the sense that it discards the ordinary mental push of individual minds and allows ideas an objective impersonal deterministic movement of their own. On the one hand, a kind of mysticism: on the other hand, a kind of mechanism which seems to have its proper home in scientific materialism. The incongruity of the combination has often puzzled Spinoza's Anglo-Saxon commentators (Stuart Hampshire being perhaps the most recent example). But Derrida's position illuminates Spinoza's position. Spinoza is not a scientific materialist, but a materialist of a very different breed. Like Derrida, he is a Metaphysical materialist.

But although the position of the Metaphysical materialist is a coherent one, we do not have to accept that it is an all-encompassing one. Certainly, Derrida's kind of signifying is not simply causal force and not simply meaning; but it is also not what Derrida claims, the ultimate unification of causal force and meaning. Rather it is a third alternative, a movement of hyper-meaning so far beyond all ordinary meaning that it takes on many of the characteristics ordinarily associated with causal force. This kind of signifying cannot be accounted for in terms of causal force and (ordinary) meaning; but neither can causal force and (ordinary) meaning be accounted for in terms of this kind of signifying.

12

Foucault as genealogist

(i)

Derrida's Post-Structuralism is the earliest and the pivotal version of Post-Structuralism, but it is not the only version. Another version of almost equal importance is the version associated with Foucault in his 'genealogical' period of the 1970s. In many respects, Foucault's 'genealogy' follows on from where his 'archaeology' left off, extending into new areas of discourse the campaign against science and humanism. Thus, 'genealogies . . . are precisely anti-sciences'; and 'genealogy [is] a form of history which accounts for the constitution of knowledges [*savoirs*], discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to refer to a subject'.[1] But in other respects, there is a decisive philosophical difference between 'archaeology' and 'genealogy'. And although Foucault does not appear to be directly influenced by Derrida – and even displays considerable animosity towards Derrida – yet this difference is in the end analogous to the difference between Saussure's theory of 'langue' and Derrida's theory of Writing.[2]

The most obvious aspect of the difference between 'archaeology' and 'genealogy' is that the latter puts the emphasis upon power rather than upon knowledge, upon practices rather than upon language. Thus Foucault now proposes that 'one's point of reference should not be to the great model of language [langue] and signs, but to that of war and battle'.[3] And apropos of the 'genealogical' concept of 'apparatus', he claims that 'what I call an apparatus is a much more general case of the *episteme*; or rather . . . the *episteme* is a specifically *discursive* apparatus, whereas the apparatus in its general form is both discursive and non-discursive'.[4] Of course, the connection between language and practices has always been crucial to Foucault's concept of discourse, and the connection between knowledge and power has always been crucial to his arguments against 'truth'. But with the new emphasis, there is a shift away from the notion of epistemic frameworks existing *in idea*, and a shift towards materialism. Power is to be directly related to bodies: 'What I am after is to try to show how the relations of power are able to pass materially into the very density of bodies without even having to be relayed by the representation of subjects.'[5] This shift towards materialism is analogous to the shift towards materialism in Derrida's Post-Structuralism.

The direct relation between power and bodies can be seen as operating in either of two ways. One way is the way of power *over* bodies: 'Power relations have an immediate hold upon [the body], they invest it, mask it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.'[6] According to Foucault, this kind of hold has increased enormously in modern times, with 'a veritable technological take-off in the productivity of power'.[7] Whereas pre-capitalist economies needed only an external power to punish and tax bodies, the capitalist economy needs to force bodies to a new kind of labour, to extract productive service from them. And this involves an actual 'incorporation' of power into the bodies of individuals, controlling their acts and attitudes and behaviour from within.[8] Characteristically, such 'incorporation' operates through language and signs; but the reality behind it is war-like and battle-like.

The other way of power is the way of the body's own power, the body's own force of Will and Desire. Such a power *of* the body opposes the power *over* bodies, and thereby represents, for Foucault, the source of all revolution. Here Foucault leaves behind the dilemma of his 'archaeological' period, the dilemma of epistemic frameworks which are on the one hand totally inescapable and on the other hand politically objectionable. In his 'genealogical' period, Foucault discovers a force which is not a thinking and is therefore not determined by epistemic frameworks. For Foucault as for Derrida, society's dominating *a priori* 'langue' is no longer the primary reality. There is a deeper reality to which we can be true.

Foucault's new terminology of Will and Desire is explicitly Nietzschean, and he consistently draws upon Nietzschean arguments when demonstrating the rationalizations of power and the reality of war and battle. But we must tread carefully here. For Nietzsche can be and has been interpreted in very different ways, and Foucault's is by no means the most accepted or most obvious interpretation. The Existentialists, for instance, assimilated Nietzschean irrationalism to their own 'I'-philosophy: Will and Desire became free will and subjective desire, experienced through the subjective 'lived body'. For Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, Nietzschean irrationalism has usually seemed to tie in with scientific notions of evolution and the organism: Will and Desire become biological instincts, pre-programmed towards the survival of the species. Neither of these interpretations is relevant to Foucault; and the biological interpretation, in particular, can only reduce 'genealogy' to a state of hopeless self-contradiction.

In fact, 'genealogy' is not only at odds with the Anglo-Saxon interpretation of Nietzsche, but with the whole Anglo-Saxon way of thinking about the body which lies behind that interpretation. This is especially the case when Foucault analyses sexuality and overturns the notion of sexual instincts and the myth of their repression. According to the myth, our natural sexual instincts have been forcibly restrained and hidden during the past three centuries of bourgeois class-domination: 'modern puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence'.[9] So it seems to us now that the truth of sex,

> lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weights it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation.[10]

But according to Foucault, our sexual instincts are not so natural after all. True to the essential Superstructuralist vision, he gives the cultural superstructure priority over the supposed biological base:

> We believe in the full constancy of instinctual life and imagine that it continues to exert its force indiscriminately in the present as it did in the past. But a knowledge of history easily disintegrates this unity, depicts its wavering course . . . We believe, in any event, that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes.[11]

There is nothing fundamental or inevitable about our sexual instincts.

By way of illustration, Foucault considers the sexuality of the child, as revealed by Freudian psychoanalysis. This sexuality, he argues, is there to be revealed only because it was first put there, historically, during the eighteenth century. During this period, according to Foucault, the sexuality of the child was suddenly 'discovered', as evidenced by a whole new literature on the topic, with precepts, observations, medical advice, clinical cases, outlines for reform and plans for ideal institutions. Great efforts were devoted especially to the eradication of masturbation amongst schoolboys. And the end-result of such efforts was, inevitably, not eradication but intensification: 'sexuality through thus becoming an object of analysis and concern, surveillance and control, engender[ed] at the same time an intensification of each individual's desire for, in, and over his body'.[12] In effect, the sexuality of the child was created by an eighteenth-century discourse.

As for the sexuality of the child, so for sexuality in general. According to Foucault, western society has always been obsessed with telling the truth about sex, ever since the time of the old Catholic confessional. And specifically in the last three centuries, 'since the classical age, there has been a constant optimization and an increasing valorization of the discourse on sex'.[13] This discourse on sex, even when speaking *against* sex, creates its own object just like the discourses discussed by Foucault in his 'archaeological' period. And the object thus created is sexuality or the idea of sex, a cultural object that imposes itself on bodies. As Foucault asks of our modern so-called 'sex': 'is it not rather a complex idea that was formed inside the deployment of sexuality?'[14]

Our modern so-called 'sex' thus possesses many remarkable qualities that are by no means natural. Sex is

> that agency which appears to dominate us and that secret which seems to underlie all that we are, that point which enthralls us through the power it manifests and the meaning it conceals, and which we ask to reveal what we are and to free us from what defines us.[15]

It has become a source and centre of all meaningfulness, the most important truth in our lives. Instead of sex as desire, we now have a desire for sex – as something which is in itself desirable.

Under Foucault's analysis, then, power does not appear in the form of a negative repressive power; but it appears none the less. It appears in the form of a positive expansionist power, 'a power bent on generating forces, making them grow and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them'.[16] Such a power takes charge, not by prohibition, but by regulatory intervention and 'management procedures'. And it encourages the spread of sexuality because it can penetrate deeper into the body with sexuality as its support. Thus in the case of the eighteenth-century campaign against masturbation:

> The child's 'vice' was not so much an enemy as a support; it may have been designated as the evil to be eliminated, but the extraordinary effort that went into the task that was bound to fail leads one to suspect that what was demanded of it was to persevere . . . rather than to disappear for good. Always relying on this support, power advanced, multiplied its relays and its effects. . . . In appearance, we are dealing with a barrier system; but in fact, all around the child, indefinite *lines of penetration* were disposed.[17]

In appearance, the eradication of masturbation is the goal, and knowledge and surveillance are merely the means to that goal; but in fact, it is knowledge and surveillance in themselves that are the goal.

As for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Foucault sees the management and regulation of sex depending upon the increasing proximity between 'scientia sexualis' and the biological sciences. For 'by virtue of this . . . proximity, some of the contents of biology and physiology were able to serve as a principle of normality for human sexuality'.[18] Sexual behaviour is no longer constrained under the notion of sin; instead it is constrained under the notion of the abnormal, the pathological. And, of course, this rule of the 'truth' of nature is much harder to shrug off than the rule of an explicitly man-made morality. With our characteristic western obsession about being natural, we characteristically internalize the standards of biology and carry out our own self-surveillance and self-regulation. Even Freud, who in some ways opposed the simple division between the normal and the pathological, still gave us a standard to internalize and obey.

As against our characteristic western obsession about being natural, Foucault sets the oriental way of thinking about sex in term of an *ars erotica*. This latter way of thinking is not directed towards 'a healthy sexuality' or 'a complete and flourishing sexuality' or 'the lyricism of orgasm and the good feelings of bio-energy'; it is directed towards 'pleasure . . . considered . . . first and foremost in relation to itself' and 'pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity'.[19] Instead of sex as a servant of nature or a centre of truth, this is sexuality as an erotic art, a kind of playing, creative and deliberately artificial.

Here we approach the crux of Foucault's conception of the body – the primary power *of* the body that resists all imposed power *over* the body. In Foucault's words, 'the rallying point for the counter-attack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire but bodies and pleasures'.[20] The usual biological conception of the body explains sex-desire as following from the reproductive instincts, and pleasure as following from the satisfaction of desire. Pleasure here is merely an incidental by-product, a reward for carrying out the good work of evolutionary survival. Or in Freudian terms, pleasure is merely gratification, the relief of getting back down to a normal state of stasis and balance after a period of tension and imbalance. Foucault's conception completely inverts all such models. For Foucault, the primary power *of* the body must be seen as a seeking after pleasure. It is the seeking after pleasure which gives rise to desire, and it is desire which uses the physical body. And the intensities of pleasure sought after in this way are quite beyond mere animal gratifications, and quite unrelated to the evolutionary survival of the species. The primary power derives as it were from the top rather than from the bottom, putting the body into a state of perpetual imbalance and perpetual restlessness and perpetual onward motion. Instead of speaking of the body and its pleasures, we should perhaps speak more precisely of pleasure and its bodies.

What's emerging here, of course, is an analogy between Foucault's conception of the body and Derrida's conception of the signifier. For, as we have seen, Derrida's signifier is also in a state of perpetual imbalance and perpetual restlessness and perpetual onward motion. And this state follows from the logic of supplementarity, where what's added on endlessly supplants and leaves behind what was there in the first place – just as, in Foucault's conception, ever-new intensities of pleasure endlessly supplant and leave behind original animal gratifications. In spite of the apparent distance between bodies and signifiers, Foucault's conception actually has a very similar philosophical status to Derrida's conception. On the one hand, the body obviously does not exist like an *idea*; but on the other hand – and no doubt less obviously – it also does not exist like a *thing*. Rather, it is always being pulled out of itself, always toppling forward into newly opening spaces, always being drawn across boundaries. What comes first for Foucault is not the solidity of the body but the power of the body as a force, just as what comes first for Derrida is not the signifier as an entity but the process of signifying. Foucault, like Derrida, is a materialist only in a very special sense.

(ii)

Along with the dimension of pleasure, there is another, very different, dimension to Foucault's conception of the body: the dimension of politics. Power *of* the body and *over* the body is also power in a political sense. And since power *of* the body and *over* the body appears in even the most local and small-scale human relations, so too does politics. Politics is no longer restricted to the level of general class relations, but percolates down into domestic relations, schooling relations, parent–child relations, and of course sexual relations. (On this dimension too, sex is anything but biological.) As Foucault says, 'in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals'.[21] In his 'genealogical' period, Foucault sees politics everywhere.

However, this does not mean that Foucault is putting forward a political theory in the old sense. He is not putting forward a totalizing description of how society is, nor a utopian vision of how, in the general interest, it should be. Such theories depend upon precisely that kind of impartial objective knowing which Foucault has always condemned as illusory. Politics, in Foucault's conception, depends not upon impartiality but upon self-interest: it becomes a matter of tactics and strategy. And politics, in Foucault's conception, depends not upon knowing but upon desire: it becomes materialized in bodies. Bodies are also involved in the conception of politics as practical action – in demonstrations, for instance, and physical confrontation. Foucault, who admits to having been politicized by the 1968 student revolution in France, develops his conception of politics very much in relation to the new kind of politics which grew out of that upheaval.

At the same time, however, this self-interest is still not to be interpreted in terms of the subject as an individual; and this desire of the body is still not to be interpreted in terms of any mere gratification of biological needs. Such interpretations would render interest and desire essentially a-social and ultimately a-political. Indeed, such interpretations would typically suggest notions of minimal government and the private vote, on the old Anglo-Saxon model. But Foucault's politics is over and above the individual even as it is below and beneath society-as-a-whole. Whence, for example, the strange philosophical status of 'the great anonymous, almost unspoken strategies': 'the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them'.[22] Such strategies, it seems, must be granted an objectified existence of their own, virtually independent of the individual calculations of those taking part in them.

What's at issue here can be illustrated by a concrete example from Foucault:

> Imagine that in some factory or other there is a conflict between a worker and one of the bosses, and that this worker suggests to his comrades that some retribution is called for. This would not be a real act of popular justice unless the target and the potential outcome were integrated into the overall political struggle of the workers in that factory.[23]

Knocking down a boss is not by itself a political action, not if it is performed merely in personal terms, merely between individuals, merely out of an instinctive sense of grievance. As Foucault says, 'an act of popular justice cannot achieve its full significance unless it is clarified politically'.[24] The key word here is 'significance'. When an action is integrated into an overall political struggle, it assumes a kind of general *meaning*. In acts of retribution – as in demonstrations and confrontations – the body is political only when it is used as a symbol.

Of course, Foucault will not allow us to think of this general meaning as something in the minds of those taking part. But perhaps we can conceive it in terms of formal differences. A personal hostility between workers and bosses is like a particular causal difference: it can motivate the throwing of a punch, but it has no meaning. A meaning arises only when workers and bosses stand in a relation of absolute, formal difference, when what the workers *are* is what the bosses *are not*, and vice versa. Does not this kind of difference lie at the heart of all politics? And might not a purely physical action thus manage to point to something beyond itself?

In any event, the presence of such meaning once again reveals the distance between 'genealogy' and all philosophies of the 'natural' body, and once again establishes the connection between 'genealogy' and Superstructuralism. In particular, we can now see more clearly than ever just how 'genealogy' fits into the Post-Structuralist phase of Superstructuralism. We have already seen that there is a power *of* the body which is not a thinking and is therefore not determined by the dominant epistēmē. Now we can see that there is also a symbolism of the body which can be used in political action and can be turned against the dominant epistēmē. So, as in Derrida's theory of Writing, two levels of the sign emerge: an institutionalized level of socially controlled discourse, and an anti-institutional level of the body's own revolutionary symbolism.

The concept of the body's own revolutionary symbolism underlies Foucault's account of the history of the penal system. According to Foucault, the modern penal system was erected against a 'danger' that appeared towards the end of the eighteenth century, the 'danger' of actions previously regarded as criminal starting to take on political meaning. Before and around and after the time of the French Revolution, 'a whole series of illegalities was inscribed in struggles in which those struggling knew that they were confronting both the law and the class that had imposed it'.[25] Refusing to pay rents, looting shops, attacking the king's agents – such hitherto individual retributions and confrontations were becoming integrated into a general protest against the existing state of society. But the invention of the modern penal system saved the day for social order and its new guardians, the bourgeoisie. With the modern penal system, the old methods of violent punishment were supplanted by more gentle but also more thorough methods of control: methods of routine, measurement, surveillance and observation. As Foucault puts it, 'The perpetual penality that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*.'[26] Or to put it another way, the small ceaseless grind of prison existence crushes the meaning out of the bodies of prisoners.

Foucault thus inverts the accepted wisdom of penology, which claims a relative humanity for the new methods of control and which proposes as the goal of imprisonment not punishment for its own sake but the *reform* of the criminal. As Foucault points out, such reform has never been achieved; the modern penal system seems only to encourage recidivism. How, then, has so consistently unsuccessful a system managed to survive? Foucault suggests that it has survived because it has actually proved very successful in terms of another, quite unstated goal – the positive production of delinquency:

> For the observation that prison fails to eliminate crime, one should perhaps substitute the hypothesis that prison has succeeded extremely well in producing delinquency, a specific type, a politically or economically less dangerous – and, on occasion, usable – form of illegality . . . in producing the delinquent as a pathologized subject.[27]

Delinquency is less dangerous because it is merely personal and local and limited in its power to attract popular support. For a strategy of social order this advantage far outweighs the very minor disadvantage of habitualizing criminals to a lifelong cycle of crime and imprisonment. Just as the eighteenth-century campaign against childhood sexuality succeeded even as it failed to eradicate masturbation, so the modern penal system succeeds even as it fails to eradicate crime. In both cases, there is 'a mastery of [the body's] forces that is more than the ability to conquer them'.[28]

If the strategy of social order works in terms of its practical means rather than in terms of its programmatic goal, so too with the countervailing strategy of social disorder. Foucault seeks to recover a revolutionary political meaning for prisoners and other 'normalized' minorities, but he does not seek to proclaim a goal towards which revolutionary political action should aim. The revolutionary political meaning of prisoners and other minorities is simply the meaning of a difference between the minority and the law, between the minority and the class which has imposed the law; it is the negative meaning of what the minority is *against* rather than a positive meaning of what the minority is *for*. With Foucault, politicization has become an end in itself: 'the problem is not so much that of defining a political 'position' (which is to choose from a pre-existing set of possibilities) but to imagine and bring into being new schemes of politicisation'.[29] There is no blueprint for a post-revolutionary state of society in Foucault's writings.

In so far as one may deduce a post-revolutionary state of society from Foucault's writings at all, it seems clear that there can be no once-and-for-all removal of power-relations. Power is too deeply ingrained, it is 'always already there'; and Foucault's Nietzschean way of thinking gives no reason to suppose that the power *of* some bodies would ever cease to entail a power *over* other bodies. If a post-revolutionary state of society is to represent any improvement over the existing state, it must be by virtue of a loosening and unstructuring of power-relations: power-relations would still exist, but in ever-changing ever-flowing forms. There would be no permanent appropriations of power. ~~Indeed, power-relations might even be envisaged~~ in terms of creative play, whereby controls would be set up only in order to be transgressed.

This way of thinking, in so far as one may deduce it from Foucault's writings, seems more appropriate to a specifically French tradition of revolution – as exemplified by the French Revolution and the 1870 Paris Commune – than to the tradition of Communist revolution – as exemplified by the 1917 Russian Revolution. (Here it is perhaps worth noting that Foucault's attitude to prison and prisoners looks very much like a throw-back to Fourierism.) In fact, Foucault is avowedly anti-Marxist: not only when he rejects the reduction of all power-relations to class-relations, but also when he rejects the ideal of an ultimate social harmony and the belief in an inevitable historical progression towards that ideal. Such rejections stem from a fundamentally different conception of human existence. In one particularly revealing lecture, for instance, Foucault even claims that

> it is false to say, 'with that famous post-Hegelian' [Marx], that the concrete existence of man is labour. For the life and time of man are not by nature labour, but pleasure, restlessness, merry-making, rest, needs, accidents, desires, violent acts, robberies, etc.[30]

And he goes on to speak of man's 'quite explosive, momentary and discontinuous energy'.[31] Clearly, this unpredictable and irresponsible dynamism must find expression in any 'true' state of society.

Of course, what divides Foucault from Marx relates Foucault, once again, to Derrida. For there is a similar dynamism in Derrida's theory of Writing: as we have seen, linguistic meaning as disseminated is perpetually in motion, it reaches no terminus, it is forever toppling across boundaries. Derrida opens language up to an anarchic proliferation of forms over and above anyone's deliberate intentions, just as Foucault opens politics up to an anarchic proliferation of forms over and above anyone's deliberate aims or goals. And if we view Derrida's theory of Writing as an unrestricted version of Hegel's self-generating logic, might we not similarly view Foucault's approach to politics as an unrestricted version of Hegel's self-generating history of political systems?

13
More Post-Structuralists

(i)

As Foucault moves from a version of Structuralism to a version of Post-Structuralism, so too do Kristeva and Barthes. But Kristeva and Barthes are concerned with language rather than with politics. Thus their version of Structuralism is a semiotics founded originally upon Saussure, and their version of Post-Structuralism is a philosophy of meaning derived mainly from Derrida. Kristeva, for instance, began with aspirations to a universal mathematical understanding of signs, while Barthes envisaged an all-encompassing science of culture and society. But both came up against the problem already described in Section (i) of Chapter 10, the problem of a 'science of an object ("language", "speech" or "discourse") so obedient to the necessity for social communication as to be inseparable from sociality'.[1] Seeking an escape from such all-encompassing social control, Kristeva and Barthes abandon the old 'euphoric dream of scientificity', and turn their attention to possible forms of transgressive anti-social creativity.[2]

At first sight, of course, the escape from social control can look like a mere return to individualism, especially when Kristeva insists upon the reintroduction of 'the speaking subject' and Barthes insists upon 'the freedom of the Reader'. However, this freedom is not the free will of a transcendental consciousness, and this subject is not the coherent subject of a self or an 'I'. On