century

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

onwards, attaching itself to men both as individuals and as elements of a social body,

a form of power comes into being that begins to exercise itself through social production and social service. It becomes a matter of obtaining productive service from individuals in their concrete lives. And in consequence, a real and effective 'incorporation' of power was necessary, in the sense that power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behaviour.<sup>9</sup>

In order for power to gain access to the lives of men it allied itself with knowledge. The power to administer life necessitated the knowledge of life's processes and capacities.

For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention.<sup>10</sup>

Foucault's writings are expositions of the mechanisms this new form of power has adopted; they track the movement of the fluid amalgam of "power-knowledge". It is in these investigations of the various historical formations of power-knowledge alliances that the reader is confronted with the justifications for three executions. And yet, it would seem, one must already have committed the three revolutionary acts marking the end of the King's rule, of Man's existence,

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<sup>9</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 125.

<sup>10</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 142.

and of History's march, before Foucault's investigations can be fully appreciated.

### The death of the King

One may attribute the King's long life in political analysis to his symbiotic relation with the law. To this day, power is conceived in terms of the sovereign and the law. Foucault warned his readers not to overlook

a fundamental historical trait of Western monarchies: they were all constructed as systems of law, they expressed themselves through theories of law, and they made their mechanisms of power work in the form of law.<sup>11</sup>

This is the heritage of Western society, which has, since the Middle Ages, exercised power in terms of law and sovereignty (whether that of a monarch or of 'the people'). Accompanying the concepts of law and sovereignty are those of prohibition and liberty. Their relation to power is straightforward. Law, as power's form of expression, is the articulation of prohibition. Power, as held by the sovereign, is a pure limit set upon man's fundamental liberty. Power prohibits by restricting the freedom of its objects.

Traditional critiques of this "juridical" concept of power do not escape its hold.<sup>12</sup> Generally, either the monarch

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

is attacked as a transgressor of the juridical domain, or, alternatively, the entire juridical system is accused of being a facade for the domination and exploitation of the many by the few. In both cases the basic identification of power with law is left unchallenged, if not reinforced. The first censures the monarch's actions because they are unlawful, which implicitly upholds the law. In the second and more radical criticism, there persists a presumption that ideally power would be exercised with reference to a fundamental lawfulness, a lawfulness that is absent owing only to the arrangement of the juridical apparatus. Identified with law as such, power remains solely prohibitive in scope; its analysis is spellbound by the sovereign as lawmaker. Between the fingers of the Leviathan are seen to lie entire fields of freedom. Only when his grasp becomes too tight, or when inequitably it allows a privileged few to escape its hold, would there be call for a beheading. Yet the King's head, if cut off, would be immediately replaced with that of another, presumably more lawful, sovereign.

In dismissing this juridical concept of power Foucault did not deny the existence today of a sovereign, of law, and of prohibition, as represented by the State and its functions in most Western societies. He challenged the relation of power to the sovereign, law, and prohibition, hence the nature of power itself. In the Middle Ages, speaking

in terms of the King, his laws and its prohibitions, adequately described the mechanisms of power. Since the seventeenth century, however, there has been a change in these relations. Power, formerly a weapon of the sovereign with which he could threaten the lives of his subjects, became a tool to extort and fashion life itself. The King's power of death gave way to the State's power over life. Both the nature of power and of the sovereign changed. Today power must be seen as coming from "below." It is only owing to its access from below that power is capable of escaping its former prohibitive, juridical form and assuming its responsibility for the lives of men, as individuals and as elements of society. For Foucault:

The State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. The State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth.... [The State is] a kind of 'meta-power' which is structured essentially round a certain number of great prohibition functions; but this meta-power with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 122.



The sovereignty of the State, the forms of law, and the apparent over-all unity of domination and prohibition they establish are only the "terminal forms power takes."<sup>14</sup>

In 1975, answering questions about his then recently published Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison, Foucault stated that his concern with power was not so much its terminal forms as its roots. In its "capillary forms of existence" power "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself in their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives."<sup>15</sup> By way of investigating prisons and their formation Foucault analysed this capillary form of power. From this analysis the obsolescence of the juridical model of power became evident.

During the eighteenth century law-breakers, vagabonds, and madmen were no longer publicly tortured as enemies of the sovereign. They had become enemies of society, social deviants, and would be placed in a prison, not merely to restrict their freedom and isolate the dangers of crime, disorder, and madness, but as a means to their "normalization" that would occur through the application of increasingly sophisticated techniques of surveillance and discipline.

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<sup>14</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 92.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 39.

Bentham's architectural design, the Panopticon, can be taken as an ideal representative of the prison because it was both a concrete proposal for, and an illustrative summary of, the many techniques of normalizing power integral to the penal system.

The inmate of the Panopticon, whose barred cell would constantly expose him to the unseen but supposed observing eyes in the central watchtower, soon would become his own warden and judge. His fear of a constant supervision he could never verify becomes, in time, a self-imposed discipline under whose rigour his actions could elicit no reprimand. The panoptic principle underlies the other forms of discipline developed in prisons that depend upon this instilled self-surveillance. In France's Mettray Prison, whose official opening in 1840 was taken by Foucault as the date of the completion of the carceral system because Mettray was "the disciplinary form in its most extreme," the various techniques of discipline became supported by the panoptic formula: "the entire parapenal institution ... culminates in the cell, on the walls of which are written in black letters: 'God sees you'."<sup>16</sup> In such a panoptic system,

there is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze,

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<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 293, 294.

a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself.<sup>17</sup>

As exemplary of the entire penal system, the Panopticon marks the death of the King in three ways. First, as with the other techniques of discipline, the Panopticon was not the result of a sovereign's demand for a more efficient penitentiary system, nor was it restricted to prisons in its inception or development. Bentham's idea was sparked by a visit to a military school<sup>18</sup> and he designed it for an array of uses including the reformation of schoolchildren. Similarly, the other disciplinary techniques that were developed in penal institutions often saw their genesis in monasteries or military academies, and were subsequently extended to schools and hospitals. In turn, these techniques were transported into the entire social body. Yet one can define no sovereign or hegemonic group that instigated their creation or development. Nor is one able to find a sovereign who organized the deployment of these disciplinary techniques and their dispersion into the social body. In an interview with Le Monde Foucault said;

"Where do prisons come from?" I would answer, "A little from everywhere." No doubt there was an

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<sup>17</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 155.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p. 316. In fact, Bentham's brother came up with the idea while visiting the École Militaire in Paris.

"invention", but it was an invention of an entire technique of surveillance, inspection, identification of individuals, control of their gestures, their activity, their efficacy. And that since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the army, in colleges, in schools, in hospitals, and in workshops. A technology of power, subtle and constant, a power over the body. Prisons are the final faces of this age of disciplines.<sup>19</sup>

Second, the present array of these disciplinary techniques today cannot be defined as the arsenal of a sovereign. The legacy of the complex borrowing, deploying, and refining of disciplinary techniques over the last three centuries, in which the prison served as a point of interaction, generation, and intensification, is the carceral or normalized society--the "panoptic society". In this society we are each other's jailers and judges, as well as our own, just as we are all extensions of the inspecting gaze. This is not to say that power is distributed evenly or exercised equitably. But the "more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations"<sup>20</sup> that composes power is not in the service of a sovereign or hegemonic group. The web of power that enmeshes the panoptic society does indeed allow for positions of dominance, but just as one can find no sovereign who spun it, there exists no sovereign who can traverse its sticky fibres so as to dominate and control

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<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, "Des supplices aux cellules," (interview in) Le Monde, 21 February 1975, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 198.

the whole. In the panoptic society,

one doesn't have a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over others. It is a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised.<sup>21</sup>

Third, as with the other forms of disciplinary techniques that have infused the social body, the panopticon is not limited to the prohibitive function ascribed to power under the auspices of the law and sovereign. Along with his physical confinement, the penitentiary inmate was subjected to an attempted reformation of his character. This normalization was a product of power's ability to induce the inmate to curtail his own freedom, to produce his own "moral prison." The soul of the inmate was created, or at least recast, by power in its new productive role. Power in the panoptic society produces the same effects.

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within, the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished--and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects, over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonized, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives.... [Born out of] methods of punishment, supervision and constraint ... the soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p. 29.

Power cannot be understood as the weapon of a sovereign that curtails freedom by law and its enforcement. It helps create souls and does not merely limit their expression.

Any of Foucault's readers uneasy about their complicity in his regicide have justification to ask for quid pro quo. Before rejecting with Foucault the traditional juridical model of power, the answers to two questions would seem his reader's due. First, isn't the new productive capacity of power, the creation of souls, simply the internalization of prohibition? Does not power still lay in the realm of a repressive force, albeit a very efficient one capable of planting itself in individuals rather than working from the outside? Second, since power does not emanate from a sovereign nor remain fully within his grasp, but is rather constituted and maintained from below on the basis of multiple relations of power, how can their organization be understood? Just as the juridical model of power proposes that the concepts of the sovereign, law, prohibition, and fundamental liberty, be taken as an ensemble, one might say that Foucault's analysis of power also offers only a package deal. The beheading of the King, and the unwillingness to place another sovereign in his stead, confronts us with the ineluctable task of performing two other equally revolutionary acts. The answer to the reader's first question brings him inevitably to the

death of Man; that to the second question, to the death of History.

### The death of Man

Foucault's announcement of the death of Man, the transcendental subject, was based upon his discovery of the productive capacities of power. Foucault admitted that until the early 1970s he remained tied to a negative formulation of power, as that which denies, prohibits, refuses, and excludes.<sup>23</sup> It would appear that Discipline and Punish did not wholly escape this concept of power as repression.<sup>24</sup> The techniques of power typified by the Panopticon remain fundamentally prohibitive. Prohibition is simply made more efficient by being internalized. The member of the panoptic society is a product of power only insofar as he has created his own moral prison. Power is repressive of a body that is fundamentally opposed to it and fundamentally expressive of a primal

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<sup>23</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 183.

<sup>24</sup> Gilles Deleuze's review of Surveiller et punir illustrates how Foucault's works were perceived as treating power in terms of repression and constraint. He wrote, "No doubt one can say that in his activities as in his books, Foucault's problem was always that of "enclosure" (enfermement)... It was inevitable that Foucault should strike out at prisons as the principal model of enclosure. (Gilles Deleuze, "Écrivain non: un nouveau cartographe," Critique 343 {1975}, pp. 1212.)

desire alien to power and beyond its reach. Power produces souls only as prisons of bodies. Foucault's complete rejection of this limitation to power's capacities is made evident only in The History of Sexuality (volume one).

Not unlike discipline and punishment, sexuality was chosen by Foucault as a topic for investigation because it marks a definite point where power reaches to the individual. Sexuality was seen "as an especially dense transfer point for the relations of power ... endowed with the greatest instrumentality."<sup>25</sup> In The History of Sexuality Foucault directly challenged the hypothesis that sexuality was subjected to a Victorian repression, to "an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, nothing to know."<sup>26</sup> Just the opposite:

So, since the Middle Ages nothing has been subject to so much study, interrogation, extortion, revelation, discussion, obligation to confession, demand for expression, and praise, until, finally, it found its words. No civilization has known a more talkative sexuality than ours.<sup>27</sup>

Carnal pleasures and desires were tracked down, categorized, and analysed, incited and inserted into discourse. Through

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<sup>25</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 103.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, "Sorcellerie et folie," (interview in) Le Monde, 23 April 1976, p. 18.



this activity sexuality was not, in general, repressed, but rather deployed, modified, actually produced. In fact, it was the discourses on bodies, pleasures, and the desires they yielded that produced 'sexuality' and 'sex'--not as things to be repressed, but as creations to be subsequently explored, reoriented, and intensified. The love of sex, and the desire to exploit sexuality relentlessly as the key to open every door behind which the secrets of man's being lay hidden, are not phenomena of power's repressive capacities but of its productive ones.

Sexuality and sex are not to be seen as transcendental constants, as fundamental aspects of an immutable human nature that power encroached upon. They are creations of power itself. The truth of sexuality (as for truth in general) is not to be posited as of a realm other than that of power. For Foucault, "we are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."<sup>28</sup> The relations of power and knowledge that inject themselves into bodies and into discourses of desires and pleasures also produced these transfer points. To say that sex and sexuality were produced does not mean that their 'facts' were siphoned off previously unsettled solutions of extant truths and falsehoods. The

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<sup>28</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 93.

production of truth is not simply the recognition and acknowledgement of the facts before one's eyes, nor a distillation of observations that removes the impurities of deception. In the production of truth, the interplay of power and knowledge creates the very objects of truth and its domain. If there is any encroachment of power, it is not upon sexuality and sex, which are the products of power, but upon bodies, pleasures, and desires.<sup>29</sup>

Even so, one is not to assume that bodies, pleasures, and desires remain fundamentally untouched, unchanged, and alien to the mechanisms of power. Power-knowledge is productive of desire, and is "linked together by complex mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement" to pleasure.<sup>30</sup> In the fullest sense, power is creative. The soul is not simply the repressive internalization of power. The soul, as well as the body, are the rallying points of power for the production, modification, and intensification of desire, for the perversion, reorientation, and displacement of pleasure, and for the incitement to discourse and the very truths that discourse begets. The soul of man, man himself, is not the ever-resistant, transcendental essence against which power is continually struggling. Man is not the constituent

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<sup>29</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 48.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., and Power/Knowledge, p. 59.

subject against which power deploys its ruses and techniques, the immutable subject who skirmishes with power without it ever entering his being. Rather, man is the product of just these ruses and techniques. Foucault's analyses of power do not reveal Man, the transcendental subject, who remains unchanged beneath thick webs of power. Rather, Foucault brought to light the constitution of Man himself, a historical product of the mechanisms of power.

Thus the death of Man. As Man was generated, he died. Man the transcendental subject, Man the subject of the anthropology, "which constitutes perhaps the fundamental arrangement that has governed and controlled the path of philosophical thought from Kant until our day," no longer lives.<sup>31</sup>

Already in 1966, with the publication of Les Mots et les Choses, Foucault asserted that he had little time to waste on those who continued to confine their thought to the study of Man. To all those with "warped and twisted forms of reflection" who

still wish to talk about man, about his reign or liberation, to all those who wish to take him as their starting-point in their attempt to reach the truth, to all those who, on the other hand, refer all knowledge back to the truths of man himself, to all those who refuse to formalize without anthropologizing...

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<sup>31</sup> Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 342.

Foucault could only answer with a "philosophical laugh--which means, to a certain extent, a silent one."<sup>32</sup>

It was over a decade after this announcement, with the publications of Surveiller et Punir and La Volonté de Savoir, that one learned how the death of Man was to be exposed. In The Order of Things Foucault announced that the death of Man was synonymous with the freeing of thought and the ability for men to think anew of the present. The end of Man was proposed as

the return of the beginning of philosophy. It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance. For the void does not create a deficiency; it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think.<sup>33</sup>

In Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality Foucault began to uncover evidence that challenges the reader to free himself from anthropology and once again to think of power. He is to think of man not only as the subject and object of power, but as its product. He is shown how the discourse of Man makes little sense in a world where power creates souls, desires, and individuals, rather than serving merely as a weapon to be wielded and a force to be resisted. He is challenged to accept that,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 342,343.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 342.

the individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in doing so subdues or crushes the individual. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-a-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects.<sup>34</sup>

If Man is indeed the effect of power, one must make certain assumptions about the nature of power. Power must be omnipresent. It is produced by, and productive of, the individuals whose interrelations serve as its medium. Power is therefore immanent in, rather than exterior to, all other relations such as those of sex, economics, or kinship. For this reason one is never outside power: "there are no margins for those who break the system to gambol in, no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network."<sup>35</sup> Those who break away from a system of dominance do not escape power, but rather illustrate a victory over a certain form of its organization. Power circulates. Hence, if hierarchical relations of dominance are to be formed power must be channeled and its multiple and mobile relations organized. Power, then, cannot be held in the hands of a sovereign. If a sovereign appears he is only the pinnacle of a pyramid

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<sup>34</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 98.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 141,142.

of power relations that necessarily preceded him and serve as his infrastructure.

The King, for all the powers he was traditionally thought to wield, was after all a man. The new forms of power--circulating, forming alliances with knowledge, productive of the very individuals who form its basis--certainly could not coexist with a sovereign immune to its effects. Foucault's incitement to cut off the King's head in his writings of the 1970s was only the logical step to take once Man's demise became apparent. In fact, Man's death, as announced in The Order of Things, would appear already to have been a regicide. The King died with Man. Foucault does not so much kill the King in his later works as display his head upon a pike. It is a parading of the regicide for those who could not draw the conclusion from witnessing the end of Man.

### The death of History

With the death of Man and the King, one is left in a quandary regarding the analysis of power and its organization. One is not allowed to replace the King with any other sovereign who could constitute the origin of power. Neither individuals nor classes may take the sovereign's stead as the overall

inventors, organizers, or systematizers of the various forms and techniques of power that have emerged in the last three centuries. One is told that the new technology of power does not take its historical origin

from an identifiable individual or group of individuals who decide to implement it so as to further their interests or facilitate their utilization of the social body.... These tactics were invented and organized from the starting points of local conditions and particular needs. They took shape in piecemeal fashion, prior to any class strategy designed to weld them into vast coherent ensembles.<sup>36</sup>

Nor is one allowed to posit men as transcendental subjects of power whose unchanging constitutions could form a permanent grid upon which the mechanisms of power would necessarily follow a structured path. The particular development of forms of power cannot be explained as the result of the encounter of power with the immutable nature of Man, no matter how modest an existence one may wish to allow him.

In desperation one might flee to the realm of History. Could not the various forms and organizations of power be the product of historical processes played out according to structured, unalterable rules? Or, may one not find an answer in the dynamics of a dialectic, which even now is causing the mechanisms of power to coalesce, regroup, multiply, and ultimately become something they are not? These options,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.159.

however, are not for Foucault's readers. Those who flee to the sanctuary of History will be greeted by its corpse. History, as the bearer of continuity, structural systems, or dialectical processes and their laws of contradiction, has met the same fate as Man and the King.

Foucault's initial attack upon History in The Order of Things situated both Marx and Ricardo as being equally caught in the fabric of modern thought. For both thinkers History represented Man's finitude. History's development according to ascertainable rules could lead only to the end of History, seen as the point where Man, as a finite being, is brought face to face with himself. The historical development of labour, production, population, and scarcity confronted with the "fundamental finitude of man" would soon reach its limits: "The moment History reaches such boundaries, it can do nothing but stop, quiver for an instant upon its axis, and immobilize itself forever."<sup>37</sup> Whether it was Ricardo's pessimistic view of the end of History (scarcity will eventually limit itself by demographic stabilization as labour slowly adjusts itself to its exact needs; man's delusions of the promises of time are stripped from him) or Marx's revolutionary one (the working class, faced with its own hunger, exploitation and alienation, perceives its necessary role; History is

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<sup>37</sup> Foucault, The Order of Things, p. 289.



reversed and stopped as immortal new laws replace those that led to the final revolution) the destination was the same. The historicity introduced into Classical Economics by Ricardo and later taken over by Marx heralded the end of History.

Anthropological man is a necessary element of the immobilization of History, and both define "one of the major networks of nineteenth century thought." The point is, Man cannot be done away with while maintaining History. For it is History that displays Man's nature, both in its movement and in its culmination wherein Man's finitude is reached and his essence bared. When on that

promised evening, the shadow of the dénouement comes, the slow erosion or violent explosion of History will cause man's anthropological truth to spring forth in its stony immobility; calendar time will be able to continue, but it will be, as it were, void, for historicity will have been superimposed exactly upon the human essence.<sup>38</sup>

The slaying of Man leaves one no alternative but the slaying of History, lest one ask what it all means.

Foucault's demonstration in The Order of Things that he had cleverly escaped the constraints of anthropology and of Marxist history only landed him with the denunciations and felicitations of having joined and contributed to the structuralist camp. The publication of The Archaeology of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

Knowledge three years later showed that he felt he deserved neither. At that time Foucault had not yet seen the internal connection between power and knowledge. His aim was "to uncover the principles and consequences of an autochthonous transformation that is taking place in the field of historical knowledge."<sup>39</sup> While possibly employing tools, raising problems, and obtaining results not entirely foreign to structuralism, his work did not use structural analysis. His aim was

most decidedly not to use the categories of cultural totalities (whether world-views, ideal types, the particular spirit of the age) in order to impose on history, despite itself, the forms of structural analysis. The series described, the limits fixed, the comparisons and correlations made are based not on the old philosophies of history, but are intended to question teleologies and totalizations.<sup>40</sup>

Neither the totalizing framework of structural analysis, nor the "meagre logic of contradiction" employed by Marxist historians would suffice for Foucault's purpose. Discontinuity, ruptures, thresholds, reversals, shifts--in

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<sup>39</sup> Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 15,16. For those who wished to lump his work together with that of the structuralists (who are themselves hardly a homogenous group), Foucault's response was: "You may know this riddle, 'What is the difference between Bernard Shaw and Charlie Chaplin? There is no difference because they both have beards, with the exception of Chaplin, of course!'" ([interview in] Le Monde, 3 May 1969, p. 8.)

a word, the whole precariousness of the development of systems of thought and knowledge--would become a vital part of the archaeologist's discourse.

Power, war, and genealogy

In taking away this last key to the puzzle of power's organization, Foucault appeared to offer another in return. Instead of attempting to understand the formation and organization of power in terms of the play of a dialectic or of structural systems in history, one is asked to consider it as the historical product of war and struggle, strategies and tactics. In 1977, to the question whether the relation of forces in the order of politics was a warlike one, Foucault did not "personally feel prepared to answer this with a definite yes or no." Nevertheless, this is the terminology under which his recent work was carried out.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 164. By 1982 Foucault had rejected the use of war to describe power relations, apparently because it carried a notion of force and violence which were seen as antithetical to the freedom upon which power is based. Nevertheless, the terminology of strategies, tactics, and struggle was maintained (Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics [Second Edition]. [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983]).

If, in the analysis of power, a general social organization of domination is discerned, one is not to posit that the dialectic of history or the structural systems of culture could have it no other way. Rather, to engage in Foucault's type of analysis,

power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitutes their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations transforms, strengthens or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.<sup>42</sup>

The analytic method Foucault employed to track the formation of power relations in terms of war, struggle, strategies and tactics was genealogy. Genealogical analysis is not hampered by but rather is founded on losses inflicted by the deaths of the King, of Man, and of History. In fact, it exposes these deaths anew each time it is used. Genealogy is proposed as "effective" history because its investigation does not depend upon the delusory phantoms of sovereign bodies, Man, or the neat and systematic unravelling of events known as History. It is not interested in origins, ideal significations, or teleologies. Rather, the purpose of gene-

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<sup>42</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), pp. 92,93.

alogy is to

maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations--or conversely, the complete reversals--the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to uncover that truth and being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but at the exteriority of accidents.<sup>43</sup>

Genealogy is the history of the war, struggle, strategies, and tactics that occur in the capillary forms of power relations and of their effects in the production of domains of objects, discourses, truth, and men. Genealogy creates no invariable factors to theorize with. At the most fundamental level the genealogist is confronted with individuals and basic relations of power-knowledge: individuals are seen as products of power; relations of power-knowledge are not seen as stable but as "matrices of transformations." Hence genealogy is not a science: it is in fact an "anti-science."<sup>44</sup>

'Effective' history differs from traditional history in being without constants. Nothing in man--not even his body--is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), p.146.

<sup>44</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 83.

<sup>45</sup> Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice, p. 153.

The genealogist, ever in need of patience for his meticulous task, finds himself in the midst of the plenitude of events. Yet he is not content with collected descriptions of isolated happenings for his product. He wishes to illustrate how the fundamental struggles and events that constitute the power relations of his study are composed, and how they develop. As a genealogist one's analysis of power in terms of struggle

only really becomes operative if one establishes concretely--in each particular case--who is engaged in struggle, what the struggle is about, and how, where, by what means and according to what rationality it evolves.<sup>46</sup>

Foucault's ability to explain the victory or defeat of certain formations of power, of particular alliances of power-knowledge, is made possible because of a grid of analysis employing the terminology of battle, tactics, and strategies.<sup>47</sup> If victorious, power-knowledge relations form the terminal arrangements of forces that Foucault calls apparatuses ([dispositifs] for example, the State, penal, or medical apparatuses). An apparatus consists of "strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by types of knowledge."<sup>48</sup> More specifically, an apparatus consists

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<sup>46</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 164.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

of a heterogeneous ensemble of discursive and non-discursive elements, that is, of power-knowledge relations, that are manifested in laws, discourses, institutions, statements, architectural forms, and so forth. These elements are linked together by their common response to an "urgent need" at a particular historical moment. They all address, or rather, figure in, the attempted resolution of a particular problem (which may stem from political, economic, demographic, or other factors). Unified into general strategies, these relations of power-knowledge lend each other the common support necessary for their victory as it is exhibited in their formation and maintenance of an apparatus. Working from the bottom up, the genealogist explains, on the basis of power relations viewed in battle, how particular struggles, tactics, and strategies fared in the war which is history.

It may appear, however, that Foucault's genealogical method builds its theoretical concepts upon a never-laid foundation. Apparatuses, strategies, tactics, and struggles may be useful means of visualizing history, but is there a basis to it all? With the assassinations of the King, Man, and History, who or what, in the end, is going to initiate, coordinate, and organize all the multiple and mobile forces that exist at the genesis of events and constitute the struggles, tactics, strategies, and wars?

An overview of the battlefield exposes the problem. Apparatuses are groupings of strategies that respond to a particular historical problem. Strategies, "anonymous and almost unspoken," are coordinated groupings of tactics, that, "becoming connected to one another, but finding their base of support and conditions elsewhere, end by forming comprehensive systems." Tactics, on the other hand, are "loquacious" often being "quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed."<sup>49</sup> They are the configurations taken by relations of power imbued with knowledge, and are the primary forms of power-knowledge relations to serve particular ends. Tactics, in turn, are the form that struggles take.

The genealogically minded person, for whom the construction of a neat continuous history as the background for transcendental Man spells naïveté or fraud, may find the prospect of subjectless strategies appealing. It is, perhaps, not too much to ask that one conceive of apparatuses and strategies as anonymous, their pieces falling into place due to the magnetic force inherent in the tactics that compose them. Apparatuses and strategies of power relations may be proposed as "both intentional and nonsubjective" because their intelligibility, if they are intelligible, results

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<sup>49</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 95.



from their being "imbued, through and through, with calculation: there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives."<sup>50</sup> Their intelligibility, then, derives from the calculation that goes into each of their tactics. Their non-subjectivity derives from the lack of any identifiable coordinator of these same tactics. Power relations at the macroscopic level, apparatuses, may indeed be said to "serve" and delineate relatively stable conditions of domination. However, this is not because the strategies utilized therein were generated and coherently developed at the hands of discernible subjects seeking to better their interests, but because the tactics that compose strategies were calculated creations of self-interested subjects. This means, however, that one cannot say that tactics, like strategies and apparatuses, are non-subjective. Like the struggles they manoeuvre, tactics remain tied to the subjects of struggle. One must, then, sooner or later, confront the question of the fundamental subjects of the struggle. Who opposes whom?

The answer given by Foucault is that the struggle is "all against all.... We all fight against each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights

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50 Ibid., pp. 94,95.

something else."<sup>51</sup> Asked if he meant that only transitory coalitions could form and that first and last the components of struggle would be individuals, Foucault answered: "Yes, individuals or even sub-individuals." To the request for an explanation to his last comment and the probable raised eyebrows it received, Foucault offered only, "Why not?"<sup>52</sup>

Foucault's answer was not simply a tease. Power traverses and produces subjects. There is no reason to suspect that struggle is necessarily between the particular formations of power relations named individuals. The individual cannot assume the role of a constant in the genealogist's investigations. As if to guarantee that power would not be construed as fundamentally opposed to the individual who stands as its unified and transcendental subject and object, Foucault supplied his reader with the non-subjective nemesis of power, suitably named, resistance. Like power, resistance is omnipresent, and its multiple forms may also be integrated into non-subjective strategies. It is described as a "centrifugal movement, an inverse energy, or discharge." It is figuratively defined as being "a certain plebeian quality or aspect," found in bodies and souls, that forms power's limit, responding

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<sup>51</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 208.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

"to every advance of power by a movement of disengagement."<sup>53</sup> Resistance is as inventive, as mobile, and as productive as power. It is contemporary with power. Resistance and power grapple with each other, not only becoming each other's adversary and target, but also serving as supports and handles. Power, though ubiquitous, is not always victorious because resistance reveals itself wherever power engages its forces. Resistance is inscribed in relations of power as "an irreducible opposite."

As with Foucault's understanding of power, one needs to be similarly nominalist with the concept of resistance.<sup>54</sup> Power and resistance are names given to fundamental forces that are most easily identified at their macroscopic level (apparatuses, revolution, etc.), but must be conceived as originating in capillary forms. They are irreducible because one is not allowed to posit a transcendental subject who instigates, deploys, or organizes them. They become each other's antagonists as antonyms, and are not to be conceived in physical terms as elementary substances.<sup>55</sup> In this respect they have no more reality than mirror images, which is not a distorted image of what they are of each other.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>54</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 93.

<sup>55</sup> Foucault, "Non au sexe roi," (interview in) Le Nouvel Observateur, 12 March 1977, p. 124.

With power and resistance thus matched off, Foucault has freed the individual from his role as the transcendental subject, unified and imperious:

In the grumbling that shakes us today, it is perhaps necessary to recognize the birth of a world where one would know that the subject is not one but many, is not sovereign but dependent, is without an absolute origin but with an ever-modifiable function.<sup>56</sup>

The fields upon which power engages its forces with those of resistance are men's bodies and souls, bodies and souls that are themselves defined, transformed, fortified, and devastated by the fray. Individuals and sub-individuals are the mutable arenas of battle.

#### Nietzsche and the 'why' of power

In his speculation on, and analysis of, the struggles and wars of history, Foucault has supplied his readers with the 'where,' 'how,' 'when,' and even the 'who' of power's organization and exercise. Is one entitled to ask for a 'why'? Can one legitimately ask why individuals, or sub-individuals, become the battleground for the forces named power and resistance? Why do they allow themselves, as it were, to be susceptible to the ruses and tactics, to create

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<sup>56</sup> Foucault, (interview in) Le Monde, 3 May 1969, p. 8.

and exploit tactics themselves, to dominate and to succumb? Can one ascribe a 'cause' to the struggles of power and resistance at the most basic (sub)individual level? There is, however, a presumption of a psychology behind these questions. They beg for psychological concepts, that, if supplied, would prove to be useless tools when applied to the soul described by Foucault, a soul as much a product of psychology as the object of psychological study. If nothing else, the attacks on psychology in Mental Illness and Psychology and Madness and Civilization indicate that Foucault was not likely to supply one of his own.

Nevertheless, Foucault pays much homage to Nietzsche, and claims to be, if not following in his footsteps, then at least making use of the light of the embers still aglow on the path Nietzsche burnt. Foucault proposes that his present studies may all be seen as attempts to "constitute the 'political economy' of the will to knowledge."<sup>57</sup> The phrase, will to knowledge, as the genealogical method that tracks it, was taken directly from Nietzsche, the self-professed psychologist.<sup>58</sup>

As early as Folie et déraison Foucault situated his

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<sup>57</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 73.

<sup>58</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 35.

work "under the sun of Nietzsche's great search."<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche, wrote Foucault in The Order of Things, set aflame all the elements of nineteenth century thought that made up its archaeological framework. With the announcement of the death of God, Nietzsche was already forecasting the death of His murderer, Man. At the same time, Nietzsche broke and scattered "the great continuous chain of History," allowing neither Man nor History to fill the void of nihilism left by the death of God. "It was Nietzsche," said Foucault, "who burned for us, even before we were born, the intermingled promises of the dialectic and anthropology."<sup>60</sup> Foucault surrounds his discussion of Nietzsche with images of fire, burning, and a blazing sun. Like fire, Foucault seems to say, Nietzsche both destroys and purifies; destruction and purification also are the tasks Foucault set himself as a genealogist. However much one may wish to attribute to Foucault the creation of a methodology capable of grinding out the various ramifications of Nietzsche's proclamations, Foucault's own words as to the source of his inspiration must be observed. As Foucault

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<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie a l'âge classique (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1961), p. v. Foucault's phrase appears in a rather prophetic statement: "The study we shall read will only be the first and undoubtedly the easiest of a long investigation which under the sun of Nietzsche's great search would like to confront the dialectics of history with the immobile structures of tragedy."

<sup>60</sup> Foucault, The Order of Things, p. 203.

was ready to admit, "it was Nietzsche who specified the power relation as the general form, shall we say, of philosophical discourse."<sup>61</sup> It was also Nietzsche who construed the political question in terms of "truth" and "power."<sup>62</sup> Finally, that truth is produced in the struggles and wars that amalgamate it with power, that at the basis of power relations lies the hostile engagement of forces, Foucault called, for convenience sake, "Nietzsche's hypothesis."<sup>63</sup>

In Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," published in 1971, one finds amid the numerous references to eleven of Nietzsche's works, all the tools and concepts later adopted by Foucault in Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality. All the trademarks of Foucault's methodology and concerns--the nature of genealogical study, the violence of (the origins of) truth, the cruelty, malice, and passion of the will to knowledge, and the sacrifice and self-sacrifice of the subject of knowledge in the endless deployment of the will to truth--are to be found in this essay documented as Nietzsche's own. By the mid-seventies Foucault was willing to make his own archaeological method subservient to genealogy.

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<sup>61</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 53.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

Archaeology became an analytical method employed in the genealogist's investigation.<sup>64</sup> Were he willing to carry Nietzsche's banner, something he felt to be "pretentious," Foucault said, "I would use 'the genealogy of morals' as the general title for what I am doing."<sup>65</sup>

The History of Sexuality is conceived as a history of the will to truth, at least the will to truth about sex and sexuality. It was the will to truth that allowed man to subject himself to "that austere monarchy of Sex."<sup>66</sup> The production of sex and sexuality, and of their truths, is founded on the desire for knowledge, and it is this desire that makes man susceptible to the relations of power that surround truth. In the name of knowledge, or rather under its pull, men are, and allow themselves to be, sacrificed: "Where religion once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge."<sup>67</sup> Men lay open their bodies and souls as fodder to feed the production of knowledge. Foucault saw that his task was to "write the history of this will to truth, this petition to know that

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 53

<sup>66</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 159.

<sup>67</sup> Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice, p. 163.



for so many centuries has kept us enthralled by sex: the history of a stubborn and relentless effort."<sup>68</sup>

Foucault's extensive borrowing from Nietzsche's arsenal for his genealogical forays tempts his reader to search in Nietzsche for the answers to questions Foucault seems to evade. If the will to truth were construed as a psychological construct, it could be seen as a basic force, drive, instinct or passion that inhabits the souls and bodies of men. As such, the will to truth could become the sought-for glue binding together power-knowledge relationships, the 'why' of power's successes or failures at the level of individuals, the magnetic, anonymous force that holds tactics together for the construction of strategies, in short, it might be the underlying 'cause' of the complex formations and dynamics of the power-knowledge relations introduced by Foucault.

Were the reader to turn to Nietzsche, as the originator of the will to truth, he might find some support for his

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<sup>68</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 79. According to Foucault the purpose of Discipline and Punish was similar: "The automation of power and the mechanical character of the devices from which it shapes itself is absolutely not the thesis of the book. But it is the idea in the eighteenth century that such power would be both desirable and possible; it is the theoretical and practical research of such mechanisms, it is the will, incessantly manifested, while organizing similar devices, that constitutes the "object" of the analysis" ([debate with Foucault in] L'impossible prison: Recherches sur le système pénitentiaire au XIXe siècle [Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1980], p. 37).

'cause.' Nietzsche projects the will to truth as a form and function of a more encompassing instinct, passion, or force, known as will to power. Investigations such as Foucault's, which examine power-knowledge relations, would be justified in employing the will to truth rather than the will to power as the point of departure since the will to truth is the form of the will to power with the greatest relevance to the subject matter. As Zarathustra said to the enlightened man: "Truly, my will to power walks with the feet of your will to truth."<sup>69</sup> Nietzsche conceived his psychology as a morphology of the will to power, as "the development-theory of the will to power."<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche theorized that "all driving force is will to power, that there is no other physical, dynamic or psychic force except this."<sup>71</sup> Life itself becomes will to power. The ultimate conclusion is also the ultimate explanation: "This world is the will to power and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power--and nothing besides!"<sup>72</sup> Using Nietzsche, one is able to explain the complexity of Foucault's

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<sup>69</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 138.

<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 35.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>72</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 550.

power-knowledge formations in terms of the development of the will to truth as it functions as a substrate of the will to power. Individuals are then seen to open themselves to the battle of power and resistance owing to their primal instinctive motivation called will to truth.

Indeed such an employment of Nietzsche's theories may provide answers for those who wonder at Foucault's projects. But they are wrong answers if affirmed as Foucault's own, and presumptuous ones if they suggest what Foucault really wants to say but does not. They are, in any case, products of a shallow reading of Nietzsche. The will to power for Nietzsche was just as nominalistic a concept as power and resistance were for Foucault. We should not hold that Nietzsche proposed seriously the will to power as a transcendental object or a fundamental unifying and motivating force of the individual, for two reasons.

First, Nietzsche saw the individual as a "multiplicity of subjects" whose interactions and struggles form the basis of consciousness and thought.<sup>73</sup> Our body was held to be "only a social structure composed of many souls," the struggle of a myriad impulses amalgamated in battle.<sup>74</sup> Each of these drives was itself a will to power, with its own "lust to

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 31.

rule" and "perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm."<sup>75</sup> What is called, in general, will to power, is thus only the name given to that complex and indeterminate grouping of forces that appears in one of its forms as the individual. Nietzsche does not propose the will to power as a unifying force that motivates a subject.<sup>76</sup>

Second, the will to power, as a nominalist force that pervades Nietzsche's world, including the men therein, does not cause anything. No one is in a position to calculate the origin of an event or the motivation of an action. One's search for a "will as cause," simply because an effect has been observed, is futile, and its presumptions are spurious. The belief in cause, and in particular in the "will as cause," is proposed by Nietzsche as one of the Four Great Errors that confound man's thinking.<sup>77</sup> For Nietzsche:

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<sup>75</sup> Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 267.

<sup>76</sup> Foucault, it would appear, has gone one step farther in this respect by introducing a dichotomy that separates the drives or sub-individuals into those characterized by being power oriented and those of a resistive or plebeian quality.

<sup>77</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 48,49.

One ought to to employ 'cause' and 'effect' only as pure concepts, that is to say as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation, mutual understanding, not explanation.<sup>78</sup>

Nietzsche's psychology is thus an anti-psychology, just as his and Foucault's gay sciences are anti-sciences. It does not supply a 'cause' nor give the answer to a 'why'.<sup>79</sup> Nietzsche's taunting challenge to conceive of all as will to power was made to those whom he despised, to those who were attempting to strip the world of its ambiguity, to define it once and for all, to find "an answer for all its riddles."<sup>80</sup> Their search for the answers, for a "knowledge" that presupposed teleology, was seen as a contemptible laziness and weariness of life.<sup>81</sup> Concern with causes makes it more difficult to employ the concepts such as will to power as tools to understand, without explaining the world.

In the same vein, Foucault cautioned against the simplifi-

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<sup>78</sup> Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 37.

<sup>79</sup> Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, p. 51. It may be safer to say that Nietzsche supplies a psychological etiology that remains free, however, from teleology (in the same sense as his genealogy remains free from ontology). Foucault's examination of the various uses of 'origin' (Herkunft, Ursprung) in Nietzsche's genealogical method reveals that Nietzsche challenges any search for an absolute origin (Ursprung), "at least on those occasions when he [Nietzsche] is truly a genealogist" (Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice, p. 143).

<sup>80</sup> Nietzsche, The Will to Power, p. 550.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

cation of the analysis of power by way of the reliance on will as cause. He wrote:

I think one must be wary of the whole thematic of representation which encumbers analyses of power [and that] takes no account of the complexity of the mechanisms at work, their specificity, nor the effect of inter-dependence, complementarity, and sometimes of blockage, which this very diversity produces. In general terms, I believe power is not built up out of 'wills' (individual or collective), nor is it derivable from interest. Power is constructed and functions on the basis of particular powers, myriad issues, myriad effects of power. It is this complex domain that must be studied.<sup>82</sup>

Foucault's resistance to having power represented by any transcendental essence, such as will (to truth), and his insistence on defining power in its own terms, as forming its own organization, must be read as a warning. To pose the problem of power in terms of a reduction to some psychological force such as will does nothing to explain its complex forms. Rather, it tempts the analyst to repose against his stable, immutable construct. Genealogy is without constants, including psychological ones. One must assume that Foucault's will to truth is no more stable than the individuals who manifest it. It exists as part of the struggles of power-knowledge just as much as their stimulus, and therefore becomes produced, transformed, intensified, or reoriented in the battle.

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<sup>82</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 188.

For these reasons Foucault's analysis of power is primarily concerned with how power is exercised and not what power ultimately is. He wrote:

I would say that to begin the analysis [of power] with a "how" is to suggest that power as such does not exist. At the very least it is to ask oneself what content one has in mind when using this all-embracing and reifying term; it is to suspect that an extremely complex configuration of realities is allowed to escape when one treads endlessly on the double question, What is power? and Where does it come from? The little question, What happens? although flat and empirical, once it is scrutinized is seen to avoid accusing a metaphysics or an ontology of power of being fraudulent; rather it attempts a critical investigation into the thematics of power.<sup>83</sup>

Thus a Foucaultian analysis of power offers no respite in the realm of pure theory, being ever engaged in the empirical investigation of the events that testify to the multiple and variegated effects of power.

### The tactical use of genealogy

Genealogy is not for the tired, but for those, as Nietzsche said, with "light feet". The will to truth is not a crutch but a hammer. It is a tool to be used, and perhaps discarded, once it has served its purpose or becomes an impairment by making lazy or by being adopted by those who misunderstand

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<sup>83</sup> Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, p. 217.

its function. A whimsy and a political calculation are implied by this artful use of self-defining concepts and self-serving methods. One may feel that Foucault employed concepts for the benefit of a political purpose and in a sort of fanciful search for the analytical tools to carry it out. Indeed, this is the nature of genealogy, of a gay science.<sup>84</sup>

Foucault submits his concepts as "hypotheses to be tested," as "analytics" of power rather than "theories." He speaks of doing a genealogy of something, fully realizing that another, with a different point of departure and different results, could be constructed. He is quick to point out that the subtitle of The Order of Things was "an archaeology of the human sciences, not the archaeology."<sup>85</sup> The ground that shifts under his readers' feet as they come to understand Foucault's methods also shifts under his own. He tells us that the first volume of The History of Sexuality originally construed a fundamental opposition of sex to sexuality, and that only after many rewrites did there appear a complete reversal of his thinking to produce the published version. If this hypothetical employment of fabricated concepts and

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<sup>84</sup> The genealogical mood for Foucault is one of a "lighthearted positivism" (un positivisme heureux), (Discourse on Language, p. 234.)

<sup>85</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 65.



methods is accused of manufacturing a fictional product, of producing stories "too neat not to be harbouring lies,"<sup>86</sup> Foucault is ready to admit the nature of his work. He said: "I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent."<sup>87</sup> The truth to be found in Foucault's writings is in battle with other truths, and necessarily so. We discover that

the subject which speaks in this discourse [on the nature of power] cannot occupy the position of either jurist or philosopher--that is, the position of a universal subject. In this struggle of which he speaks he is inevitably on one side or the other. He is in the battle, he has adversaries, and he fights for a victory. And if he also speaks of truth, it is this perspective and strategic truth that permits him to claim victory.<sup>88</sup>

Truth is of this world: "Truth exists, with power and its effects, and with dangers as well. Truth is never politically indifferent or useless."<sup>89</sup> Foucault is not freeing a neutral and ultimate truth from the disfiguring shackles of power, but rather bringing to light, in a tactical manoeuvre,

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>88</sup> Michel Foucault, "Histoire des systèmes de la pensée," Annuaire du Collège de France (Paris: 1976-1977), p. 363.

<sup>89</sup> Michel Foucault, (preface to) Bernard Cuau, L'affaire Mirval ou Comment le récit abolit le crime (Paris: Les Presses d'Aujourd'hui, 1976), p. x.

knowledges that have been stifled or disqualified by the present systems of power.

It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.<sup>90</sup>

Genealogy is meant to free certain knowledge from the great systems of truth and exclusions. In doing so it serves a political purpose, and Foucault openly describes his genealogies as "tactics".<sup>91</sup> Once the struggle for this political purpose starts to founder, the tactics must be rethought, the tools of analysis and the concepts they engender must be remolded or discarded.

If Foucault remained unwilling ultimately to define power in terms other than itself, or if at some later date he would have discarded his analytical tool, will to knowledge, one cannot but believe it would have been to save his thought from being "colonized" by critics or perhaps by over-zealous followers. Nietzsche said he published Ecce Homo to prevent people from doing mischief with him.<sup>92</sup> Foucault, too, was wary of his readers. The first volume of The History of

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<sup>90</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 133.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>92</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 326.

Sexuality was written

as a sort of prelude, to explore the keyboard, sketch out its themes and see how people react, what will be criticized, what will be misunderstood and what will cause resentment--it was in some sense to give the other volumes access to these reactions that I wrote this one first.<sup>93</sup>

In this respect Foucault was self-consciously an ironic writer. He knowingly wrote, as Socrates spoke, to two audiences. But unlike Socrates' conversations, Foucault's writings were not privileged to the immediate reactions and misunderstandings of his adversaries and friends. Before continuing his discourse, then, Foucault wished to ascertain who accepted his purpose and need for nominalization in the analytics of power, for the use of the construct of the will to truth, as well as who did not, and how they would twist and pervert his meaning. For those who saw him as a sociologist with a new methodology, Foucault had constantly to shift his tactics and change his weapons, and leave one battlefield only to reemerge on another. In The Order of Things Foucault wrote that Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God, which heralded the death of Man and History, was the "explosion of man's face in laughter, and the return of masks."<sup>94</sup> As one reads Foucault's genealogical writings, his gay science, one can hear his laughter, but one is not allowed to identify

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<sup>93</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 193.

<sup>94</sup> Foucault, The Order of Things, p. 385.

the voice. He remains faceless, masked, elusive. In the conversation Foucault carried on with himself at the beginning of The Archaeology of Knowledge he asked:

Are you already preparing the way out that will enable you in your next book to spring up somewhere else and declare as you're now doing: no, no, no, I'm not where you are lying in wait for me, but over here, laughing at you?

And answered:

What, do you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task, if I were not preparing--with a rather shaky hand--a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same; leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write.<sup>95</sup>

It is unlikely that Foucault's papers would have ever been put in order by his own hand, if by this is meant he would have extracted from them great and totalizing truths that would have formed a system of exclusion. Like Nietzsche, Foucault would say, "I distrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity."<sup>96</sup> It was the destruction of the great systems of truth by Nietzsche,

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<sup>95</sup> Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, p. 25.

Foucault said, that allowed the space in which modern men could think anew, that produced the masks behind which their thoughts could occur, and that allowed the laughter such thinking would elicit. Foucault's own mask is a result of his ironic writing; yet it is formed as much by his desire to remain faceless as by the misinterpretations his work receives. Everything profound loves a mask, said Nietzsche. And the profound thinker receives his mask only in part from his own doing:

Around every profound spirit a mask is continually growing, thanks to the constantly false, that is to say shallow interpretations of every word he speaks, every step he takes, every sign of life he gives.<sup>97</sup>

In this respect, those who accuse Foucault of producing fictions, although naive, present none of the danger that is inherent in attempts to systematize his work in order to fashion a 'true' science from his gay one. Foucault tacitly ended each of his works with the same statement Nietzsche used to end his affirmation of the "universality and unconditionality" of the will to power: "Granted this too is only an interpretation--and you will be eager enough to raise this objection?--well, so much the better."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Foucault, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 51.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

As a genealogist, Foucault need not have feared the accusations of his work's fictional quality. Nor need he have feared that he was not a good genealogist simply because he may not have remained true to Nietzsche from whom he borrowed the term. The genealogist is neither master nor disciple. After explaining that he came to his truth "by diverse paths," Zarathustra challenges his listeners: "This--is now my way: where is yours? Thus I answered those who asked me 'the way'. For the way--does not exist!" Zarathustra affirms that, "one repays a teacher very badly if one remains only a pupil. And why then, should you not pluck at my laurels?"<sup>99</sup> Foucault understood this well enough when he said:

The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest. And if commentators then say that I am being faithful or unfaithful to Nietzsche, that is of absolutely no interest.<sup>100</sup>

To be a Foucaultian or Nietzschean genealogist is, to use one of Nietzsche's terms, a contradictio in adjecto. The genealogist has no constants, not even the teacher's words and methods. We are not to find our answers to the problems Foucault posed by scouring Nietzsche, though such an activity must open our eyes to the field in which Foucault's thought

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<sup>99</sup> Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p. 213, 103.

<sup>100</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, pp. 53, 54.

is situated. If we read and use Foucault, it must be for our own purposes. We must use our own tactics. To those who accuse us of being unfaithful to the master our reply should be: "That's of absolutely no interest." If, in their persistence, our antagonists bring all the tools and measures of truth-making and science to bear against our "interpretations," we may only say: "So much the better," and, sensing that it is the ghost of Man or History who haunts them, offer a smile.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE WILL TO TRUTH: A GENEALOGICAL TOOL

Foucault accorded an invitation to his readers. It was an invitation that followed naturally from his genealogical mood:

What I say should be considered as propositions--as offers to play, to which those who are interested are invited to participate. They are not dogmatic affirmations to be taken as a whole. My books are not philosophical treatises, nor are they historical studies. At the very most they are philosophical fragments in historical building sites.<sup>101</sup>

The game Foucault invited one to participate in entailed the analysis of the fundamental relations or "specificities" of power, with the intent to menace the systems of power they form.

Because power comes from below and is coextensive with society, everyone is vulnerable to it. Moreover, the productive capacities of power allow it to seep imperceptibly into our very being, modifying and producing our perceptions and desires. The point is not that all power is bad, but rather that it is all, at least potentially, dangerous. We cannot escape all power relations, but we can determine which ones are particularly dangerous, that is, which systems of power

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<sup>101</sup> Foucault, (debate in) L'impossible prison, p. 41.



constitute power's most pernicious forms. Foucault stated:

My problem is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger.<sup>102</sup>

The nature of power is that the more productive it is, the more insidious are its forms, the more dangerous it becomes. Hence Foucault's task of the genealogy of "bio-power."

The purpose of the game has been set out by Foucault, the means to its achievement remain a personal choice. There are no pre-established rules because each must make up his own as he goes along. For his part, as a result of his genealogical forays, Foucault supplied an array of game-pieces and maps to aid those who wish to participate. Foucault saw himself as "a merchant of instruments, a recipe maker, a cartographer."<sup>103</sup> His books and theories are to be employed as "tool-kits." In 1975 Foucault said:

All of my books whether it be Madness and Civilization or this one [Discipline and Punish] are, if you will, little tool boxes. If people wish to open them and make use of this certain phrase, idea, or analysis, as one would use a

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<sup>102</sup> Foucault (interview in) Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, pp. 231,232.

<sup>103</sup> Michel Foucault, (interview in) Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 17 March 1975.

screwdriver or a wrench in order to short-circuit, disqualify, or break the systems of power, possibly including even those from which my books are conceived ... well, so much the better.<sup>104</sup>

My lead has been taken from this invitation. From Foucault's box of tools I have selected the will to truth. The subsequent chapters will put this implement to work; for the moment my concern is to set out its proper usage. While the rules according to which I employ the will to truth ultimately must be my own, I rely on Foucault's demonstration of how to secure a grip.

#### The will to truth and the will to knowledge

Up to this point the making of what may appear as an important distinction has been avoided: that between the will to truth and the will to knowledge. It is, in fact, a distinction Foucault proposed to make during his first year of lectures at the Collège de France (1970-1971).<sup>105</sup> However, his published works, though supplying helpful descriptions, do not offer precise or exhaustive definitions of either term. Moreover, it would appear at times that the terms

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<sup>104</sup> Foucault, (interview in) Le Monde, 21 February 1975, p. 16. See also Power/Knowledge, p. 145.

<sup>105</sup> Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice, p. 201.

were used interchangeably. The distinction between truth and knowledge provides us with a beginning.

Recalling the concept of power-knowledge, of power's and knowledge's symbiotic relation, one may say that truth is what supplies this relationship with its forms. There is a regime of truth that orders, constructs, and controls the relations of power-knowledge, the specific effects each has on the other, the various configurations they form, and the transformations of these configurations. Truth is to be conceived not as the accumulation of discovered facts, but as a system of exclusion that governs which facts or knowledge are to be accepted as truth. By so doing truth manages knowledge's interplay with power. Foucault wrote:

By truth I do not mean the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted, but rather the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true.<sup>106</sup>

Truth, then, is concerned with the regulation and production of knowledge. It is a grid upon which knowledge may be sorted, being either rejected as false or accepted as true, and subsequently slotted into its proper compartment where it may become useful.

As a system of exclusion, truth does not simply separate the true and the false, but also performs a prescriptive

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<sup>106</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 132.

role. Truth determines which methods, practices, and procedures are to yield knowledge, and hence which will allow the production of truths (and the detection and elimination of falsehoods) in the first place. In its task of producing knowledge, truth is concerned with the proper management of the fields of knowledge, ensuring that they remain controlled and at the same time fertile. In its activity of sorting, accepting, rejecting, and prescribing knowledge and the methods of its production, truth forms the divisions that give knowledge its value, its possibility of appearing as knowledge of the true.

The regime of truth, as a system of exclusion, is what Foucault calls the will to truth. The will to truth is the ensemble of divisions, prohibitions, and prescriptions that outline the domains of knowledge and ensure their productivity. It is not, however, to be thought of as a transcendental or ahistorical system of rules. In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, The Discourse on Language, Foucault asserted that the will to truth has a history, and he gave an example of its transformation.

For the sixth century Greek poets true discourse inspired respect and terror. It derived its truth from its circumstances, as a result of being

pronounced by men who spoke as of right, according to ritual, [truth] meted out justice and attributed to each his rightful share; it prophesied the future,

not merely announcing what was going to occur, but contributing to its actual event, carrying men along with it and thus weaving itself into the fabric of fate.<sup>107</sup>

This will to truth led men to find truth not so much in what was said, but in who said it, and how it was said. Then, sometime between Hesiod and Plato, the will to truth shifted. One finds that

the highest truth no longer resided in what discourse was, nor in what it did; it lay in what was said. The day dawned when truth moved over from the ritualized act--potent and just--of enunciation, to settle on what was enunciated itself: its meaning, its form, its object and its relation to what it referred to.<sup>108</sup>

The will to truth had opened up a new domain of knowledge, of rules for separating the true from the false, and of prescriptions for producing truths.

Although the will to truth constituted after the sixth century (B.C.E.) has kept its general form to the present day, it has, nonetheless, never ceased shifting ground:

From the time of the great Platonic division onwards, the will to truth had its own history ... the history of a range of subjects to be learned, the history of the functions of the knowing subject, the history of material, technical and instrumental investment of knowledge.<sup>109</sup>

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107 Foucault, Discourse on Language, p. 218.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.

In sum, one finds the will to truth to be a historically mutable system of exclusion governing the production of knowledge. Foucault's general task, which, however, was explicitly stated as such only in the first volume of The History of Sexuality, was to track down this will to truth, to uncover the shifts that have modified the systems of exclusion that regulate the production of knowledge, and to relate these shifts to the interplay of power and knowledge.

In this same volume Foucault also set himself the task of constituting the political economy of the will to knowledge. The two tasks become difficult to separate. Within the will to truth the will to knowledge is deployed. As a sub-system of exclusion, the will to knowledge finds its domicile within the folds of knowledge created by the will to truth. The divisions produced by the will to truth are what the will to knowledge operates within. To refer to Foucault's Greek example: the various rules governing the extraction of knowledge from the what was said, depend upon and are located within the previous division that situate truth in the what was said, and not in the who who said it, the how it was said, or the what it did. The will to truth is "in its very general form, the kind of division governing

our will to knowledge."<sup>110</sup>

The confusion between will to truth and will to knowledge emerges because the will to knowledge, itself a system of exclusion, undergoes changes similar to those of the will to truth; it is a shifting domain of divisions located within a shifting domain of divisions. The theoretical or practical means by which one could distinguish the particular kinds of shifts, were, for the most part, ignored by Foucault. Hence his description of the shifts undergone by the will to knowledge appear identical to what was previously described as shifts of the will to truth, and one is at a loss to determine whether the two are in fact not one. We find, for example, that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (particular in England),

a will to truth emerged which, anticipating its present content, sketched out a schema of possible, observable, measurable and classifiable objects;

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp. 218,219. In his course summary of 1970-1971, Foucault spoke of the concepts will to truth and will to knowledge as providing the "theoretical justification" for the archaeological work of isolating "the distinctive level of discursive practices." Will to truth and will to knowledge were seen as providing the rules of exclusion governing the different levels of discursive practices. Through the actual examination of discursive practices, Foucault hoped to uncover the inherent rules distinct to each level that would then allow the differentiation of the concepts of will to truth and will to knowledge. Hence the study was to proceed by "establishing a distinction between knowledge and the rules necessary to its acquisition; the difference between the will to knowledge and the will to truth..." (Language, Counter-memory, Practice, p. 201). Unfortunately, Foucault did not publish the results of this study.

a will to knowledge which imposed upon the knowing subject--in some ways taking precedence over all experience--a certain position, a certain function.<sup>111</sup>

A comparison of Foucault's statements (of the shift in the will to truth after the Platonic division and that of the will to knowledge in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) allows the reader no grounds to make a differentiation.

The overlap of will to truth and will to knowledge, or perhaps better said, their apparent state of being thoroughly intertwined, did not seem to trouble Foucault. On numerous occasions he exchanged the terms freely.<sup>112</sup> The liberty with which Foucault employed will to truth and will to knowledge reflected his changing concerns. He wished to focus less on the epistemological distinctions of the archaeologist (which would have required a clear differentiation of will to truth and will to knowledge as the forces producing the "distinctive level of discursive practices") and instead to concentrate his efforts on the genealogical task of examining

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<sup>111</sup> Foucault, Discourse on Language, p. 218.

<sup>112</sup> These interchanges occur, in fact, a number of times in The Discourse on Language itself. For example, Foucault begins one paragraph: "But the will to truth, like other systems of exclusion, relies on institutional support...." The following paragraph begins: "Finally, I believe that this will to knowledge, thus reliant upon institutional support..." (p. 219). See also the apparent interchanges in The History of Sexuality (volume one), pages 73 and 79; and in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice pages 163 and 164.



power-knowledge, that is, the interplay of power and knowledge that allows the systems of exclusion their force, and the regime of truth its rule. As a genealogist Foucault could ignore the differentiation that would facilitate archaeological analyses, and instead focus upon how, as systems of exclusions, both will to truth and will to knowledge are manifested in power relations. With this in mind, I shall ignore the epistemological distinction between the will to truth and the will to knowledge. For the purpose of the following analysis, which could loosely be called genealogical, the will to truth and the will to knowledge can be taken as two tools forged by Foucault for much the same job. The terms will be understood to be interchangeable, and their meaning will not be restricted to any particular level of a system of exclusion.<sup>113</sup>

How is one to account for the shifts in the will to knowledge? May one posit a subject of knowledge who consciously transforms the will to knowledge, disassembling and reconstructing the ensemble of rules in an ascertainable

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<sup>113</sup> Since I am not, as will be explained below, primarily concerned with the historical development of the will to truth or of the will to knowledge, but rather with its characteristically modern features, which term is used is not of particular importance. In order to avoid the annoyance of switching between the two, I have chosen will to truth as the preferred expression for my own analysis. However, Foucault often employed will to knowledge, and to reduce the confusion I shall follow Foucault's choices in this section.

historical act, and disseminating the new regime of truth by means of his power over others? The answer to the latter question should be obvious. The principles of exclusion that come to form a will to knowledge "are not based on an agent of knowledge (historical or transcendental) who successively invents them or places them on an original footing." The will to knowledge "polymorphous, susceptible to regular transformations" is also "anonymous."<sup>114</sup> One is confronted with subjectless shifts of the will to knowledge in much the same way as with the subjectless creation and organization of apparatuses and strategies of power. It was to be expected. Power-knowledge relationships cannot be explained by either term alone. One could not escape Foucault's circular definition of power simply by introducing the notion of a (psychological) will to knowledge. Neither can one explain the formations and transformations of the will to knowledge by falling back on the idea of some transcendental or historical subject whose power is employed for this purpose. Rather, the will to knowledge is introduced into the circular definition of power, it turns with it, becoming an element thereof, without forming its origin or base and without ever rising to a higher level that would rely on this definition for its own foundation. The will to knowledge governs power-knowledge

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<sup>114</sup> Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice, pp. 200,201.

relations, but, at the same time, is subject to the effects of power-knowledge relations as they figure in its own transformations. Like power, the will to knowledge is to be understood only through an analysis of specificities. It is to be built, like power, from the bottom up, as the result of the genealogist's formidable task of analysing power-knowledge relations in their capillary forms.

As an aid to his analysis of power, to serve as a working hypothesis, Foucault employed the imagery of battle. Politics was conceived as war by other means; power was described in terms of strategies, tactics, and struggle. To understand the workings of power Foucault developed and employed the implements of battle, and placed them in our hands. He has not been so helpful regarding the analysis of the will to knowledge. In 1971 Foucault could say that "to our time few conceptual tools have been elaborated for analysing the will to knowledge." The ones at hand, such as

"anthropological" or psychological notions like those of curiosity, the need for mastery or reaction to the threat of the undifferentiated; historical generalities such as the spirit of a period, its sensibility, its types of interests, its conceptions of the world, its systems of values, its essential needs; philosophical themes such as horizon of rationality that makes itself known through time...

were considered "at best, imprecise".<sup>115</sup> The conclusion:

We are faced with the unavoidable fact that the tools that permit the analysis of the will to knowledge must be constructed and defined as we proceed, according to the needs and possibilities that arise from a series of concrete studies.<sup>116</sup>

The concrete studies to follow, Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality, though considered as investigations of the development of the will to knowledge, provided few, if any, of the theoretical tools for its analysis. The task of forging these tools remains unfinished.<sup>117</sup>

### The modern will to truth

If the tools for the analysis of the historical transformations of the will to truth remain undisclosed, the same can not be said of the features of the modern will to truth. Foucault's writings from the early 1960s to the first volume

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> A definite start was made by Foucault. Just as Nietzsche's genealogical method provided the implements of war to analyse power, it also provided the rudimentary elements for the analysis of the will to knowledge. In his course at the Collège de France in 1970-1971, which was devoted to the formation of a "morphology of the will to knowledge," Foucault employed elements of the Nietzschean concept of the will to knowledge, developed in The Gay Science, as a model to aid in the investigation of ancient Greek concepts of justice. We find none of the results of these investigations in his published works.

of The History of Sexuality focus upon and bring to light the face of the will to truth that has dominated the last few centuries in Western societies. It is the face of Man.

Just as Foucault could say that from Madness and Civilization to The History of Sexuality his concern was the analysis of power, so he saw fit to state that the goal of his work over the last twenty years was "to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made into subjects." His works were said to have consisted in the examination of "three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects."<sup>118</sup> Roughly speaking, the three modes are: the human sciences, which objectify the speaking subject in linguistics, or the labouring subject in economics, for example; the "dividing practices," which objectify the subject by means of his categorization--mad or sane, sick or healthy, criminal or law-abiding; and finally, the practices of self-objectification, wherein the individual makes himself a subject of knowledge, for example, as a subject of sexuality or of ethics. Underlying all three modes is a will to truth that holds truth to be the truth of Man. Wherever modern man turned in his search for knowledge--history, economics, language, sexuality--he encountered himself. For man,

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<sup>118</sup> Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, p. 208.

in constituting himself as the object of knowledge also became its subject. Truth became anthropological truth; the will to truth became the will to truth of Man.

The examination of the objectification of human beings into subjects of knowledge has been a consistent theme spanning Foucault's works, from his books written in the early 1960s to the investigations into sexuality and government in his latest writings. They are all analyses of the will to truth that predominated in the modern Western world, though the phrase 'will to truth' was not always used. In Maladie mentale et psychologie Foucault wrote of the relatively recent shift in the will to truth that placed truth inside man himself. No longer in a relation external to him, truth in the modern period had to be sought by peering into the obscurities of man's being. Psychology was one of the methods.

The general relationship that Western man established nearly two centuries ago of himself to himself ... is the emergence in forms of knowledge, of a homo psychologicus burdened with holding interior truth, emaciated, ironic of all possible knowledge; finally replaced in the largest opening, this relationship is the one that man has substituted for his relationship with truth by alienating truth in this fundamental postulate that he himself is the truth of truth.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Michel Foucault, Maladie mentale et psychologie (Paris: PUF, 1962), p. 103. This book is a substantial rewrite and reversal of certain themes found in Maladie mentale et personnalité published in 1954.

The same point is made in Folie et déraison. The division of sanity and madness in the Middle Ages constituted a form of exclusion that rendered the madman's speech meaningless (or in certain cases endowed it with a higher form of meaning). In time doctors began to listen to the discourse of the mad. It was seen to reveal the truth of Man, tracing his limits and the foundations of his being. We learn that "the great critical division of folly is now replaced by the proximity (always lost and always found again) of man and his truth."<sup>120</sup> The division of reason and folly that formerly excluded the madman's discourse from having meaning and from the common discourse of men, gave way to the system of exclusion of the will to truth. The madman's words were now invested with truth, and this truth was the truth of Man. As a system of exclusion, the reason/folly division that held sway up until the end of the eighteenth century was assimilated by that of the will to truth in order to modify the former and provide it "with a firm foundation." As a result of such invasions into the domains of other systems of exclusion "the will to truth ... daily grows in strength, in depth and implacability."<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Michel Foucault, Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie a l'âge classique. (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1961), p. 632.

<sup>121</sup> Foucault, Discourse on Language, pp. 217-219.

Moving ahead to his latest writings one finds the same theme has been carried forward. The concern has remained with the objectification of the human being as a function of the will to knowledge. With reference to sexuality Foucault characterized the will to knowledge, which "traverses our entire relationship to sex," as a

will to knowledge to such an imperious point, and in which we are so enveloped, that now we not only search for the truth of sex but we ask it to reveal our own truth. For it to tell us what part of us it is. From Gerson to Freud an entire logic of sex has been constructed that has organized the science of the subject.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, in his course on government given in 1979-1980, Foucault's concern remained the investigation of the will to truth of Man that characterizes our culture. Foucault questioned how in this society,

the government of men asks of those who are guided not only acts of obedience, of submission, but "acts of truth" that are distinctive in that the subject is not only required to tell the truth, but to tell the truth with respect to himself, his faults, his desires, the state of his soul, etc.? How is it that a type of government has formed which not only requests one to obey,

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<sup>122</sup> Michel Foucault, "L'occident et la vérité du sexe," Le Monde, 5 November 1976, p. 24.



but to demonstrate what one is?<sup>123</sup>

To be very schematic, one may say that Foucault's work was concerned with relations of power-knowledge and the production of truth. In turn, these themes were analysed using the concept of the will to truth, that is, the force that governs power-knowledge relations and the production of truth by means of objectifying human beings, turning them into subjects of knowledge. In the modern period we may call this force or system of exclusion the will to truth of Man.

#### The proper use of the will to truth

Sometime between the Classical period and the modern age, not at a given historical point but in a gradual transfor-

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<sup>123</sup> Foucault, "Histoire des systèmes de pensée," Annales du Collège de France (Paris: 1979-1980), p. 449. Foucault's most recent publications, volumes two and three of The History of Sexuality (L'usage des plaisirs and Le souci de soi) also focus on subjectification and the will to truth. Foucault summed up the purpose of the series thus: "The project was the history of sexuality as experience--experience taken to mean the correlation within a culture between domains of knowledge, types of normality and forms of subjectivity." The focus is upon "the formation of knowledge ... within which individuals can and must recognize themselves as subjects of this sexuality" (Histoire de la sexualité (vol. 2), L'Usage des Plaisirs [Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1984], p. 10). While the general goal of the study remains a history of the present, these latest works strictly concern themselves with Greek and Roman times from the fourth century B.C.E. to the second century C.E. They need not concern us for the moment.

mation, the will to truth shifted. The will to truth of Man emerged, and its reign has not yet passed. It lingers on to cloud our thinking. From the perspective of an analysis of power, Foucault has shown that Man has died.<sup>124</sup> Yet it was precisely upon Man that the mechanisms of power tried to attach themselves. It was around Man that power and knowledge joined forces. It was the extortion of Man's truth, the search for the secrets of his being, the assumption of his transcendental nature which would be revealed through language, or sex, or History, that supplied the modern period with its will to search for and construct vast ensembles of tactics and mechanisms of power.

The point is, in order to understand the phenomenon of power in the modern period we have to do away with Man--precisely because Man dominated the modern period. Thus we are forced into the revolutionary and cathartic act that marks the death of Man. Or, to put it another way, we must turn the will to truth of Man against its own culture,

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<sup>124</sup> As has been shown in Chapter One, the death of Man also signals the death of History, which carries Man forward and exposes the truth of his being, and the death of the King, whose accepted impotence and inability to encroach upon Man's fundamental liberty hides the productive capacities of power. Without a belief in Man neither the belief in History nor in the King could retain its grip. One must remember that for Foucault the death of Man is the death "of the Subject with a capital letter, of the subject as an origin and foundation of Knowledge, of Liberty, of Language, and of History" ([interview in] Le Monde, 3 May 1969, p. 8).

wield the will to truth of Man as a hammer in order to pry apart the modern period's regime of truth and to break open its foundations. According to Foucault:

When one is dealing with the Classical period, one has only to describe it. When it comes to the modern period, however, which began about 1790-1810 and lasted until 1950, the problem is to free oneself from it ... one has to dig out a whole mass of discourse that has accumulated under one's feet. One may uncover with gentle movements the latent configurations of earlier periods; but when it is a matter of determining the systems of discourse on which we are still living, when we have to question the words that are still echoing in our ears, which become confused with those we are trying to formulate, the archaeologist, like the Nietzschean philosopher, is forced to take a hammer to it.<sup>125</sup>

A "history of the present," as Foucault proposed to do, thus requires the historian's own rejection of the concepts that dominated the period of his study. It is the perspective

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<sup>125</sup> Alan Sheridan, Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1980), p. 196. The dates of the modern period roughly correspond to Foucault's philosophical periodization, that of Kant and Hegel to Sartre. Within this period are to be found the anthropological philosophy Foucault said has dominated Western thought since Kant, and the "contemporary humanism" said to have begun with Hegel and ended with Sartre. This type of philosophy was considered as "essentially an enterprise of totalization, if not of the world, if not of knowledge, then at least of human experience." In this regard Sartre is considered by Foucault as the last Hegelian and the last Marxist ([interviews in] La Quinzaine Littéraire, 1 March 1968, p. 21; and Arts et Loisirs, 15 June 1966, p. 8). I must agree with Sheridan, however, in saying that the precise date of the end of the modern period (1950) should probably not be taken to represent any particular event. The remark was given as an unprepared response during an interview and does not appear in any of Foucault's writings.

gained with the acceptance of Man's death that allows one to see how his life energized the discourse and practices of the last few centuries. Similarly, it is the use of the will to truth as a tool, a hammer, that allows one to expose the means by which the regime of Man originated, flourished, and tenaciously attempts to retain its hold today.

I have chosen the will to truth, from among the many intriguing implements found in Foucault's tool-box, in order to analyse the phenomenon of power as it appeared in the world towards the end of the modern period in the totalitarian movements and regimes, Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. The research for this study is not my own. I shall rely wholly upon the writings of Hannah Arendt, notably The Origins of Totalitarianism.<sup>126</sup> If a justification for such reliance is needed it is that, for all the differences that distinguish Arendt's and Foucault's political thought (which need not be discussed here), their concepts of power have fundamental aspects in common. It should be stated that the purpose of the analysis is not to vindicate Arendt's theoretical claims or her historical research. Neither is it to propose Arendt's and Foucault's concepts of power as equivalent and to force

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<sup>126</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1973). The periods of Arendt's study are 1929-1941, 1945-1953 in Stalinist Russia, and 1933-1945 in Nazi Germany (pp. xxiii-xxv).

either thinker to swallow the other's propositions in the process. Finally, it is not my explicit purpose to unite the two thinkers' concepts and theories in order to lend each other support or to allow a clearer understanding of one's work by means of the other's reinforcement (though it may be hoped that this latter possibility will be accomplished as a by-product). Rather, I wish to employ the will to truth in order to come to a better understanding of totalitarianism.

Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism is used as what I would hope to be a receptive medium in which I may employ the implements borrowed from Foucault. Her research and analysis provide a convincing argument for the understanding of totalitarianism as a completely new form of rule, based on fundamentally modern motivations and circumstances. Foucault's will to truth is most valuable in understanding what makes totalitarianism new, and how it achieves an unprecedented form of rule. The modern will to truth is proposed to be an indispensable foundation for totalitarian power, a foundation given its theoretical elaboration by Foucault, and its historical and analytical description by Arendt. The union of Foucault's and Arendt's work gives us insights to totalitarianism not found in Arendt, as well as a chance to examine a critical point in the modern development of power-truth relations that Foucault left unexplored.

Power for Arendt and Foucault

Because it is the phenomenon of power in Arendt's study that is analysed with the aid of Foucault's will to truth, the two thinkers' similar understanding of the nature of power, if not necessary for such an enterprise, is certainly helpful. Before I begin the analysis itself, then, I must show the similarity between Arendt's and Foucault's concepts of power, focusing not on the forms of power or on its organization (which, regarding Foucault, was done in Chapter One) but on its basic nature, as far as they have defined it.

I do not wish to overstate my case. Even the most cursory reading of Arendt reveals a concept of power substantially different from Foucault's. For Arendt, power is the life-blood of political communities, the laudatory means whereby men can influence each other through common speech and action, thereby creating the space for their public life. She wrote:

Power is actualized only when 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.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 200.

Certainly this seems to be a far cry from Foucault's understanding of power with its insidious mechanisms and pernicious effects. It must be remembered, however, that Foucault's concept of resistance, which would appear to mesh more easily with Arendt's concept, has exactly the same composition as power. It is, in effect, as if Foucault chose 'power' to denote those power relations in society that, because of their effects, bear or should bear a pejorative title, while employing 'resistance' for those power relations that need not, or should not, be so deprecated. But this distinction emphasizes the purpose for which power is exercised, which does not alter its nature. It must also be remembered that Foucault chose the position of "hyper- and pessimistic activism," and that even from such a perspective the idea is not that all power is bad, but rather that it is all dangerous. Nevertheless, any attempt to equate Arendt's and Foucault's concepts of power would be futile; accordingly I shall only try to outline the common ground upon which their concepts rest.

For Arendt:

Power is always, as we would say, a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable, and reliable entity like force or strength. While strength is the natural quality of an individual seen in isolation, power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

Power is that which is generated when people get together and "act in concert." If men's speech and action come to influence, modify, or stimulate speech and action, it is power that allows this, and it is power that is generated. Power is that which enables men to act in concert by creating the public space that separates them and by exposing the common ties that unite them. It exists only in its actualization, which occurs whenever men, being together, influence and are influenced by each other's speech and action. As such, power is "boundless." Its only indispensable natural factor is the coexistence of human beings.

Power is not violence. For Arendt, violence, because it does not allow speech or action, or renders them meaningless by introducing force to modify behaviour, is by nature opposed to power. When either of the two exist in an absolute form, the other is eliminated. Yet this is not to say that violence and power are not found together. Indeed it is rare to find either in its pure form, that is, without any trace of the other.<sup>129</sup> As is generally the case with political communities, their origins, their methods of maintaining themselves, and their disintegrations are products of both power and violence.

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<sup>129</sup> Hannah Arendt, Crisis of the Republic (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1972), pp. 145, 146, 151.



Foucault's description of power is similar to Arendt's on a number of counts. According to Foucault:

Power is not possessed.... As far as we go in the social network, we always find power as something which "runs through" it, that acts, that brings about effects. It becomes effective or not, that is, power is always a definite form of momentary and constantly reproduced encounters among a definite number of individuals.<sup>130</sup>

Both Arendt and Foucault agree that power is, at least potentially, coextensive with the human community. Both agree that power is the product of human relations, is not possessed, but produces a web of actions (including speech) as a result of people encountering and influencing people. And like Arendt, Foucault understood power as a potential that exists only nominally except in its actualization. He wrote:

The exercise of power ... is a way in which certain actions modify others. Which is to say, of course, that something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist. Power exists only when it is put into action, even if, of course, it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Michel Foucault, Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy, ed. Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979), pp. 59, 60 (notes taken from a 1973 lecture by Foucault).

<sup>131</sup> Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, p. 217.

Power, then, is action that comes to bear on other action. Hence, when one speaks of power one presupposes that the subjects of power are capable of action, that they have retained their freedom throughout the exercise of power. For Foucault, as for Arendt, power is distinguished from violence, which constrains its subject, forcing his movements and robbing him of his possibility for action. The subject of violence, unlike that of power, can only react in a constrained manner. As Foucault stated:

In itself the exercise of power is not violence ... it [power] incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult ... it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of acting.... Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free.<sup>132</sup>

Unlike violence, which "closes the door on all possibilities," there are, according to Foucault, two indispensable elements in a power relation:

That 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up.<sup>133</sup>

Power is not violence for Foucault; it is not coercion. Yet in Foucault one finds an aspect of power that appears

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 220,221.

to verge on the coercive (seduction)--something that seems absent in Arendt. If, for Arendt, power appears as power created and exercised between people, Foucault's notion of power is that of power over people. He wrote:

What characterizes the power we are analysing is that it brings into play relations between individuals (or between groups). For let us not deceive ourselves; if we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others. The term "power" designates relationships between partners (and I am not thinking of a zero-sum game, but simply, and for the moment staying in the most general terms, of an ensemble of actions which induce others and follow from one another).<sup>134</sup>

Foucault's use of the term "power over" designates a relation of unequal influence. One exercises power over someone when one is, in general, the inducer of activity. While the other over whom power is exercised is free to act in any number of ways, he is influenced (induced, seduced) to act in a specific manner, to choose a certain form of action.

Such a formulation is not entirely foreign to Arendt by any means. Power, for Arendt, "corresponds to the condition of plurality," which is to say it operates only because there exist not simply many subjects of power, but many individuals--subjects whose varying circumstances and whose unequal abilities to persuade and unequal susceptibilities to persuasion would inevitably result in unequal influence.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

In power relations, the effect people have on each other need not constitute a perfectly reciprocal exchange. In practice it seldom would. By definition power only exists between men (for Arendt and Foucault). By invoking the condition of plurality Arendt suggests that power would not form completely egalitarian relationships; it would also be power of men over men. In their metaphorical use to describe power relations the two prepositions 'over' and 'between' are not incompatible. However, whatever the direction of inducement or the proportions of the unequal influence, power, as opposed to violence or force, is a product of free individuals' speech and action, and it is productive of the same.

As a result, power is no more a state of consensus than it is an act of violence. For both Arendt and Foucault, though any particular set of power relations between actors or of actors over actors may have been born out of either violence or consensus, and may produce effects of violence or consensus, neither violence nor consensus constitutes the foundation of power. In its pure form, the state of consensus precludes the exercise of power just as does the use of violence. Violence denies the freedom necessary to (at least one of) the actors in a power relationship. Absolute consensus (perhaps an abstraction not to be found in practice) would eliminate the need for power in the first place and

strip it of any effects it may have had. In a situation of absolute consensus one does not have actors influencing other actors, actions bearing upon actions, but merely a universal affirmation of intent of like-minded people. The possibility of power is grounded in plurality, the existence of free individuals: the forceful disregard of plurality (violence), or its effective absence (absolute consensus) means that power can not be actualized.

Power for both Arendt and Foucault is a potentiality that is coextensive with the web of human relations, and that is actualized whenever speech or action influence speech or action. The subjects of power relations, though not necessarily and probably very seldom involved in a perfectly reciprocal exchange of influence, remain free. Whatever the effects of power, the action it produces could always have been otherwise. Thus power is distinct from violence and force. Such an affinity between the concepts of power developed by Arendt and Foucault does not begin to resemble an equation of terms, but it is felt to be strong enough to facilitate, rather than hamper, the following analysis. Our understanding of power and its relation to the will to truth will now come to bear on totalitarianism.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF TOTALITARIAN POWER

Foucault argued that the relationship proper to power is government. Government must be understood to have a very broad meaning; it is not restricted to political structures and the management of the state, but includes the manifold relationships that pervade society and allow for the guidance and direction of action.<sup>135</sup> Power, unlike violence, does not force: it governs, structures the field of possibilities for actors. Power creates and organizes the space for the appearance of action, directing its course. With this description in mind, the most powerful form of government yet to exist would appear to be totalitarianism. The pervasiveness of the mechanisms of power of totalitarianism is unparalleled; its strength of organization and capacity to direct action remain matchless. Nevertheless, the goal of totalitarianism is not the creation of power, but its destruction. Power, the essential feature of government (according to Foucault and Arendt) is destroyed in totalitarianism to the extent violence and terror become

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<sup>135</sup> Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, p. 221. See also Annuaire du Collège de France, 1979-1980.

the instruments of rule. The ability to act in concert is replaced by the necessity of reacting to coercion and violence. One might say that totalitarian government is the means to totalitarian terror, that is, the rule of violence and force in which, as much as possible, power is eliminated.<sup>136</sup>

The development of totalitarian power into terror is not so much a puzzle as a logical progression. Since in practice a power relation is seldom symmetrical, power implies the existence of a leader, the one who induces action. In creating the space for concerted action, and in allowing for its organization and direction, power begets leadership, and thereby introduces an element of control into human affairs (hence, for Foucault, the inherent danger of power). Control or direction introduced into the web of relations that constitutes any society or community is called government. But government is not complete control. A power relation presupposes individual freedom; it allows for each to direct or lead himself.<sup>137</sup> From the standpoint of the governors,

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<sup>136</sup> Those referring to Arendt will find that her general use of 'government' is not like Foucault's, but is synonymous with regime or rule. Nevertheless, Arendt maintains that the essential feature of government is power, and hence a totalitarian government, that is, one based on violence and terror, is really a contradiction in terms. See Crisis of the Republic, p. 149.

<sup>137</sup> Foucault neatly expresses this relationship using the French verb conduire, which means to lead or drive, and its reflexive form se conduire to behave or direct oneself. Power begets both conduct and self-conduct ("The Subject

control in a power relation is always limited by the freedom of the other actors. However, because the goal of totalitarianism is not merely control, but total control, power relations, the mark of government, do not characterize its final form of rule. The limited control produced through power must be transformed into total control maintained through force.

Total domination or control in its purest form is achieved in the concentration camp, which forms the pinnacle of terror and is the trademark of totalitarian rule. Concentration camp inmates may be controlled in the fullest sense of the word, for their ability to act, to lead themselves, has been stripped away. Under the reign of terror in the camp, power is absent. The prisoner does not retain the freedom necessary for the exercise of power. He no longer has a field of possibilities before him. His absolute anonymity, indiscriminate torture, forced participation in the committing of atrocities, and subjection to various other techniques have stripped him of his individuality and spontaneity. The concentration camp inmate is capable not of action but only of reaction, forced and predictable behaviour. He has become, as Arendt aptly put it, "bundles of reactions." As with Pavlov's dog, the victim of concentration camp terror

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and Power," in Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, pp. 220,221).



responds predictably to given stimuli. Not only freedom, but even the possibility of struggling for freedom is eliminated under the conditions of concentration camp life.<sup>138</sup>

Under the "scientifically" controlled conditions of the concentration camp, totalitarianism realizes total domination, that is, the total elimination of power without at the same time creating a state of anarchy.<sup>139</sup> The total domination exercised in the camps, however, can only be approximated throughout the rest of the regime. The terror of constant purges and mass executions allows a large part of the power relations normally required for government to be eliminated. Yet, as Arendt notes, a totalitarian regime cannot completely do away with power save for the creation of an army of robots that, under the leader's command, could maintain a reign of terror without producing the power necessary for a secret police force, camp guards, or state administration.<sup>140</sup>

Even if the total elimination of power appears practically impossible under any form of rule by men, it remains the

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<sup>138</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 297.

<sup>139</sup> The anarchist is concerned with the elimination of leaders so that each individual may lead himself. The totalitarian leader is concerned with the destruction of his followers' ability to lead themselves. Hence both anarchism and totalitarianism, as the two opposite ends of the political spectrum, aim at creating powerless societies.

<sup>140</sup> Arendt, Crisis of the Republic, p. 149.

goal of totalitarianism. Through the ideological indoctrination of elites, totalitarian movements appear to have achieved the transformation of thinking, acting men into thoughtless, robot-like fanatics. In this way they attain the capacity for absolute rule without power (which indicates that 'impossible' is not part of the totalitarian vocabulary).<sup>141</sup> The coerciveness of ideological logic, the necessity of acting, or rather, behaving, according to an ideology's historical laws, creates a sort of inner terror. The force of ideas rules the minds of those who succumb to ideology.

The point of departure for the following analysis is the fact that in the totalitarian pursuit of total domination, attainable only with the elimination of power, vast and intricate relations of power are produced and organized. The increasing power over life that totalitarianism exhibits must transform itself when the minimal amount of freedom necessary to power is destroyed in order to achieve total domination. By means of terror, totalitarianism eliminates power; it destroys man's capacity for freedom. Yet only the development of relations of power would lead to the point where power itself becomes a limit to control. Hence, power necessarily precedes totalitarianism's rule by terror,

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<sup>141</sup> Arendt's epigraph for totalitarianism is David Rousset's "Normal men do not know that everything is possible" (The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 303).

including what might be called the inner terror that rules those who are indoctrinated by its ideology. This chapter and the following one offer an analysis of totalitarian power, its foundations and purposes. As such, terror, though constituting the essential feature of totalitarian rule, will be examined only insofar as it marks the limit of power, a limit, however, that is apparently transgressed by means of ideological indoctrination.

It is my belief that the creation, organization, and maintenance of totalitarian power, as well as its function, can best be understood by employing Foucault's will to truth. As an analytical tool, the will to truth offers us three handles: there is Man, who, burdened with truth (since all truths must be discovered in him), becomes the object of knowledge and his ultimate revelation its goal; there is History, whose knowable processes reveal Man and his truths; and there is the King, who serves as the juridical mask of power, hiding its productive capacities, and at the same time, because he is seen to hold power, is conceived as being antagonistic to Man and History, using his power to obstruct the truth they bear. In employing the will to truth as a tool for the analysis of totalitarian power, one is confronted with two tasks, to be assumed respectively in this and the following chapter. First, in order to free oneself from the traditional concepts of power, one must

show that Man, History, and the King are in reality not to be found in totalitarianism. Second, one must illustrate how the will to truth, that is, the belief in Man, History, and the King, allowed totalitarian power to be formed, to assume the proportions and features it did, and finally, to transgress its own limits.

### Power without a King

The assertion that there is no King to be found in totalitarianism appears to fly in the face of traditional analyses that display the totalitarian leader as a diabolical tyrant. Hitler and Stalin are often portrayed as lone figures who seized power, wielded it over and against the unwilling masses, and retained control of it in their hands. As tyrants they represented the one against the many, both in the seizure of power and in its exercise. Totalitarianism, by this reading, is conceived simply as the latest form of tyranny. But totalitarianism is not tyranny; it is an altogether different form of rule. There is no King because there is no tyrant. There is no King-like rule because power is exercised not so much from above as from innumerable points within the system. In its formation totalitarian power is

not tyrannical. The organization of totalitarian power is not monolithic.

There is a striking feature of totalitarian movements that on its own should persuade us that they are not tyrannies: totalitarian movements have mass support. The rise to power of totalitarian movements is not the sudden usurpation of the seat of authority and state power, but rather the organization of the masses, which are on the whole in favour of the movements. Moreover, the assumption of state power by totalitarian movements, that is, their transformation into totalitarian regimes, is based upon the continued consent of the largely enthusiastic masses. Thus, the head of the movement no less than the ruler of the regime is not a tyrant oppressing the masses, but a leader who expresses their desires.<sup>142</sup>

The success of totalitarian leaders cannot be solely attributed to their masterly use of propaganda based on the ignorance of the masses. In general the propaganda of totalitarian movements, however deceitful in form, leaves little to the imagination, outlining with amazing frankness the goals of the movement. And the masses remain remarkably well informed of the movement's actual programs. The point is summed up by Arendt, who warned us not to forget that

the totalitarian regimes, so long as they are in power, and the totalitarian leaders, so long as they are alive, "command and rest upon mass support"

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<sup>142</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 306.

up to the end. Hitler's rise to power was legal in terms of majority rule and neither he nor Stalin could have maintained the leadership of large populations, survived many interior and exterior crises, and braved the numerous dangers of intra-party struggles if they had not had the confidence of the masses.... The propaganda of totalitarian movements which precede and accompany totalitarian regimes is invariably as frank as it is mendacious, and would-be totalitarian rulers usually start their careers by boasting of their past crimes and carefully outlining their future ones.<sup>143</sup>

Totalitarian movements require mass support owing to the total loyalty they demand of their adherents. The masses, unlike cliques or classes, which have common group interests, do not constitute a self-interested group and hence are free and willing to devote themselves entirely to the movement. This essentially selfless support of the masses does not even waver when the price is death. Not only is totalitarian power produced and maintained on the basis of popular support, but even when terror is substituted for power mass support remains intact. As was illustrated by the Moscow trials, totalitarian members were often all too willing to aid in their own persecution for the good of the Party. We find that this

fanaticism of members of totalitarian movements, so clearly different in quality from the greatest loyalty of members of other parties, is produced by the lack of self-interest of masses who are

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pp. 306, 307 (and see xxiii).

quite prepared to sacrifice themselves.<sup>144</sup>

The power formed by and exercised in totalitarian movements and regimes, and to a certain extent even the force and violence perpetrated, is not of and by a tyrant over and against resistant subjects. Rather, totalitarianism brings forth a popular leader who is favoured with mass support.

Assuming this point to be taken, it has still not been shown that no King exists in totalitarianism, but only that no tyrant exists. In other words, given that the totalitarian leader gains and maintains the support of the masses until the end, does he nonetheless not exercise power over and above the masses, as might a popular king over his subjects? The answer is no, and is based upon an examination of the organization of totalitarian power.

Certainly it may be said, for lack of a better expression, that totalitarian leaders hold the reigns of power. They

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.348. In her analysis of totalitarianism Arendt uses (totalitarian) 'member' to denote not only official Party adherents but also the masses whom we have seen to be generally supportive of the totalitarian movement. While it is certainly an exaggeration to say that all members of the totalitarian society are supportive of the regime or movement, to use terms like 'subjects' or 'victims' to denote constituents of the totalitarian society indicates a lack of mass support that is at odds with the historical facts. For the purposes of this study, 'member' will be used to mean a constituent of the totalitarian society who is distinguished from the totalitarian leader and the member of non-totalitarian societies, but need not be assumed as an elite or even a particularly avid supporter.

exercise an incredible control over the movement's direction and development. But the moment this control is described as a monopoly of power, implying that power is held in a concentrated form in the leader's hands, one is led astray in the analysis of totalitarian power.<sup>145</sup> Authority may indeed be concentrated in a single office, as it often is. Power, on the other hand, though perhaps receiving its stimuli from a political leader, is always the result of organization, of the links that unite members of a political body. With totalitarianism, as with any modern state, we must speak of the web of power that corresponds to the web of relations comprising its society. The picture this metaphor calls to mind is one of structure and organization, of diffused power. If the totalitarian leader is able to mobilize people and see his orders carried out, as Hitler and Stalin were to a frightening degree, it is because he occupies a key position in the structure, forming, as it were, a cohesive central strand of the web. It remains in the strength of the threads and the skill with which they are bound together, that is,

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<sup>145</sup> Arendt herself speaks of totalitarianism's "absolute and unsurpassed concentration of power in the hands of a single man," but it is clear that this is an imprecise use of 'power' and is incompatible with her theoretical definition of it. Power, as a potential, corresponding to the ability for men to act in concert, certainly cannot be held in any one person's hands (Ibid., p. 412).



in the organization of totalitarianism and not in its leader per se, that power is located.

The totalitarian leader is the functional linchpin of the organization. Hitler could proclaim "in all modesty" that he was "irreplaceable" and that the destiny of the Reich depended on him alone. The totalitarian leader needs no special training or qualities. He fills a function in the organizational network, and may consider himself irreplaceable only so far as it is his position and not his person that completes and maintains the totalitarian web of power. Those who form the highest rank of the totalitarian hierarchy know well that it is not a single man who imbues the movement with its power; rather, it is the movement's organization itself:

These men consider everything and everybody in terms of organization, and this includes the Leader who thus is neither an inspired talisman nor the one who is infallibly right, but the simple consequence of the type of organization; he is needed, not as a person, but as a function, and as such is indispensable to the movement.<sup>146</sup>

Indeed if one were to choose an epigraph for totalitarianism it might well be 'organization is everything.' The conviction of totalitarians that there is no limit to human capacities, that everything is possible because total domination can remold human beings into precisely what they

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 387.

should be according to ideological tenets, is a consequence of their boundless trust in the potential for human organization:

Their faith in human omnipotence, their conviction that everything can be done through organization, carries them into experiments which human imagination may have outlined but human activity certainly never realized.<sup>147</sup>

Obstacles in the path of the movement, often as large as the existence of entire peoples, can only be seen as temporary hindrances "that superior organization will certainly destroy."<sup>148</sup>

The uniqueness of totalitarian organization is that it generates its power not through the construction of stable structures linking its members, but by means of exactly the opposite process, namely, the setting in motion of the entire organization and the purposeful maintenance of instability. The totalitarian movement, as Hitler rightly called it, is a "living organization."<sup>149</sup> With its loci of authority shifting daily, the transmission lines of power are forever replacing each other. In Nazi Germany this was chiefly accomplished by the duplication of government offices, and the constant shift of authority amongst officials within

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 436.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 382.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

the party apparatus.<sup>150</sup> The result was that

the inhabitant of Hitler's Third Reich lived not only under the simultaneous and often conflicting authorities such as the civil services, the party, the SA and the SS; he could never be sure and was never explicitly told whose authority he was supposed to place above all others. He had to develop a kind of sixth sense to know at a given moment whom to obey and whom to disregard.<sup>151</sup>

In the Soviet Union the shifts were no less numerous or frequent, and the results were much the same; the major difference was that Stālin, rather than simply duplicating offices, tended to liquidate the former office-holders when he created new ones.

The purpose of what Arendt called the "perpetual-motion mania" of organization is the destruction of any permanent ties to authority. Neither officials, political offices, party departments, nor the edicts and doctrines that any of these may promulgate are able or intended to form stable bases of authority for totalitarian members. Even the dicta of the leader himself do not constitute a reliable authority. Not the Fuehrer, nor his espoused doctrines, but the ever-changing "will of the Fuehrer" was to be followed in Nazi Germany. Similarly, in Stalinist Russia,

the most perfect education in Marxism and Leninism

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<sup>150</sup> This was the case with the shifting of authority from the Stormtroopers, to the Shock Troops, and finally to the Security Service (Ibid., p. 400).

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 399.

was no guide whatsoever for political behaviour ... one could follow the party line only if one repeated each morning what Stalin had announced the night before.<sup>152</sup>

Totalitarianism does not demand the loyalty of its members to any (semi)permanent authority, for this would stabilize and hence retard the movement. Instead, it instills a total loyalty, devoid of content. The devotion of the totalitarian adherent is as flexible as it is absolute.

The destruction of the ties to authority of members of a totalitarian organization creates only part of the instability that generates its power. Not only ties to political authority, but all bonds within society must be eliminated. Totalitarianism is based upon a mass society, a society of essentially isolated, atomized individuals who have no common bonds or interests. When the Nazis came to power, Germany was already a mass society. History had not prepared Russia so well for totalitarianism, so that Stalin found it necessary systematically to liquidate the Soviets, the property-owning classes (peasant and middle classes), the workers, and finally the bureaucracy.<sup>153</sup> The point of all this destruction was that the total loyalty demanded by the movement could not coexist with loyalties to other groups or even with the loyalties of individuals to each other. Total domination

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., pp. 320,321.

requires total loyalty, and

such loyalty can be expected only from the completely isolated human being who, without any other social ties to family, friends, comrades or even mere acquaintances, derives his sense of have a place in the world only from his belonging to a movement, his membership in the party.<sup>154</sup>

The destruction of the ties to authority is achieved through a constant shuffling of the organization and frequent changes of its officials. Today's laws and edicts may become tomorrow's heresy in a totalitarian system, just as today's officials may become tomorrow's victims in purges and liquidations. The destruction of all other bonds in society is accomplished by turning the organization, the totalitarian society, into a giant Panopticon. All relationships in a totalitarian society are severed save one: the relationship of total devotion each member has with the movement. This relationship entails the obligation to keep constant watch over one's neighbour, lest he be an enemy of the movement, and to help ferret out those who are suspect. A panoptic society is created in which

everyone, in a way, is the agent provocateur of everyone else; for obviously everybody will call himself an agent provocateur if ever an ordinary friendly exchange of "dangerous thoughts" (or what has in the meantime become dangerous thoughts) should come to the attention of the authorities.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., pp. 323,324.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., pp. 430,431.

Totalitarianism has organized its society so well that each keeps his neighbour in check; "a system of ubiquitous spying, where everybody may be a police agent and each individual feels himself under constant surveillance."<sup>156</sup>

The effect of the panoptic system is that the individual becomes as mutable as the organization itself. Having no attachments to particular doctrines, or political bodies, even less to individuals, who would make him liable to "guilt by association" if ever they fell from grace, the totalitarian member is ready to adopt whatever the leader declares as fact or prescription one day, and, if required, is equally ready to discard it the next. What arises is a thoughtless acceptance of the movement's direction and fulfillment of its demands. As a part of the movement's organized instability and panopticism, the member will trust no one with his thoughts. Because it is too easy to betray oneself, the only sensible thing to do is to stop thinking altogether, to identify oneself totally with the (movement and its) leader, becoming a correctly behaving but non-thinking extension of him.

Power seems to be manifest in the capacity of totalitarian adherents for concerted action. Yet with the result being not merely consensus but an identity of thought and will, we may be loath to term it action or to call its capacity

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 431.

power. Power, always a product of organization, appears to have transgressed its own limits through the sophisticated techniques of totalitarian organization. This was the discovery of totalitarianism. The thrill of discovering the power of organization was evident in Hitler's words of 1929, when he joyfully remarked that the "great thing" about the movement was how thousands of men

have actually become almost a unit, that actually these members are uniform not only in ideas, but that even their facial expression is almost the same. Look at these laughing eyes, this fanatical enthusiasm and you will discover ... how a hundred thousand men in a movement become a single type.<sup>157</sup>

Sustained by the organization, the totalitarian fanatic seems to actually become incapable of the free and individual thought or action normally associated with power. Through its organization totalitarianism has achieved "a means for dominating and terrorizing human beings from within"--a far more effective form of rule than power's usual requirement of persuasion--and "in this sense eliminates the distance between the rulers and the ruled."<sup>158</sup> Hence, one cannot portray the totalitarian leader as either a tyrant or sovereign whose power separates him from his subjects. One must admit that,

in substance, the totalitarian leader is nothing more nor less than the functionary of the masses

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

he leads; he is not a power-hungry individual imposing a tyrannical and arbitrary will upon his subjects ... he depends just as much on the "will" of the masses he embodies as the masses depend on him. Without him they would lack external representation and remain an amorphous horde; without the masses the leader is a nonentity.<sup>159</sup>

What must be remembered, however, is that it is not the leader who transforms the amorphous horde into ordered, loyal fanatics in a movement. That is the job of the organization, of systematic instability and panopticism, just as it is the organization that preserves the leader's status as the embodiment of the masses' will. However one may be inclined to label the capacity of totalitarianism for concerted action or behaviour, for the totalitarian adherent there is little doubt as to its origin: "Power, as conceived by totalitarianism, lies exclusively in the force produced through organization."<sup>160</sup>

### Power without History

Because organization is everything for totalitarianism, we find that not only the King but also History is consumed by its movement, disappearing into its fluid composition.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 418.



History, as proclaimed by totalitarian propaganda, is carried on the back of the movement. In fact, it is produced through the organization of the movement. Totalitarian propaganda, which establishes the history of the movement and prophesies its future successes, can only be realized through organization. Since the power of totalitarian organization has learned to do without the troublesome means of achieving concerted action through persuasion, it stands to reason that "the true goal of totalitarian propaganda is not persuasion but organization."<sup>161</sup> Members of totalitarian movements need not be persuaded of the historical truth of its propaganda; by means of the organization of which they are a part they live the propaganda each day. The Nazis did not need to persuade their members of the historical accuracy of the Jewish world conspiracy any more than the Bolsheviks needed to persuade their members of the historical basis of the international class struggle and the struggle's dependence on the consolidation of Soviet power. As part of the movement, the masses lived as though the propaganda was true. The truth of totalitarian propaganda "was being realized every day in the functioning hierarchy of a political organization in whose framework it would have been very 'unrealistic' to

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

question it."<sup>162</sup> Engulfed in a vast system whose organization functioned according to the dictates of propaganda, the masses could hardly help but come to believe in the conspiracies, struggles, and victories behind the words. It follows that the increased loyalty of the masses and their increased faith in the truth of their leader's words would not come from better arguments or a closer compliance with the historical facts--something totalitarian leaders and spokesmen have always displayed a contempt for--but simply from better organization.

As declared today, totalitarian propaganda determines what the movement's members are to think and will today, and perhaps tomorrow. But it also determines what they are to remember. The totalitarian demand for the total loyalty of its members and for their absolute identification with the movement cannot be threatened by any other bonds, including those to the past. History, like the present and the future, is what the totalitarian leader says it was, is, or will be. In fact, it makes little sense to separate history from the present or future when speaking of totalitarian movements. Historical laws consume them all, allowing the determination, with complete assurance and without recourse to the study of the past, of what was, is, and is yet to

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

be. He who controls the totalitarian organization controls History, because History is revealed through the movement, is actually produced by it. In 1939 Hitler announced:

I want today once again to make a prophecy. In case the Jewish financiers succeed once more in hurling the peoples into a world war, the result will be ... the annihilation of the Jewish race of Europe.

Arendt aptly comments:

Translated into nontotalitarian language, this meant: I intent to make war and I intend to kill the Jews of Europe. Similarly Stalin, in the great speech before the Central Committee of the Communist Party of 1930 in which he prepared the physical liquidation of intraparty right and left deviationists, described them as representatives of "dying classes".... In both instances the same objective is accomplished: the liquidation is fitted into a historical process in which man only does or suffers what according to immutable laws, is bound to happen anyway.<sup>163</sup>

Just as the future may be predicted in the light of History as it is determined by totalitarianism, so may History be reevaluated in light of the movement's current or future needs and direction. Both prophecy and reevaluation of the past usually spell the destruction of those who stand in the way--the misfits who would impede History or contradict it by their mere existence, and hence who must cease to exist, or perhaps must cease ever to have existed. Thus, for example, we find the figure of Trotsky strangely missing from Russian history under Stalin. And when Stalin decided

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 349.

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rewrite the history of the Russian Revolution, the propaganda of his new version consisted in destroying, together with the older books and documents, their authors and readers: the publication in 1938 of a new official history of the Communist Party was the signal that the superpurge which had decimated a whole generation of Soviet intellectuals had come to an end.<sup>164</sup>

What allows such a sacrifice of history for History, of historical facts for ideological dictates, is not the propaganda itself, the cleverness of its rhetoric, or the deceitful substantiation of its proclamations, but rather the power of totalitarian organization within which the propaganda gains its reality and vindication no matter how absurd or grotesque it may appear to nontotalitarian eyes. As Arendt said, "It takes power, not propaganda skill, to circulate a revised history of the Russian Revolution in which no man by the name of Trotsky was ever commander-in-chief of the Red Army."<sup>165</sup>

Just as we do not find a King as the reservoir of power, so we do not find History as the developer and organizer of the forms of totalitarian power. Rather, totalitarian power becomes History's organizer; or better said, totalitarian organization creates the power to make History. Certainly the liquidation of European Jewry or of Russian intellectuals

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

is not in itself power; it is violence plain and simple. Nevertheless, totalitarian power, as created and maintained through organization, allows this violence to be carried out. Without its dynamic organization the totalitarian movement could never attain the status of the faithful bearer of History, nor could it elicit the absolute trust of its members in its historical role.

As far as totalitarian power is concerned, what can be said of History can be equally said of Man. Man, like History, is not revealed through the totalitarian movement, nor does he constitute an unsurmountable obstacle to its exercise of power. Rather, Man, like History, is produced as a result of totalitarian power. Moreover, just as the production of History sacrifices history (the world of facts as we come to know it), so in the totalitarian production of Man human beings are sacrificed.

A short excursus at this point to make some methodological points regarding the use of 'History' and 'history,' 'Man' and 'man,' may be in order. The distinctions are made by Foucault as well as Arendt: Foucault's were outlined in Chapter One, Arendt's will be further explained in Chapter Four; for now it will suffice to make some clarifying remarks.

The terms with capitalized first letters, History and

Man, may be called totalizing fictions. History is conceived as the series of events that unravel according to ascertainable laws, following, as Arendt said, a logic analogous to that with which the 'ideas' (survival of the fittest, racial supremacy, class struggle) of the ideologies are worked out. Hence a knowledge of the laws of History would conduce to prophecy as well as to a tendency to reevaluate the past, fitting it into the logical process. Man is conceived as the subject of knowledge who, by becoming its object, has come to divine his own nature. Thus one may speak of the true desires, consciousness, and destiny of Man without ever accounting for the plurality of men, let alone the difficulty if not impossibility for a limited being to know its ultimate causes. The totalizing fictions of Man and History are products of the same age, and accompany one another. Man's nature is manifested in the processes of History: the end of (these processes of) History and the final revelation of (in totalitarian terms, Aryan or Communist) Man coincide.

In juxtaposition to the totalizing fictions we have what Arendt would call the common sense concepts of history and man. History, in this case, is the story of events, which are the happenings of the unpredictable actions of men. Meaning can be derived from history, as from any story: it appears in the retrospective glance. But history is not a function of laws and does not allow the deductions or

inductions of truths (though events may be correctly or falsely recorded and remembered). Men, or 'man' as the collective noun denoting mankind or human beings in general, exist in plurality. Men are individuals with unique characters having different abilities and qualities. Whatever science can tell us about the capacities and characteristics of man, it cannot fully reveal his nature. As Arendt said, it would take a god to define man's nature, to know him as a 'what' rather than a 'who'. The relation between man and history is straightforward. Though history is about man (the story of events that are products of the actions of men), man does not 'make' history in any sense analogous to an artisan or craftsman. Instead, man can become the judge of history, not extracting its truths and laws that would then bind him to its processes, but rather determining its meaning.

As a final point it should be noted that the rejection of History and Man in no way depreciates history or man. Quite the opposite. For Arendt, the rejection of the totalizing fictions is the minimum requirement if we are to "reclaim our human dignity, win it back, as it were, from the pseudo-divinity named History of the modern age, without denying history's importance, but denying its right to being

the ultimate judge."<sup>166</sup> The creation and adoration of History and Man is not the apotheosis of history and man; it signals their perversion and destruction.

### Power without Man

If we do not yet distinguish between the totalitarian fanatic who sacrifices himself for the movement and the victim of terror (a distinction that in practice is nearly impossible to make because, in the end, both bundles of reactions go to their death willingly) but simply mark the numbers of deaths that can be attributed to totalitarianism, the sacrifice of men in the totalitarian experiment to create Man is all too obvious. The estimated three million executions of Stalin's Great Purge (with five to nine millions arrested and deported) must be added to the nine to twelve million victims of the First Five Year Plan (1928-1933), and the dekulakization which cost eight million lives. By 1937 it could be said that nearly thirty million people were "missing."<sup>167</sup> The figures for Nazi Germany are no less astounding. Apart from the millions of Jews who died in or

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<sup>166</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Life of the Mind (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1978), p. 216.

<sup>167</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, pp. xxx, 310.



en route to the concentration camps, and the hundreds of thousands of Gypsies, homosexuals, and political prisoners who experienced the same fate, had Hitler's Thousand Year Reich been allowed more than the thirteen years it got, there were explicit plans to be carried out for the extermination of the Poles and a substantial portion of the German population that was considered unhealthy, as well as threats against all "Eastern subb-humans" and certain "democratic" peoples.<sup>168</sup>

The reasoning behind the massacres was quite simple: as the production of Communist or Aryan Man was the goal of the movements, all deviants, who in both cases numbered in the millions, would have to be stamped out. The Bolsheviks' struggle for a classless society must be accompanied by the liquidation of those who belong to classes, the unwanted remnants of the past. Similarly the promise of Aryan rule cannot be fulfilled without the thorough elimination of all

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., pp. 416, 424, 350. That even Germans were not exempt from terror by virtue of their nationality, and that only the fictional category of 'Aryan' would safeguard one against liquidation was clearly foreshadowed in 1923 when Hitler stated that "the German people consist for one third of heroes, for another third of cowards, while the rest are traitors." Although the "most extreme contrast to the Aryan is the Jew" (Mein Kampf), and hence his persecution is guaranteed, one is led to believe that other peoples would undergo a similar persecution. The extermination of the Ukrainians, some 170 million Russians, and the intelligentsia of Western Europe was foreseen in Nazi plans (Ibid., pp. 360, 411).

"bad blood." In totalitarianism creation and destruction are two simultaneous stages of the same process. The creation of totalitarian Man necessitates the destruction of men.

Totalitarianism's production of Man reaches its apogee only with the reign of terror in the concentration camps. Only here can the bundles of reactions that are the perfect source material for totalitarian organization be produced en masse. It is at this final yet ever expanding stage of totalitarianism that the revelation of totalitarian Man occurs. He may not be what some had expected or hoped for, but there is none better for the purposes of the movement; the "real triumph of the system" occurs only when men have been turned into "ghastly marionettes with human faces, which all behave like the dog in Pavlov's experiments, which all react with perfect reliability even when going to their own death, and which do nothing but react."<sup>169</sup>

Though the mass production of totalitarian Man is achieved only with the establishment of concentration camps, he shows his face far before this stage. The totalitarian organization of instability and panopticism already establishes the proper environment for totalitarian Man, and the ideological indoctrination of elites indicates that his creation need not depend upon the terror of the camps. Hitler's pleasure at

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 455.

the sight of men of the movement who were "uniform not only in ideas, but even the facial expression" was voiced in 1929, long before his concentration camps demonstrated the effects terror could produce. It was only a few years later, shortly after coming to power, that the Nazis felt they could congratulate themselves for their successful attempt to strip away almost everything that distinguished unique, private individuals from the transparent members of the totalitarian society who are identical in ideas and will. As a result of organization, they had achieved the uniformity of men that allowed them to announce: "The only person who is still a private individual in Germany is somebody who is asleep."<sup>170</sup>

That the production of totalitarian Man is well on its way before terror is used is confirmed by the fact that totalitarian terror is essentially not a means to crush active opponents, but is employed to rule over largely complacent masses: "The most characteristic feature of totalitarian terror [is] that it is let loose when all organized opposition has died down and the totalitarian ruler knows he no longer need be afraid"; it is used "to rule masses of people who are perfectly obedient."<sup>171</sup> Stalin's great purge only began

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 6, xxx.

in 1934, after Stalin himself at the 17th Party Congress had declared: "At this Congress ... there is nothing more to prove and, it seems, no one to fight."<sup>172</sup>

Terror maintains what the techniques of totalitarian power (as exhibited in the fluidity of its organization, its interplay with propaganda, its panopticism, and its capacity to serve as the foundation and supporting structure for ideological indoctrination) have already shown themselves capable of producing: totalitarian Man, that is, men who are virtual extensions of the totalitarian leader's thought and will. What Hitler announced to his SA in 1938 could well have been applied to the masses he led: "All that you are, you are through me; all that I am I am through you alone."<sup>173</sup>

Our attempt to understand totalitarian power must be founded on the rejection of typically modern conceptions that obscure its nature. The features of the modern will to truth cannot play a part in coloring our own understanding of totalitarianism. Our examination of totalitarianism

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p.xxx. In the Soviet Union, the organized production of totalitarian Man had already begun in 1917, and continued after the end of Stalinist terror when the mechanisms to ensure the mass production and daily maintenance of totalitarian Man were, by and large, dismantled. As the late President Konstantin Chernenko reminded his countrymen in November 1984: "The molding of the New Man is an imperative condition in the building of Communism" (Time, 4 March 1985, p. 50).

<sup>173</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 325.

reveals not a King, no tyrant, but rather a popular leader who is simply the functional apex of a vast and intricate organization that spans the entire society. Power does not emanate from above but is exercised from below, on the basis of panopticism and systematic instability. An examination reveals not History, but the falsification of history. The forms and mechanisms of totalitarian power did not take shape as the predictable result of historical processes, but are rather the means whereby History itself is produced. Finally, an examination of totalitarianism reveals that Man is not to be found apart from its power. There is no transcendental subject who ultimately escapes the ruses and mechanisms of power. Nor is there to be discovered the glorious emergence of Man, liberated at last from power and its oppression. Instead we are shown the destruction of men that accompanies their attempted transformation into copies of totalitarian (Aryan or Communist) Man. Totalitarianism attempts to realize the fiction of Man, to remold men and society so that they conform to ideological images and ideas. The result is not the exhibition of man's true nature, but rather the physical annihilation of men and their manipulation into thoughtless fanatics capable of believing anything and remembering nothing. Our present task is to discover how all of this was made possible. To perform it we must now proceed with minds unclouded by the traditional notions of power.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF TOTALITARIAN POWER

The thesis to be discussed in this chapter is that the will to truth is a necessary condition for the formation and maintenance of totalitarian power. Chapter Three argued that the King, History and Man are not found in totalitarianism: they are fictions that mask reality. What has been outlined and must be examined further is the attempt by totalitarianism to produce all three. In this chapter I argue that the King, History, and Man, absent in fact, are supplied by totalitarianism in fantasy. We explore, in other words, the following question: how is it that totalitarian power is founded upon the member's attachment to the three pillars of the modern will to truth? The interpretive strategy is twofold. First, the reader will be asked to conceive of himself as being in the position of a subject of totalitarian rule who would be left, however, without the support of the three pillars of the will to truth. Under these hypothetical circumstances we will consider whether totalitarian power could gain and secure its hold. Second, the effects of the will to truth will be examined in order to show how the belief in the King, History, and Man, allows totalitarian power its success.

Power is traditionally conceived as being in the hands of the King. His subjects' capacity and prerogative is to guard themselves against his power. And, if indeed power tends to corrupt, even the popular King should be treated with some suspicion lest his power become oppressive. The absolute loyalty to the movement and its leader demanded by totalitarianism is incompatible with such a concept of power and the suspicion it begets. The status of a monarch, even a popular one, is therefore insufficient for a totalitarian leader.

What becomes necessary is a rejection of the monarchical concept of power without at the same time allowing the insidious, productive capacities of power to become visible. The juridical mask of power must be thrown away without revealing the threatening features lying underneath. In totalitarianism this is accomplished by the destruction of the distance between the ruler and the ruled--a distance clearly displayed in a monarchical power relation. The complete identification of the members with the movement leaves no room for suspicion. The masses need not guard themselves against the power of their leader, for he merely embodies their own thought and will; it would make as little sense as guarding against one's true desires and interests. Hitler found it necessary to remind the people of this, stating: "I am not the head of state in the sense of a dictator or monarch, but I am

the leader of the German people." His elites knew what this meant, and they let it be known that, "the National Socialist Reich rests on the mutual loyalty of the Fuehrer and the people."<sup>174</sup> Totalitarianism's demand for a new form of loyalty necessitated a new form of rule, one that the King was incapable of exercising.

The struggle against the enemy King

The totalitarian solution to the problem of the suspicion of power could present a discomfoting thought to its members: with no King, there is no power to be resisted, nothing to struggle against, and no liberation from the oppression of power to struggle for. Yet totalitarianism can only survive as a struggle, in constant motion. In effect, the King-less movement needs an external enemy to battle, a King-like power hostile to it, against which it may engage, test, and prove its superior forces of organization. The King deposed from within the movement has to be set up without. Totalitarianism always requires a nemesis, and so fabricates one.

The enemy King wields all his traditional powers, but he does not do so openly. In fact, the enemy King is nowhere

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<sup>174</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 357.



to be seen because he does not exist. Hence, in fiction, he must take on a conspiratorial form, donning the cloak of secrecy. The proof of his existence and of the magnitude of his power is shown only in the numbers of his agents and spies that are routinely caught and exterminated.

For the Nazis, Jewry constituted the main, though certainly not the only, enemy of the movement. Ostensibly it was on the basis of this enemy's existence that the Nazis won the support of the German people and could demonstrate the necessity of their loyalty. Hitler's successful appeal for Aryan support for his war was based on the threat posed by the Jews. In the Reichstag session of September 1, 1939 his words received a telling response: "If Jewry should instigate an international world war to exterminate the Aryan peoples of Europe, not the Aryan peoples but Jewry will (rest of sentence drowned by applause)."175

For the Bolsheviks, numerous conspiratorial enemies took the place of one major one; while one conspiracy followed another in importance, it was not seen as necessary to discard the earlier ones upon the emergence of others. Thus, at

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175 Ibid., p. 350. In many ways the conspiratorial enemy is held to be a mirror image of the totalitarian movement itself. Thus the power of the conspirators is seen to lie solely in their organization. Himmler could say that, "We owe our own art of government to the Jews," the laws of which "the Fuhrer [had] learned by heart" (Ibid., p. 360).

the end of Stalin's era, the Bolsheviks were simultaneously fighting the Trotskyite conspiracy, which started around 1930; the conspiracy of the three hundred families, which arose about 1935; British Imperialism, which emerged during the Stalin-Hitler alliance; the "American Secret Service," which arrived at the close of the war; and finally Jewish cosmopolitanism, born with the founding of the state of Israel.<sup>176</sup>

There was no particular necessity for the Bolsheviks to heap nemesis upon nemesis, except perhaps as an attempt to enliven the movement with the refreshment of a new enemy to seek out and destroy. However absurd propaganda of the enemy may be, for the members of the totalitarian movement the sheer organizational operation of the movement establishes positive proof of the existence and gravity of the threat. Nazi propaganda of the Jewish conspiratorial threat was maintained even when the Jews of Europe had all but been exterminated. The Bolsheviks' relentless search for Trotskyites did not end even when whatever few of Trotsky's supporters who remained in the USSR had been liquidated and Trotsky himself had been murdered. The key to understanding what to nontotalitarian observers must appear as the movement's absurd striking out at shadows is that the conspiratorial

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 351.

forces are construed as world powers having inexhaustible resources and tactics. Whether it is the "world Jewish conspiracy" or the "global conspiracy of Trotskyites," the point is that nothing less than world domination by the movement would allow the conspiratorial threat to be crushed once and for all. The movement's struggle against its enemy is never-ending because the enemy not only surrounds the movement, and must be hunted to the four corners of the earth, he also infiltrates the movement, and must be screened out by an ever finer mesh. The prize Goebbels promised the Germans in their struggle against the Jews is what all totalitarian movements hope to win in their battle with the enemy King: they "are going to take his place in the domination of the world."<sup>177</sup>

It would not be an exaggeration to state that the success of totalitarian power largely depends on how the traditional formulation of power, both in theory and practice, has been rejected. In order for power to eliminate the suspicion it usually carries with it, the King needed to be replaced with a leader. The space that separates monarch from people, ruler from ruled, had to be eliminated, and the monarch's stable hierarchy of command replaced by the fluid organization of the totalitarian movement. Furthermore, in order to provide

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 360.

the movement with a justification for its ever-increasing power of organization an enemy King is needed. His global conspiracy which threatens to overthrow and destroy the movement provides its members with the nemesis against whom their unending struggle is, and must be, waged.

### The making of History

An enemy's threat certainly justifies a people's mobilization, and perhaps even the violence they may commit as a result. The members of a totalitarian movement, however, never come face to face with their menacing foe, but are only shown the alleged agents of the conspiracy, shackled convicts who appear only as defeated, pitiful fools. The totalitarian adherent is therefore never confronted with a direct threat nor the urgency for taking action that violence requires for its justification. Instead, the totalitarian organization supplies its members with something that, under normal circumstances, the endless accumulation of power and the employment of violence would never be privileged to: legitimacy, a lawfulness that only History can bestow. The massive expansion of the totalitarian organization and the violence that accompanies it is considered to be in accordance with the laws of History. It is not only justified in

terms of expediency, but is legitimized by historical necessity. Just as the fiction of the global conspiracy provides totalitarianism with the justification for the way it deals with the enemy (whoever he is suspected to be), so History provides totalitarianism with the legitimacy for whatever is done.

To conceive history simply as the story of events is impossible in a totalitarian system. Totalitarian men must believe in History, the story not of events but, as Arendt said, "of forces or ideas with predictable courses."<sup>178</sup> Without History, action would be uncertain in its product, capable of being deflected or even turned against its intention once it encounters the web of relations that constitutes society. To conceive history as the product of uncertain action, as the ensemble of unpredictable events that becomes a coherent story only in retrospect, conduces to political debate, that is, argument about what form of action stands the best chance of achieving its goal. Discussion, however, is anathema to totalitarianism. What totalitarianism needs in order to elicit the total loyalty of its members--something that could never occur if action were held to be essentially unpredictable--is a concept of history that begets certainty,

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<sup>178</sup> Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 252.

can legitimize action, and stands in need of no discussion because it is a total discourse.

For the totalitarian movement, it is History that has brought it to its present position, from which it has the duty to move on relentlessly, carrying History upon its back and following the path dictated by historical law (whether placed in terms of a dialectic and class struggle or of Aryan racial supremacy and the survival of the fittest). Whatever lies in the path of the movement is to be crushed, not only with guiltless impunity, but with a zeal that comes from knowing that right is being done and the laws of History are being promulgated and enforced by the same activity. Were History not to play its role for the totalitarian movement, its members might stray from the path, their loyalty would be apt to founder because they would be unguided in their fight against the elusive shadows of world conspiracies. The legitimacy History bestows upon the already justified struggle completes the chain of necessity that binds the member of totalitarianism to the movement, whatever road it takes.

Typically, History finds its incarnation in the totalitarian Party. What Totsky said to the Soviet people could equally have been said by the Nazis to the Germans: "We can only be right with and by the Party, for history has

provided no other way of being in the right."<sup>179</sup> The Party embodies the laws of History and therefore its dictates are not the subject matter for political debate. They are, at base, not the product of a political discussion by the Party members, not a decision taken amongst numerous possibilities that weighs the chances of success for each. Rather, Party dictates are infallible assertions that merely outline what according to History is necessary anyway. Hence, members of the totalitarian movement, as followers of the Party line, are assured of the ultimate success of their concerted action. By virtue of being Bolshevik or Nazi, they have been delivered from the uncertain fate that awaits all others who choose to act and instead are transported into a world where nothing is done but what has already been predicted, nothing occurs but what is historically necessary. A firm belief in History is requisite for the totalitarian member; without it his total loyalty and mindless adherence to Party doctrine would be hampered by the thoughts that inevitably disturb those who wish to act, and yet realize their action will seldom follow so straight a course as they imagine.

History does more for totalitarianism, however, than supply its zealots with the assurance that their action is legitimate and will be successful. It also strips them of

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<sup>179</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 307.

their ability to judge the consequences of their action. Since the member only acts from his interest, as Himmler described it, in "questions whose importance counted in terms of decades and centuries,"<sup>180</sup> he is ever incapable of judging whether or not his action ultimately had its desired effect. He can never see far enough off to make the common sense judgement of whether his action, and a fortiori the general course of the movement, is on target. Not only the prescriptions for action, but even the evaluation of its results must come from the leader. The road to the movement's success may be tortuous, and the zealot must realize that not he but only the leader knows precisely how it will unwind before them. It is thus through the assurance of the leader that adherents come to know that the mishaps, setbacks, or catastrophic defeats of the movement are only apparent. History guarantees their final victory. Hitler's acceleration of the costly and resource-consuming effort to exterminate the Jews during the last years of the war when all fronts were already in jeopardy, and the Bolshevik First Five Year Plan of 1928, which decimated the population, appear as nonsensical to nontotalitarian eyes only because they have not been dazzled by the light of History. For totalitarian men who are, as Arendt put it, "fond of reckoning in millennia,"

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 411.



the movement is not to be judged by present facts and figures but only by future successes. And since we are speaking of its development in terms of millennia, whose secret twists and turns are beyond the comprehension of the members, only the leader is privileged to evaluate the movement's current circumstances. History has guaranteed that "the Leader is always right in his actions, and since these are planned for centuries to come, the ultimate test of what he does has been removed beyond the experience of his contemporaries."<sup>181</sup> The unwavering loyalty of totalitarian members to their leader is secured by History, regardless of the apparent folly of his programs.

History serves totalitarianism in one more regard, which stems from the idea that the movement carries History forward to its proper and glorious end. What greater motivation could there be for the member's devotion to the movement than History, for the Bolshevik who, according to Stalin, was a part of "the greatest factor in world history," or for the Nazi who, according to Himmler, "knows he is working for a great task which occurs but once in 2,000 years"?<sup>182</sup> With such a perspective it naturally follows that he who does not participate in the construction and growth of the

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

movement, what Marxists would call the "making of history," can be said to have rendered his life quite meaningless. He would have missed the boat of History, a boat that sails but once. Whatever deeds he performs apart from the movement will fall into oblivion even as the making of History, in which he took no part, rises to its fulfillment. This final purpose for History, to serve in the form of the movement as the only basis for a meaningful life, inspires the fanaticism and selflessness of totalitarian adherents. Even death at the hands of his own comrades, if determined to be advantageous for the movement, strikes the adherent as a better choice than the alternative, struggle or flight, that would remove him from the movement and render his life meaningless. History assures that the member will zealously carry out whatever task the movement requires of him. He is not likely to waver in his devotion

when the monster begins to devour its own children and not even if he becomes a victim of persecution himself, if he is framed and condemned, if he is purged from the party and sent to a forced-labor or concentration camp ... he may even be willing to help in his own prosecution and frame his own death sentence if only his status as a member of the movement is not touched.<sup>183</sup>

Under the spell of History, the totalitarian adherent will not only zealously aid in the extermination of the movement's

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 307.

conspiratorial enemies, he will also remain loyal if called to the sacrificial altar himself.

### The identification with Man

Just as the movement carries History to its fulfillment, so History carries Man to his final revelation, which is to say that the movement as well as making History, creates Man. The fervour with which members fulfill the dictates of historical necessity is equally exhibited in their preparation of totalitarian Man for his final revelation at the end of History and in their attempts to identify themselves with him. They act according to the laws of History, not as individuals, but as antitypes or examples of totalitarian Man. Their total identification with the leader is carried out only insofar as he is the prototype of Man.

Totalitarianism claims to have uncovered the nature of man. As the product of History, Man is revealed in and by the movement. The power yielded to totalitarianism by this construct of Man would be difficult to overstate. It is the psychological base for self-normalization, the tantalizing reward to be attained by all those who are unrelenting in their efforts to uncover the nature of Man and establish his reign. Without Man totalitarian History would lack its

subject, the movement would lack its prototype, the leader, his name. Totalitarianism would lose its life-force if it accepted that "nothing entitles us to assume that man has a nature or essence in the same sense as other things. In other words, if we have a nature or essence then surely only a god could know and define it."<sup>184</sup> Its entire existence is based on Man, as the knowable and known object of knowledge, whom the movement seeks to liberate once and for all from oppression and the shackles of power, and whom History will finally reveal, naked and in all his glory. Without Man the totalitarian adherent would have no reason for his enthusiasm and devotion to a movement that promises nothing more or less than to establish his global empire, the world rule of (Aryan or Communist) Man. Nor would he have reason for the zeal with which he exterminates his enemies, those misfits of History who can be selected and murdered with such unflinching self-assurance because they are glaring exceptions to what Man is.

To know the nature of man, as every self-conscious totalitarian member must, is a tremendous responsibility. Each member, each specimen, is an example displaying all the characteristic features of totalitarian Man--total loyalty to, and fanatical zeal for, the movement, and an unrelenting

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<sup>184</sup> Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 10.

persistence in eradicating its enemies. In addition, each member must be capable of knowing, without being told, just what he should do (that is, what totalitarian Man would do) in any particular circumstance at any particular time. Ideally, a totalitarian regime would not need to make its laws public, for as embodiments of totalitarian Man, the members would have no need to be told what by nature they should, or perhaps must, do. This is why, once they were in power, the Nazis ensured that "a number of valid regulations [were] no longer made public." The theoretical basis for this otherwise senseless procedure is expressed by Hitler's dictum that "the total state must not know any difference between law and ethics."<sup>185</sup> Presumably the German people under Nazi rule had a common conscience, were all antitypes of Aryan Man, and subsequently did not need to be told what was legal anymore than what was moral--they would act and think correctly in any case, as it were, instinctively. Indeed the capacities of totalitarian Man are staggering to contemplate. Bolshevik Man was capable not only of acting correctly in every circumstance without being informed of the law, he could also divine who was not of his breed, regardless of the imposter's disguise. Stalin could announce in 1936 that "the inalienable quality of every Bolshevik under present

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<sup>185</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 394.

conditions should be the ability to recognize an enemy of the Party no matter how well he is masked."<sup>186</sup>

Of course the greater the capacities of totalitarian Man, the greater his responsibilities. Accompanying the Bolshevik capacity of recognizing traitors was the responsibility of being a perfect citizen for a panoptic society. Broadly speaking, that is the purpose behind all the delineations of totalitarian Man's capacities and responsibilities: to define what he is so that everyone may become him. In so doing they become identical bundles of reactions, perfectly adapted, which is to say, totally controllable, units of the totalitarian movement.

Without each member becoming such a unit totalitarianism could never hope to achieve the total control it struggles for:

Total domination ... is possible only if each and every person can be reduced to a never-changing identity of reactions so that each of these bundles of reactions can be exchanged at random for any other.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. xxxiii. Stalin's proclamation had obvious practical purposes with regard to his purges. Incriminations in the Great Purge, if ever lacking in confessions, were never without witnesses. The minute the authorities brought up a suspect scores of testimony to his guilt could be expected; as a true Bolshevik, if one had any contact with the suspect at all one could not help but to have noticed his irregular behaviour.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 438.

A society of unique individuals could never be controlled nor "scientifically" organized to the extent demanded of totalitarian members. Hence the totalitarian adherent must show himself to be not only totally devoted to the movement, but also totally superfluous. He must become an antitype of totalitarian Man, and thus not being unique he becomes completely expendable. He is superfluous because he can easily be replaced by any other member of the movement. The feeling of superfluity is the psychological basis for totalitarian Man, the prerequisite for his self-normalization and his self-sacrificial tendencies. In short, the duty of every adherent is to prove each day that he is truly a totalitarian Man, a member of the movement exhibiting not the slightest trace of individuality, who can therefore identify himself totally with the movement and its leader. He must reject the fact that men, not Man, exist in the world. He must feel himself to be completely superfluous in order to believe in and devote himself to the struggle for total domination, "which strives to organize the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings as if all humanity were just one individual."<sup>188</sup> His motivation for this devotion stems from his belief in the existence of the yet to be fully revealed Man, and in the glory the future society of

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

Man would be capable of. Man is essential for the totalitarian attack upon what is fundamental to the human condition: the plurality of men.

The totalitarian attempt to normalize, that is, to equalize men and call the result (Aryan or Communist) Man must not be confused with an attempt to realize political equality, which would be unnecessary in practice and incompatible in theory for a totalitarian society. Political equality, based "on the strength of our decision to guarantee ourselves mutually equal rights,"<sup>189</sup> does not reflect a natural human equality, but is made necessary or desirable by human inequality--the fact that we all have our own ideas and interests as well as different capacities for achieving them and therefore see fit to establish an equality of rights so as to safeguard ourselves from each other's actions and to establish a certain order. Totalitarianism could not be concerned with establishing political equality because its members are (to become) equal in all regards. An equality of rights in a society of identical men with identical ideas and interests is as unnecessary as laws to protect an individual from himself. Hence a truly totalitarian society would know no struggles for equality of rights. To engage in such a struggle would be an open admission of one's individuality--a

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 48.



damning sign that one's ideas and interests do not correspond to those of one's fellow members. And to be an individual in totalitarian society is as dismaying and dangerous as having missed the boat of History. It means that somehow one does not see things, think things, and believe things, as does totalitarian Man (who, after all, is the shining product of History). As an individual one not only has no place in the movement, one impedes its progress. Such a realization would cause the totalitarian zealot to wish he never existed.

#### The fusion of power and truth

These considerations raise the following problem: how could power and its faculty of persuasion produce the totalitarian member who would readily sacrifice himself for the movement, feel himself completely superfluous, and, in the most extreme case, would wish that he had never existed so that his aberrational individuality would not have marred the smoothly running totalitarian machine? How could power, which is based on an individual's freedom, lead to the elimination of that freedom and the creation of identical bundles of reactions? How could persuasion ever induce someone to wish that he never was? And how could the relation proper to

power, that of government, ever create the circumstances in which fundamental political questions (equality of rights, political debate) are of absolutely no concern? Is it not more likely that the reduction of individuals to robot-like fanatics and the elimination of politics are the products of force and not power?

During our discussion of the nature of totalitarian power we have been faced with a persistent problem: the difficulty in clearly distinguishing power from force and terror. The difficulty lies in the fact that totalitarian power and terror are both functions of the same phenomenon, namely, the totalitarian organization as it is actuated by the will to truth. Their distinction is further complicated by the fact that the totalitarian zealot (presumably a product of power) and the victim of terror (presumably a product of force) may behave in precisely the same manner; we are left with the problem of trying to establish whether he was transformed into a bundle of reactions by his own volition or under duress. When power and the will to truth combine, as they do in the totalitarian organization, their synthesis of totalitarian Man seems to evade both theoretical constructs of power and force.

Our quandary stems from the attempt to treat truth as a political question, an attempt made necessary by totalitarianism's utter dependence on the will to truth for

the essentially political problem of ordering human affairs. Truth does not allow for political debate, persuasion or choice, nor for the influence of the individual's personal tastes, judgements, or dispositions; it is coercive and constraining, a revelation that forces itself equally upon all. Once power and truth work together and reinforce each other--as they do to an unprecedented extent in totalitarianism--we are forced to grapple with two sets of incompatible terms: the political, which means power and its influence, inducement and persuasion, its fields of possibilities, and an essential freedom; and the apolitical, which means truth and its imperatives, force, coercion, and elimination of choice and freedom.<sup>190</sup> The fact is that the totalitarian fanatic for whom the world conspiracy, the laws of History, and the nature of Man bear indisputable truth is no more free to act than the victim of terror (who behaves as if he had identical beliefs). If we speak of totalitarianism's internal form of domination and terror, it is the terror of truth. This coercive internal force is established and maintained by the modern will to truth, which sees perhaps its greatest triumph in totalitarianism.

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<sup>190</sup> Of course one is always free to be in error, that is, one may choose to be wrong, and lacking in truth. But the Truth (with a capital letter), of Man or History, dictates what was, is, and is yet to be, as well as who you are: one cannot escape one's historical destiny or one's nature.

Ideology and the will to truth

The totalitarian will to truth has another name; or perhaps it should be said that the modern will to truth is generally manifested in totalitarianism under a different guise: ideology. Ideology is a system of exclusion that determines what can and cannot be true and outlines how to produce truth. Once it gains a member's commitment, it coerces him into thoughtless loyalty to the leader, adherence to the laws of History, and identification with the newly revealed (Nazi or Bolshevik) Man. In short, the totalitarian will to truth and totalitarian ideology are one and the same. Thus, the following cursory examination of totalitarian ideology is in essence little more than a review of what has been described at length above as the will to truth in totalitarianism. Nonetheless, it is in totalitarianism's use for ideology that we most clearly see how power and truth join forces to allow a form of domination from within.

An ideology, as Arendt points out,

is quite literally what its name indicates: it is the logic of an idea. Its subject matter is history, to which the "idea" is applied--the result of this application is not a body of statements about something that is, but the unfolding of a process which is in constant change. The ideology treats the course of events as if it followed the same "law" as the logical exposition of its "idea." Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the

whole historical process--the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future--because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas.<sup>191</sup>

To say that the subject matter of ideology is history and leave it at that, however, is to leave oneself open to misinterpretation. Ideologies are concerned with Man, his development and final revelation. History is only the form of transport that brings Man to his destination.

At the end of the modern period, we observe the development of two ideologies that, dominating all others, were capable of securing state support and becoming national doctrines, namely, Bolshevism and National Socialism: "The ideology which interprets history as an economic struggle of classes and the other that interprets history as a natural fight of races."<sup>192</sup> These two ideologies brought together the three pillars of the modern will to truth, which in the end, all bore the face of Man.

The substance of ideology is a putative historical law, and the story it spins around this law has an almost fairy-tale simplicity. Both Bolshevism and National Socialism proclaim the existence of the enemy King, the global conspiracy that seeks to gain control of the world; the conspiracy threatens the movement and must therefore be destroyed at all costs.

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<sup>191</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 469.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

Its destruction is legitimized by History, whose laws assure of the movement's victory. At the head of the movement, waging the life and death struggle with the conspiratorial forces is the Leader (and his Party). He is the prototype of Nazi or Bolshevik Man, the embodiment of the thought and will of his followers, and the diviner of History. As the leader of the forces that manifest the truth of History, he embodies omniscience: "The Fuhrer [Leader] is always right."<sup>193</sup> This guarantees the enemy King's ultimate defeat. In the wake of the enemy King's destruction emerges the world rule of (Nazi or Bolshevik) Man, the true and victorious subject of History.

The simplicity of the ideological script makes it understandable that the primary goal of the totalitarian leader is to fulfill his proclamations and prophecies, making certain that History takes its predicted course. Above all lies the long-range prophecy of the future world rule of totalitarian Man, which to be fulfilled requires first of all his fabrication. This is accomplished both through the sheer force of terror that takes place maximally in the concentration camp, as well as through the strange amalgamation of power and force manifested in ideological indoctrination.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 349. This is the first of the ideological "pledges of the [Nazi] Party member."

The force of ideology lies not so much in its ideas, which in themselves are quite harmless and simplistic, as in the iron logic with which they are developed. Logic generates ineluctable and coercive truths, whatever the simplicity of the premise. Once the subject accepts the initial idea (the historical laws of class or race struggle) as unassailable truth, he need no longer think but only start the wheels of logic in motion in order to arrive at his proper, or rather, necessary, form of action in any given circumstances, present or future. Indeed, ideology does not offer the option of thought; ideology is incompatible with it. Once the axiomatic premise is taken to heart, the mechanisms of logic not only make thought unnecessary but also strip the individual of his ability to think. This is not an unintended consequence of ideological indoctrination but its purpose. Ideology's "self-coercive force of logicality is mobilized lest anybody ever start thinking--which as the freest and purest of all human activities is the very opposite of the compulsory process of deduction."<sup>194</sup>

Totalitarian leaders knew well the "irresistible force of logic." Hitler extolled the virtues of "ice cold reasoning," as did Stalin of the "mercilessness of his

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 473.

dialectics."<sup>195</sup> We must speak of the force of ideology as well as its power; for if persuasion is required to gain acceptance of the axiomatic premise, it is the coercion of logic that is manifested in the ensuing deductions. The regime of ideological truth is maintained through a "tyranny of logicality," and once entered it allows no escape.

Ideology's consistent world of ideas, neatly ordered in its logical form, is seductive. The problem, of course, is that the real world of experience seldom corresponds to the world of ideas. The solution is, logically enough, to change the world to fit the ideas. The member's infatuation with totalitarian Man and his ideological world supplies the fanatical zeal for the movement. The movement, in turn, is organized to change the aberrational world that surrounds it into the receptive abode for totalitarian Man. It becomes clear that

the aggressiveness of totalitarianism springs not from lust for power, and if it feverishly seeks to expand, it does so neither for expansion's sake nor for profit, but only for ideological reasons: to make the world consistent to prove that its respective supersense has been right.<sup>196</sup>

To put it in other terms, totalitarianism is based not so much on will to power as on will to truth. Its object is to make the world safe for ideology.

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., pp. 471, 472.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 458.



A regime dominated by the will to power would presumably be content with a monopoly of the means of persuasion; clearly the demands of a regime dominated by the will to truth are far greater. The basic freedom necessary for the exercise of power is intolerable to the will to truth. A regime dominated by the will to truth thus seeks not only to eliminate the manifestations of freedom (as would a tyranny) but to eliminate its very possibility. It is the capacity for freedom and not merely its expression that totalitarianism attempts to destroy. If we consider this capacity for freedom, expressed most fundamentally in thought and action, to be a basic aspect of the human condition, an essential feature of whatever it is that makes humans human, then we must conclude that as a particular historical form of the will to truth "what totalitarian ideologies aim at is ... the transformation of human nature itself."<sup>197</sup> Not only must the real world be made safe for ideology, but real men must be prepared for the world of ideology. The goal of totalitarian ideology is the creation of totalitarian Man.

The evidence of the success of totalitarianism in this venture is to be found not only in the concentration camps, but throughout the movement, especially among the elites that bear the chains of ideological indoctrination. If we

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

wish to understand the behaviour either of the victim of terror or of the fanatical terrorist himself, we must realize that totalitarianism has discovered the means whereby

the psyche can be destroyed even without the destruction of the physical man; that indeed, psyche, character, and individuality seem under certain circumstances to express themselves only through the rapidity or slowness with which they disintegrate.<sup>198</sup>

The circumstances are those of totalitarian organization, wherein ideology finds a world that corresponds to its dictates. It is only within the system that the goal of ideology, the transformation of individual men into robot-like units all made from the same mold, can be accomplished.

The creation of totalitarian Man is not a once and for all act. Even if totalitarianism could expand itself to world rule, eliminating the conspiratorial forces that seek its destruction, and even if men were not constantly born into the world, thus requiring totalitarianism to be forever at work molding into shape and fitting into place the reappearing threats to the unity and uniformity of the movement, totalitarianism's struggle to achieve total domination would necessarily continue. The creation of a feeling of superfluity, total loyalty, fanatical devotion, in a word, the total domination of the individual achieved through ideological indoctrination, is not a piece of work that can be

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 441.

accomplished and left on its own unattended. Totalitarian Man must be, as it were, reminded each day anew of his character, his qualities, and his mission, lest he fall back into the ways and mentality of pretotalitarian existence.

With regard to the victim of concentration camp terror, his liberation from the camp usually also meant a nearly simultaneous escape from his terrorized self. He finds himself more or less as he was before he was stripped of his humanity and turned into a bundle of reactions: "Like Lazarus, he rises from the dead [finding] his personality and character unchanged, just as he had left it."<sup>199</sup> The fate of the ideologically indoctrinated fanatic who finds himself stranded, either because the movement has been destroyed or he has become separated from it, is identical. Only his place in the totalitarian organization allowed his immersion in the ideology whose consistent realm of ideas and coercive logic immunized him from the real world: "Within the organizational framework of the movement, so long as it holds together, the fanaticized member can be reached by neither experience nor argument."<sup>200</sup> Left without the organization, the fanatic quickly snaps back into pretotalitarian life. Separated from the movement, whose ideology had cease-

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

lessly to create and recreate a fantasy world of ideas as well as the character of its inhabitants, the zealot reverts to his former ways, rediscovering his former self. The struggle of the totalitarian movement, the ideological struggle to create totalitarian Man, is never-ending because each man threatens to regain his lost freedom of thought and action. Each day the totalitarian member must be reshaped to fit his Procrustean bed. The Nazis could rightly proclaim that "National Socialism as an ideology will not abandon its struggle until ... the way of life of each individual German has been shaped by its fundamental values and these are realized each day anew."201

The daily shaping and reshaping of totalitarian Man is made possible owing to the nature of totalitarian power: it is not exercised from above at irregular intervals, in an ostentatious display, which would be far too ineffective a means to touch and hold in place each and every individual. Rather it comes from below, is a function of organization, of the movement's web of power that daily restores and transmits its members' ideological mentality. Just as the existence and daily functioning of the totalitarian organization is, for its members, sufficient evidence of the enemy King's threat and the predictable unwinding of events that is History,

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201 Ibid., p. 326 (emphasis added).

so it is the culture medium for the transformation and production of ideological Man. The totalitarian organization sustains ideology, just as ideology sustains the totalitarian organization.

Power always presupposes organization because its fundamental material factor is the coexistence of men; it also produces and strengthens organization because it allows for the concerted action of men. When power reaches its apparent apogee in totalitarianism, however, it undergoes a strange twist. As maintained by the totalitarian organization and transmitted by its ideology, power no longer exhibits its characteristic feature of persuasion and inducement to action, but rather rules through the coercive force of truth, a forceful logic of ideas that does not induce action but extracts unreflected reaction. This transformation of the nature of power corresponds to a transformation of the nature of human beings in totalitarianism: what is most basic to men--their individuality, freedom, spontaneity, and capacity to think and act--is replaced by what is fundamental to totalitarian Man--a feeling of superfluity, total identification with the movement, robot-like behaviour, and a servile submission to the coercive force of a logic of ideas. It is a transformation made possible by the modern will to truth, which is the will to truth of Man.

Once the essentially political task of ordering human

affairs no longer receives its expression in power, but instead derives its force from truth, an attempt has been made to alter fundamentally the human condition. Totalitarianism is an attempt to realize truth absolutely. Its motivation lies in the modern belief that truth is to be discovered in man. The revelation of this truth will occur with the appearance of Man, naked, no longer capable of hiding his nature as he has done for millennia. It is the modern will to truth that entices would-be totalitarian adherents with the power of organization. They are seduced by the opportunity to form and belong to an organization that, for the first time in history and marking its highest achievement, allows the emergence of Man, displays Man, and in the end, creates Man.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE GENEALOGICAL TASK

I prefer not to write this final chapter as a conclusion that simply answers the question, What have I done? with a summary of the preceding pages. Instead, I should like to pose the question, What is the genealogist doing? and use Chapters One to Four as an outline for my answer. I do not mean to say that my examination of Foucault is comprehensive, or that my application of his ideas to totalitarianism exhausts either Foucault's methodology or the subject matter. My analysis of Foucault was limited to his work on power and truth, and I have, after all, used only one of the genealogist's tools, the will to truth; its application to totalitarianism was meant to be exemplary rather than comprehensive. Nevertheless, the power-truth relation is central to Foucault's work; exposing its roots and examining its mechanisms, as I hope to have done in my brief study of totalitarianism, is the basis of genealogy. Reflecting on what has been said to this point should guide us as we generalize about the task of the genealogist, outline the assumptions and limitations that define his investigations, point to some of the problems and dangers inherent to his work, and propose the general direction he will follow.

Foucault's task can be stated quite simply. He said: "To say things clearly: my problem is to know how men govern themselves (themselves and others) through the production of truth."<sup>202</sup> The production of truth is the management of the domains wherein the division of true and false can be regulated and made pertinent. Government, of the self and others, is a matter of power. Foucault's problem, therefore, is to investigate the means whereby power invests itself with truth, produces the true and the false, and whereby truth attaches itself to power, that may be, in the end, of its own making.

For the most part, Foucault was concerned with the modern period, and he focused upon its characteristic forms of power. Bio-power, the increasing "power over life" was the central concern. It is the power over the individual body and the species body, over men as beings with productive capacities and men as social animals whose coexistence, propagation, and health allow regulation and control. This bio-power developed in "piece-meal fashion," in prisons, hospitals, schools, military academies, factories, in philosophic and scientific discourse, and it was accompanied by a regime of truth that focused itself upon Man. The will to truth of Man dominated the modern age, regulating the

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<sup>202</sup> Foucault, (debate in) L'impossible prison, p. 47.



production of knowledge and managing the interplay of knowledge and power. It identified knowledge with knowledge of Man, investing Man with truth, and stimulating the development of the power over the life of Man.

The will to truth in the modern age allowed a productive power to emerge. Power was no longer restricted to its former role of denial, negation, and constraint. It developed into the power to form and shape life, not just to threaten it. We may see the will to truth as the stimulus for the panoptic discoveries that enabled institutions to instill discipline, and create the foundations for self-surveillance and self-normalization. The will to truth also produced sexuality as a treasure chest of Man's secrets. Sexuality was invested with truth and associated with power. It became a means to discovering Man's inner being, stimulating and directing his desires and instincts. If we may say that in the modern age the body was invested with power and the soul became "the effect and instrument of a political economy," this was because a will to truth emerged that spurred the development of power over life, regulating its formation and dictating its direction.

Taking the lead from Foucault and employing his methods, we found that the modern will to truth had perhaps its strongest manifestation in the totalitarian regimes of Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany. The will to truth of

Man as represented by a belief in Man's fundamental opposition to the power of the conspiratorial forces of an enemy King, Man's progress and eschatological development, Man's subservience to the laws of History, and his climactic revelation through History, found its expression in totalitarian ideology and its actualization in totalitarian organization. Subsequently, the tremendous power over life that totalitarian movements exercised was transformed by the regimes into force and violence, ideological indoctrination and terror. The totalitarian regime's putative achievement of truth in this world, as expressed by their ideology and manifested in their organization, eliminated the need for power. The freedom upon which power is based could be done away with; in its place we find the force of logic in ideology, and the terror of the concentration camps and of the totally panoptic organization that most perfectly express the meaning of totalitarian regimes.

If we may say that the will to truth reaches its apogee in totalitarianism it is because the truly totalitarian regime no longer requires power to control its people. The battle grounds of truth disappear as do the struggles that characterize power relations. What remains is one all-encompassing truth, the truth of totalitarian Man, and the grip of that truth allows no movement. In a system of totalized truth, power has no place. Truth compels, it does not induce or

persuade. Like the "mighty tentacle" of Stalin's ideological dialectics, truth "seizes you on all sides as in a vise ... you are powerless to tear yourself away; you must either surrender or make up your mind to utter defeat."<sup>203</sup> In fact, the choice between surrender and utter defeat is illusory: the ideological zealot and the victim of concentration camp terror behave with the same predictability and demonstrate the same incapacity for thought and action. The totalitarian regime achieves through the terror of its organization and ideology the coercive force it seeks in order to gain total control of its members.

The modern period, which marked the beginning of the development of the power over life, also marked, in at least two instances, its end. The turn of the nineteenth century initiated a tremendous development of bio-power; the first half of the twentieth century revealed two failed attempts to establish and maintain completely powerless regimes. The vast development of power that arose with the search for the truth of Man stopped when that truth had been reached. The truly totalitarian Man is not subject to power but only to the unavoidable imperative to submit to truth. Totalitarian Man is not influenced or induced into action by the mechanisms of power, but is compelled to behave by a truth that he

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<sup>203</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 472.

lives, a truth that is articulated in the ideology that rules his mind and that is sustained in an organization that envelops him.

As a summary of Foucault's work and of my application of it to totalitarianism, the preceding few pages have outlined the results of the genealogist's project. The methodology that allows such an investigation is more difficult to describe. To begin with, it is easier to say what genealogy is not than what it is. Clearly it is not a (social) science or a traditional history, though it may borrow tactics from both. While historical in its approach, genealogy is not content with the collection and recollection of facts. It seeks to analyse, synthesize, and experiment with the past. At the same time, genealogy is not a science, at least not a serious one. Genealogy does not aim at an absolute, totalizing truth. Foucault did not want his studies of power to be called theories, but preferred "analytics" to emphasize their tentative, hypothetical nature. His investigations did not create or rely on "teleologies and totalizations" but were meant to question them. Rather than bracing his work with structural systems and indicators, Foucault preferred to hypothesize freely, always leaving, as did Nietzsche, "an uncompleted work." Though embracing logic and rigour in his studies, the genealogist does not shrink from nominalization and metaphor. His work can be said to

yield meaning and understanding rather than systematic truths and explanation. Like Nietzsche, Foucault did not attempt to discover the "answer for all the [world's] riddles," but rather tried to expose knowledge where it lay hidden, and to extract the meaning that was buried in its folds.

No doubt it is rather frustrating to study Foucault without being able to define his project. His analytics of power which, as his critics have noted, is "not meant as a context-free, ahistorical, objective description," escapes the empiricism of science, the constraints of structuralism, and the limits of traditional history.<sup>204</sup> It is, to be sure, in the genre of interpretation, but to label it hermeneutics provides us little more understanding, and because so many pretend to hermeneutics, perhaps a good deal more confusion.

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<sup>204</sup> Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, p. 184. In their book Dreyfus and Rabinow have set themselves the task of defining Foucault's project. While quickly rejecting structuralism and traditional history or social science as appropriate categories, they have more trouble with hermeneutics. After a careful analysis of Foucault's work and a comparison of his style of interpretation with the hermeneutics as "a broad general term," the commentary "for the recovery of meanings and truth from our everyday practices or from those of another age or culture," and the hermeneutics of suspicion "for the search for a deep truth which has been purposefully hidden" (p. xxiii), of several other thinkers, they arrive at the term "interpretive analytics" to describe Foucault's project. Whether it is worthwhile attempting to define Foucault's work any more than he did himself may be doubted. In any case, Dreyfus's and Rabinow's book testifies to the difficulty of such a task.

If we wish to see Foucault's work as a type of hermeneutics, then above all we must realize that it is not founded upon an invariable system of indicators, a totalizing semiology, nor an entrenched suspicion of language and search for hidden meaning. Its genealogical mood eschews any absolutes, opting for the struggle of competing interpretations rather than the oppressive rule of a truth that a hermeneutics based on such constants could yield. The multitude of interpretations, though never as reassuring as a totalizing system of indicators, precludes the terror of truth such systems could spawn. For Foucault:

A hermeneutics that in effect relies on a semiology believes in the absolute existence of signs: it abandons the violence, the incompleteness, the infinity of interpretations so that the terror of the indicator reigns, and language is suspect.<sup>205</sup>

It is the nature of the genealogist to welcome other interpretations onto the battlefield, for the alternative is submission to a totalizing system of truth and the accompanying terror of its regime.

At this point it becomes necessary to reaffirm the purpose of the genealogical tool, the will to truth. As we have seen, the will to truth is not a semiotic device, nor a universal energy or desire that is to be suspected as the

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<sup>205</sup> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," Nietzsche (Paris: Cahiers de Royaumont, Éditions de Minuit, 1967), p. 192.

cause of social phenomena or formations of power. It is, rather, a useful metaphor for the analytics of power. The will to truth is a nominalization, as is power itself; it does not offer a causal explanation of the development of power though it may help us to understand it. As a hermeneutical tool, the will to truth allows us to uncover the meaning of the development of power though it does not presume to be the truth of the development itself.

#### The problem of constants

While the will to truth is clearly not proposed by Foucault as an absolute indicator for the study of power, nor is power allowed to be reduced to an analysis of "wills," this is not to say that any genealogical search is therefore immune to the emergence of constants or structural absolutes. In other words, the reliance on constants that the genealogist warns us about may be the trap he falls into himself. Perhaps on this count Foucault may be reproached. In his concern with the modern productive capacities of power, Foucault often seems to reduce power to the extraction or augmentation of productivity.

Foucault's analysis of the modern development of power may be read as the search for the mechanisms that initiated,

raised, or maintained the economic productivity of the individual and species body. The modern concern with discipline and normalization is explained thus: one disciplines in order that the productive forces can be more effectively tapped or served; one normalizes so that the uniformity of the productive forces may achieve peak efficiency. According to Foucault, "the prison is only one of the techniques of power which were necessary to assure the development and control of productive forces."<sup>206</sup> School, hospital, military, and factory discipline were said to serve the same purpose. Along these lines, Foucault believed that the invention of these disciplines in the seventeenth century occurred because the traditional methods of control, such as the loosing of the King's army to avenge a revolt, became "too costly and too dangerous." The discovery of the importance of the productive capacities of the population spelled the end of the cruder and more wasteful forms of rule. Military suppression as a routine form of control was a

spectacular but costly means of control, that one can no longer permit use of once one has a carefully calculated economy--hence the need to find other means: industrious, continuous, and silent disciplines.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Michel Foucault, "Crimes et châtements en URSS et ailleurs," (interview in) Le Nouvel Observateur, 26 January 1976, p. 35.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.



In the same vein, Foucault spoke of the "importance assumed by sex as a political issue," that is, as a function of power, in terms of the regulation of the population so as to harness its productive forces and energies, and of the disciplining of the body: "the harnessing intensification, and distribution of forces, the adjustment and economy of energies."<sup>208</sup> The question that arises, then, is whether Foucault saw the modern productivity of power, by and large, in economic terms, and if so, whether this reduction of power to the means for achieving increased productivity does not impoverish the analysis of power by identifying it with an invariable function?

The problem with defining power in terms of economic productivity (or any other constant) is that it may blind one to, or distort one's vision of, the specific forms, mechanisms, and development of power that do not easily accommodate themselves to the model. It would certainly be difficult, for example, to understand the development of the mechanisms of power in Stalinist Russia along the lines of the search for increased productivity. The disasters of the NEP and the massacres of the kulaks do not go hand in hand with the drive to maximize productive forces. From the point of view of productive efficiency, most observers

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<sup>208</sup> Foucault, The History of Sexuality (vol. 1), p. 145.

of the Bolshevik five year plan of 1929 could not help but see it as "a piece of prodigious insanity in which all rules of logic and principles of economics were turned upside down."<sup>209</sup> Even the Stalinist work camps, which ostensibly served the purpose of production, could not lay claim to efficiency of resources with their policy of working the prisoners to death. The case of Nazi Germany is even clearer. Hitler's concentration camps were by and large not designed for productivity at all. The shipping of Jews and other "enemies of the Reich" back and forth across the continent and their costly extermination was certainly not meant to boost the Reich's economic output. As the war progressed, the anti-utilitarian foundation of the exterminations became even more evident. One finds that "neither military, nor economic, nor political considerations were allowed to interfere with the costly and troublesome' program of mass extermination and deportation."<sup>210</sup> Moreover, as the possibility of losing the war grew, the exterminations were not retarded or discontinued in order to divert needed resources to the battlefields--they were, in fact, accelerated. Against any imaginable logic of useful production or efficiency one finds that for the Nazis,

the danger of losing the war altogether was only

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<sup>209</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 411.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

another incitement to throw overboard all utilitarian considerations and make an all-out attempt to realize through ruthless total organization the goals of totalitarian social ideology, no matter for how short a time.<sup>211</sup>

Were we to analyse totalitarianism with the idea that power is always a disciplinary or regulatory force that serves to heighten productivity, we would, I believe, receive a distorted picture of it. Hence, when Foucault asserts that the concentration camp was a "median formula" between the wasteful, traditional form of (medieval) terror and the efficient disciplines as practised in hospitals and factories, he misinterpreted its purpose.<sup>212</sup> Totalitarian concentration camps were not oriented to productivity or utility. Concentration camps, rather than being experimental economic units of production, were designed to realize the truth of the totalitarian regimes. Ideology, not utility, was the foundation of totalitarian terror. As Arendt said:

The concentration camp as an institution was not established for the sake of any possible labor yield; the only permanent economic function of the camps has been the financing of their own supervisory apparatus; thus from the economic point of view the concentration camps exist mostly for their own sake. Any work that has been performed could have been done much better and more cheaply under different conditions.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 410.

<sup>212</sup> Foucault, "Crimes et châtements," Le Nouvel Observateur, 26 January 1976, p. 35.

<sup>213</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 444.

Rather than being experimental factories with the purpose of achieving productive work, concentration camps were the laboratories where totalitarian ideology could be actualized, where the "inferior races" would meet their prophesied annihilation, or the "dying classes" could wait for their predicted effacement.

A basic problem for the genealogist is that his models, ideas, analytic tools, and terms of description or definition have a momentum of their own within his mind (and within the minds of his readers). Once conceived and employed, they carry themselves forward, interfering far more than they should in the genealogist's investigations. In order to point out this danger inherent to the genealogical study, I have criticized Foucault's dependence on terms of productivity in his analysis of power. At the same time, I know that Foucault would have objected to my own use of ideology in the analysis of totalitarian power.

Throughout his studies Foucault was careful of the tools of analysis he employed as well as of the terms of description and definitions he chose. In my examinations of totalitarianism I have used, with Arendt, the word 'ideology' to describe the logic of ideas that seizes the mind of the totalitarian adherent and forms an integral part of totalitarian organizational power. Foucault avoided the use of ideology, admittedly for some very good reasons.

He was concerned with the relations of power with knowledge and truth, and was unwilling to allow these relations to become merely the functions of either a transcendental subject, or of a substrative foundation or infrastructure (social, cultural, or economic). Instead, he wanted to describe as far as possible the effects and development of power, knowledge, and truth relations in their own terms. Hence Foucault avoided the term ideology, for it carried with it connotations that would have made his task more difficult and terminologically confusing. He said:

The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make use of, for three reasons. The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth. Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false. The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as an infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant etc. For these three reasons I think that this is a notion that cannot be used without circumspection.<sup>214</sup>

Foucault's points are well taken. However, my own use of ideology, borrowed from Arendt, is opposed to all three connotations on the basis of which Foucault rejected it.

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<sup>214</sup> Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 118.

Totalitarian ideology was not proposed as a function of the totalitarian movement's infrastructure but was, in fact, productive of it. Ideology and organization stood in mutual support. As a logic of ideas, ideology certainly refers to a subject whose mind is victim to its force, but we are not speaking of a transcendental subject. The subject of ideology is malleable and deformable. His soul is produced in much the same way as is the inmate's of the Panopticon. Finally, totalitarian ideology was, if anything, identified with truth rather than held in opposition to it. Ideology is the truth of totalitarianism; ideological discourse retained and produced totalitarian truth.

This last point is of special importance because it allows us to reexamine the function of ideology in totalitarianism. Instead of opposing ideology to truth, we opposed it to thinking. Ideology was seen as a device that reigned over the mind, stopping thought and action and stimulating ratiocination and behaviour.<sup>215</sup> The danger of

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<sup>215</sup> The true role of ideology as a mental tyrant is still widely recognized, often with a zeal that is as unnerving as was Stalin's pleasure at the thought of the coercive force of his dialectics. In February 1983, Yuri Andropov proclaimed: "We Soviet Communists are proud of belonging to the most influential ideological current in the entire history of world civilization, Marxism-Leninism ... it is today at the centre of the world spiritual life, and reigns over the minds of millions and millions of people. It is the ideological credo of the rising class which is liberating all mankind" (Yuri Andropov, "Some Questions of Building Socialism in the USSR," Communist Affairs:

ideology is not that it is opposed to truth, that it is false, but that its logical rigour, fundamental to the working out of its ideas, tyrannizes the mind. Thought, which inevitably gives rise to doubts as to the basis of one's knowledge or proposed action, has no place within the regime of truth fostered by ideology. If ideology is said to create a fictitious world it is not because it produces an illogical or unscientific system of ideas, but because the logicity and scientificity of its world is too rigorous to be real. The world of ideas always runs more smoothly than the world we inhabit. Ideology stands in contrast to the common sense world wherein thought periodically reminds us that the answers to all its riddles are not given.

To understand ideology, then, we must appreciate its fundamental opposition to thinking, and, if anything, its identification with truth. It is as if the grand ideas or truths of an ideology with all their logical connections occupy the mind of the adherent to such an extent that he has none left for the activity of thinking. We are reminded of Lewis Carroll's Alice Through the Looking Glass: lost and lonely in the woods Alice begins to cry, and the White Queen implores her to stop. Alice is advised to escape her troubling thoughts by "considering" impossible things.

"Now I'll give you something to believe. I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day [old]."  
 "I can't believe that" said Alice.  
 "Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone.  
 "Try again; draw a long breath, and shut your eyes."  
 Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said, "one can't believe impossible things."  
 "I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen, "When I was your age I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."<sup>216</sup>

Carroll's White Queen is not unlike the victim of ideology. Half an hour of ideological indoctrination a day may well be all that is needed to believe the impossible, to stop thinking altogether by "considering" only the logical processes of ideas, and subsequently to escape from one's uneasy circumstances and troubling thoughts of being lost and lonely in a world that never runs as smoothly as the world of ideas. We must not assume that the mind is incapable of imaginative projection and self-innoculation from the common sense world. Totalitarianism has taught us just how malleable the individual is, what he can be made to believe, and what he is then capable and incapable of doing.

Foucault was aware of the force of ideology. Though he generally chose to avoid the term, he investigated the historical links of ideology to the techniques of punishment and discipline. The prison reformers of the nineteenth century

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<sup>216</sup> Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1981), p. 157.



were said to have created "an art of punishment inspired by Ideology."<sup>217</sup> Foucault realized that from its inception at the turn of the nineteenth century, ideology developed into a technique for ruling minds by way of a continuous ineluctable logic of ideas. He wrote:

The thought of the Ideologues was not only a theory of the individual and society; it developed as a technology of subtle, effective, economic powers, in opposition to the sumptuous expenditures of the power of the sovereign. Let us hear once more what Sevrin has to say: the ideas of crime and punishment must be strongly linked and 'follow one another without interruption.... When you have then formed the chains of ideas in the heads of your citizens you will then be able to pride yourselves on guiding them and being their masters. A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chains of their own ideas ... despair and time eat away the bonds of iron and steel, but they are powerless against the habitual union of ideas, they can only tighten it still more; and on the soft fibres of the brain is founded the unshakable base of the soundest of Empires.'<sup>218</sup>

Where Foucault may have gone wrong was in his approach to ideology. His emphasis has always been placed on the practical consequences of ideology, the prison reforms or political manoeuvres "inspired by Ideology," rather than on the techniques of ideological indoctrination themselves. As for the analysis of power, what is more important than the applications of ideological indoctrination that allowed

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<sup>217</sup> Foucault, (debate in) L'impossible prison, p. 30.

<sup>218</sup> Foucault, Discipline and Punish, pp. 102,103.

political control of men without "the sumptuous expenditures of the power of the sovereign" are the techniques of ideological power that bound men by the "chains of their own ideas." For it is the development of the techniques themselves, apart from their ostensibly utilitarian applications of the nineteenth century or their anti-utilitarian ones of the totalitarian movements in the twentieth, that marks the nature of power in the modern age. It was a power over the life of Man, over his mind and body; and its stimulus, whether serving the forces of productivity or not, was the belief in the rewards of discovering the truth in Man, the secrets of his mind and body. Its stimulus was the will to truth of Man, which had as its ultimate task the creation of Man.

In certain contexts, namely those of the nineteenth century, it is easy to understand how the truth of Man could be sought after through the achievement of the perfectly efficient and productive individual and society. Man would have reached his apotheosis at the end of a history that told the story of the search for efficient productivity. However, in a different context the creation of Man came at the end of a history that told a different story: the struggle of races or classes. In this case the creation of Man was not to be the climax of a successful battle for productivity, but the result of the attempt of a race or segment of society to dominate and rule. As we have seen,

the totalitarian creation of Man also entailed the anti-utilitarian and very unproductive destruction of masses of human beings in the process.

In sum, Foucault's reliance on productivity and economic utility in his analysis of power indicates how his genealogy, while supposedly free from absolute indicators or constants, was not immune to their infiltration. Nevertheless, the methodology his form of interpretation employs, that is, the emphasis on the examination of the capillary forms of power, and the adoption of analytical tools rather than the reliance on theoretical models or systematic indicators, would appear to be the best defense against the traps the genealogist hopes to avoid.

### The focus of genealogy

If Foucault's genealogies may be described as interpretations we must then ask: interpretations of what? Is there a focus or direction Foucault has assumed, a particular field of phenomena he is primarily concerned with interpreting? We have already answered part of the question. Foucault was doing an analytics of power, an interpretation of the development of the power-knowledge-truth relation. But his concerns were more specific than that. Foucault was interested

in the present. The genealogies he wrote were what he called a "history of the present."

Foucault's interest in the modern age, that is, the period from the French Revolution to the middle of the twentieth century, was founded on his belief that the present, which borders on the modern age, receives its sets of problems and dangers from the recent past and is, so to speak, largely defined by the period of development (of power relations, etc.) that directly preceded it. At the same time, the present is a definite departure from the past. The present, or if you will, the post-modern period, displays its novelty and discontinuity with the past even as it claims its roots in the modern period. For this reason the present always escapes our attempts to define it. It surrounds us, and we are too involved to secure a perspective that would facilitate its description. We can, however, discover its roots.

Through our genealogical investigations, the discovery of meaning in the stories that constitute history, we may begin to outline the present by marking the limits of the past. We are, as it were, always approaching the present, though our investigations do not pretend to define or explain it. Instead, they show what the present is not, that is, how the present, though rooted in the past, is distinct from it. This is Foucault's history of the present, what he called in the spirit of "pessimistic activism," a "diagnosis"

of the present. Such is the task of the genealogist, and perhaps, as Foucault speculated, the task of post-modern philosophers:

To diagnose the present, to say what the present consists of, to say in which way our present is different and absolutely different from all which is not the present, that is to say our past. Perhaps it is to that, to that task, that philosophers are now assigned.<sup>219</sup>

In producing his diagnosis of the present the genealogist is careful to remain its judge. He is wary of the temptation to submit and be judged by his own tools and inventions of historical analysis. He does not employ and is not subject to any laws of History or any preconceived models of change according to which the story of events is supposed to unfold. Foucault said:

I am completely opposed to a certain conception of history that uses as a model a sort of grand evolution which is continuous and homogeneous, a sort of grand mythical life. I am also opposed to a form of history which sets down change as a given and which gives itself the task of discovering the cause.<sup>220</sup>

If tools or models are used by the genealogist, he recognizes them as aids to the investigation. The events themselves, not the tools for their analysis, retain priority. If, for example, the will to truth is used, one must acknowledge

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<sup>219</sup> Michel Foucault, "Foucault répond à Sartre," (interview) La Quinzaine Littéraire, 1 March 1968, p. 21.

<sup>220</sup> Foucault, (interview in) Le Monde, 3 May 1969, p. 8.

that men, as the characters of the story being told, have allowed history to be written; the will to truth as an idea does not make history. It has no momentum of its own with which it pushes history to a predestined goal. Because the actions of men, that is, the manifestations of their freedom, give history its breath, the genealogist does not propose that the past had a determined course any more than he would propose that the future is, or will be, determined. However he employs the will to truth in order to reveal the meaning of past events, one thing is certain: history could always have been otherwise.

For this reason we may speak of a present that is different from the past, just as we may recall unprecedented events in history. The actions of men form beginnings, ensuring that the so-called "chain of events" takes the form of a true history rather than a mere process of evolution.<sup>221</sup> Foucault wrote of "new" forms of power, just as we may speak of totalitarianism as a "totally new form

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<sup>221</sup> Apropos of the Iranian revolution Foucault discussed the most obvious form of political action that forms a beginning, marking a departure from the past: revolt. He wrote: "And because the man who revolts is ultimately without explanation, it is necessary to have a tear which interrupts the thread of history and its long chain of roots, so that a man can truly prefer the risk of death to the certitude of having to obey ... it is because there are such voices [of revolt] that the time of man does not have the form of evolution but of a proper 'history'" ("Inutile de se soulever?" Le Monde, 1 May 1979, p. 1).

of rule." To say an event is unprecedented, however, to speak of a beginning and a new form of organization or relation, is not to abandon the task of investigating its origins and discovering its roots. Were an event but the logical working out of the laws of History, there would be no need to investigate its meaning. Its truth would be immanent in the laws by which it developed; all that would remain for the historian would be the mechanical placement of past events into the relevant process that structured them. Alternatively, if history were a chaos of events that bore no relation to what preceded or followed, there would again be no place for meaning. History would consist of the accumulation of isolated and unconnected happenings. Events are not to be explained away as the necessary consequence of processes put into play by the laws of History. Nor are their meanings to be left unexplored simply because one admits they resulted from action that is irreducible to determinable causes. Rather, events are to be firmly rooted in their environment. The story of history, of the actions which manifest man's freedom, is meaningful because it is not predetermined and because it is cohesive. Foucault wrote:

Truly feel that all that one perceives is only

evident when surrounded by a familiar and poorly known horizon, that each certitude is assured only by the support of a never explored soil. The most fragile of moments has roots.<sup>222</sup>

Events large and small are firmly planted in a soil that obscures their origins. It is the genealogist's task to dig about and uncover their roots, and to examine the soil from which they were nourished. His investigations do not deny the dignity of free men by fitting their action into a historically determined process, nor do they deny specific and unique meanings to men's actions by assuming them all to be identical expressions of freedom, indistinguishable from each other in an open sea of spontaneity. It is rather by showing how actions stand out from their past while at the same time being attached to it that these actions then become meaningful and are turned into events that claim an identity and a history.

To accord an event an identity and a history is not, however, to deem it praiseworthy. To say that a set of relations or form of organization is new is not to judge its merit. Action per se, which testifies to the dignity of man only insofar as it manifests his freedom, deserves neither praise nor condemnation as an idea, an abstraction separated from its experienced reality. To say that the

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<sup>222</sup> Michel Foucault, (preface in) Jean Daniel, *L'ère des Ruptures* (Paris: Editions Grossetts and Tasquellé, 1979), pp. 15,16.



Panopticon is a new form of power or that totalitarianism is a new form of rule is not to assess its value, but simply to recognize its novelty. At the same time, to say, as Arendt does, that "some of the fundamental aspects of this time [of imperialism, 1884-1914] appear so close to totalitarian phenomena of the twentieth century that it may be justifiable to consider the whole period a preparatory stage for the coming catastrophes,"<sup>223</sup> is not to offer a defense of totalitarianism by identifying its "origins." The attempt to understand totalitarianism or the modern mechanisms of power, to recognize its novelty and investigate its origins, in no way entails its apology. What is required, and here again I must borrow from Arendt, is comprehension:

Comprehension, however, does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from the precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalizations that the impact of reality and the shock of experience is no longer felt. It means, rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden that events have placed upon us--neither denying their existence nor submitting meekly to their weight as though everything that in fact happened could not have happened otherwise. Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive, facing up to, and resisting of, reality--whatever it may be or might have been.<sup>224</sup>

The genealogist has the task of comprehension before him. The genealogist must face up to and resist reality

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<sup>223</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 123.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

because, like Foucault, he tries to "short circuit, disqualify, or break the systems of power" that surround him. Power is ubiquitous, and every event has effects of truth and power. Hence, for the genealogist, "everything is dangerous." The burden that events place upon him is the task of discovering and resisting the new and ever-changing dangers presented by power. His resistance is attentive because he searches for the capillary forms of power, the roots of power-truth relations that are formed at "the most fragile of moments." His resistance is unpremeditated because he relies on no theoretical constants or historical laws to furnish answers to questions he has not yet asked. Above all, he does not let his ideas or tools of analysis dull his senses as to what events mean nor protect him from a reality that needs confronting.

To put it a different way, the genealogist does not judge the event by his ideas but his ideas by the event. He does not make general pronouncements of what is right or wrong action in abstraction, and subsequently fit the course of events into the appropriate categories, allotting praise or blame as definitions dictate. Foucault's writings and interviews on the Iranian revolution are of interest on this matter. The idea of revolution does not allow of generalized judgements. The event itself should be faced with what one might call an unpremeditated resistance.

According to Foucault:

No one has the right to say, "Revolt for me, there is an ultimate liberation of all men." But I do not agree with those who would say: "It is pointless to have an uprising, things will always be the same." You don't lay down the law to someone who risks his life before a power. Does or doesn't one have reason to revolt? Let us leave the question open. The fact is there are uprisings, and it is through this that subjectivity ... introduces itself in history and gives it its breath.<sup>225</sup>

The result of the genealogist's work is not the acquisition of magic-like powers that allow him to explain away the past or to predict the future as the consequence of invariable laws or structural systems or to evaluate present events in abstraction as mere exemplars of his own ideas. In the end the historian of the present is not equipped to prophesy or judge events as if they were functions of his ideas that conceptualize them. Each event, even the most fragile moment, has roots that link it to its past and buds that testify to its novelty. Each event must be investigated in its specificity to discover its meaning. Though the primary concern of the genealogist is power, he is not prepared to judge it all either good or bad. His genealogies of power allow him to understand its present forms. His histories of the present allow its diagnosis, the investigations into the problems and dangers presented by the mechanisms of

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<sup>225</sup> Foucault, "Inutile de se soulever?" Le Monde, 11 May 1979, p. 1.

power. Finally, his diagnosis of the present aids him in the "ethico-political choice we have to make every day ... to determine which is the main danger."<sup>226</sup>

In sum, if we ask what the genealogist is doing the answer would be something like an interpretive history of the present. The focus of his analytics is power and the relations it forms with truth. One of the analytical tools he may use is the will to truth, more specifically, the will to truth of Man. The meaning he discovers in his genealogical investigations is not designed to explain the necessity of present circumstances nor predict the future course events will take. He produces a history of the present that points out the horizon of our time, revealing the roots of our problems and dangers and illustrating their novelty.

The genealogical survey cannot but prompt one to look towards the future in anticipation of the dangers yet to present themselves, dangers that may be immanent in the present and that will hide their meaning until one has reached the point of retrospect. In the preceding chapters I have spoken of totalitarianism as the height and perfection of the will to truth of Man, as the climax to the modern age, which was initiated by the invention of ideology and the discovery of Man. Yet one may speculate that what

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<sup>226</sup> Foucault, (interview in) Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault, p. 232.

totalitarianism ultimately failed at, technology will achieve. Totalitarianism was born out of an age that held all knowledge to be discovered in Man. Wherever modern man looked in his search for knowledge he saw only himself. Technological man also faces a mirror. As nineteenth century man saw himself in History, so twentieth century man sees himself in nature. With Arendt, we must realize that "all the processes of the earth and the universe have revealed themselves either as man-made or as potentially man-made."<sup>227</sup> The speculative conclusion is that our technology, more specifically our social techniques,

whose real field of experimentation lies in the totalitarian countries, have only to overcome a certain time-lag to be able to do for the world of human relations and human affairs as much as has already been done for the world of human artifacts.<sup>228</sup>

Hence, "it may even be that the true predicaments of our time will assume their authentic form--though not necessarily the cruelest--only when totalitarianism has become a thing of the past."<sup>229</sup> The will to truth of Man yet may have to attain its apogee, as technology succeeds with the problems of biological and social "engineering" that totalitarianism

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<sup>227</sup> Hannah Arendt, Between Past and Future (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 89.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 460.

failed to solve. On these point the historian of the present can only speculate. Nevertheless, as he meticulously constructs his genealogies of power, the picture of the present slowly takes shape.

Foucault took it upon himself to "write a history of [the] will to truth." He was one of Nietzsche's "unknown friends" who with Nietzsche posed the question: "What is the meaning of all will to truth?" Foucault began to answer the question with an analytics of power. While his detailed studies provided invaluable insights into the modern age, his general response would have been, I believe, like Nietzsche's own. To those living on the horizon of the modern age and looking back on its uncertain finish Foucault may have joined Nietzsche in answering his question with another question: "What is the meaning of all will to truth?"

And here I again touch upon my problem, on our problem, my unknown friends (for as yet I know no friend): what meaning would our whole being possess if it were not this, that in us the will to truth becomes conscious of itself as a problem?<sup>230</sup>

Nietzsche prophesied that, as the will to truth gained self-consciousness, morality would perish and there would be "the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries in Europe." Foucault made no predictions. Yet I cannot help but feel that even with his "pessimistic

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230 Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, p. 161.

activism," or perhaps because of it, Foucault again would have joined Nietzsche to hold the "great spectacle in a hundred acts" as "the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful of all spectacles."<sup>231</sup>

The events we are to witness might provide the most terrible spectacle because the modern will to truth yet may achieve its climax, and the fusion of truth and power yet may find its most terrible form. These events might be the most questionable because, for all our theories and imaginings, the question of power remains an enigma. If there is hope, it lies in our discovery of the modern will to truth that infects us, and in our conviction that we shall not become the subjects and victims of the historical laws, social forces, structural systems, or any of the other "gadgets" that the sciences of Man have offered us.

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

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This bibliography is divided into two sections: those works by Foucault (listed according to their form: books, prefaces, articles, and interviews) and general sources. The research for this study entailed the reading of almost all of Foucault's works, bibliographies of which (covering up to 1979) can be found in Sheridan's and Cooper's books, as well as in Power/Knowledge and Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy. The references to Foucault listed below indicate only those sources that were found particularly relevant to this study.

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