

## Foucault and the social sciences



### Introduction: Foucault's view of history

Foucault is against any form of global theorizing. He wants to avoid totalizing forms of analysis and is critical of systematicity. Though his works do not constitute a system, nevertheless there is an underlying coherence which stems from the fact that Foucault's works are based on a vision of history derived from Nietzsche. Indeed, he expressed his indebtedness to Nietzsche for having outlined a conception of history called genealogy.<sup>1</sup>

Nietzsche's book *On the Genealogy of Morals* was an effort to delegitimize the present by separating it from the past. This is what Foucault tries to do. Unlike the historian who traces a line of inevitability, Foucault breaks off the past from the present and, by demonstrating the foreignness of the past, relativizes and undercuts the legitimacy of the present.

Foucault rejects the Hegelian teleological model, in which one mode of production flows dialectically out of another, in favour of a Nietzschean tactic of critique through the presentation of *difference*. The Nietzschean historian begins with the present and goes backward in time until a difference is located. Then s/he proceeds forward again, tracing the transformation and taking care to preserve the discontinuities as well as the connections. This is the method used by Foucault. The alien discourses/practices are explored in such a way that their negativity in relation to the present explodes the 'rationality' of phenomena that are taken for granted. When the technology of power of the past is elaborated in detail, present-day assumptions which posit the past as 'irrational' are undermined.

The gap between the past and the present underlines the principle of difference at the heart of Foucault's historiography. He allows the discontinuity to remain unexplained. The role of cause or explanation is severely reduced in most post-structuralist texts, since it leads to evolutionist conclusions and works against the purposes of the genealogy of difference.

Genealogical analysis, then, differs from traditional forms of historical analysis in several ways. Whereas traditional or 'total' history inserts events into grand explanatory systems and linear processes, celebrates great moments and individuals and seeks to document a point of origin, genealogical analysis attempts to establish and preserve the singularity of events, turns away from the spectacular in favour of the discredited, the neglected and a whole range of phenomena which have been denied a history. According to Foucault there has been an insurrection of subjugated knowledges, of a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate – naïve knowledges located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of scientificity. Foucault often uses the term genealogy to refer to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today. Genealogies focus on local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchize and order them in the name of some true knowledge.

Genealogy, I repeat, is a form of critique. It rejects the pursuit of the origin in favour of a conception of historical beginnings as lowly, complex and contingent. It attempts to reveal the multiplicity of factors behind an event and the fragility of historical forms. In this view of history, which Foucault's writings exemplify, there can be no constants, no essences, no immobile forms of uninterrupted continuities structuring the past.

### Reason and unreason

Foucault's early work is mainly concerned with the growth of those disciplines which are collectively known as the social or human sciences. His books are an answer to the question of how the human sciences are historically possible and what the consequences of their existence are. His studies repeatedly centre on the eighteenth century – the period in

which the human sciences in their modern forms were constituted and certain new 'technologies' elaborated. Both of these developments were linked to a new philosophical conception of Man as a simultaneous subject and object of knowledge.

Throughout his life Foucault was interested in that which reason excludes: madness, chance, discontinuity. He believed that the literary text allows 'otherness' to speak. In philosophy and law this otherness is silent, whereas in madness it is not listened to. Foucault valued the literature of transgression – it attempts to subvert the constraints of all other forms of discourse by its difference. And so he admired the literary tradition that includes writers such as de Sade, Nerval, Artaud and Nietzsche.

In his first well-known book, *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault describes how madness, along with poverty, unemployment and the inability to work, comes in the seventeenth century to be perceived as a 'social problem' which falls within the ambit of responsibility of the state.<sup>2</sup> There is a new conception of the state as preserver and augments of the general welfare. In the book there is an important discussion of the emergence of 'humanitarian' attitudes towards the insane at the end of the eighteenth century. The opening of Tuke's Retreat at York and Pinel's liberation of the insane at Bicêtre are portrayed as leading to a 'gigantic moral imprisonment', more oppressive than the former practices of brutal incarceration since they operate on the mind rather than merely on the body.

#### *The great confinement*

At the end of the Middle Ages leprosy disappeared from the Western world. Foucault suggests a connection between this and some of the attitudes then taken towards madness. As leprosy vanished a void was created and the moral values had to find another scapegoat. He shows how in the 'classical period' (1500–1800) madness attracted that stigma.

During the Renaissance madmen led an easy, wandering existence. The towns drove them outside their limits and they were allowed to wander in the open countryside. One common way of dealing with the mad was to put them on a ship and entrust them to mariners, because folly, water and sea, as everyone then 'knew', had an affinity with each other. These 'Ships of Fools' were to be found criss-crossing the seas and canals of Europe. Many texts and paintings, for example the works of Breughel, Bosch and Dürer, refer to the theme of madness. These

works of art express an enormous anxiety about the relationships between the real and the imaginary. Then, within the space of a hundred years, the 'madship' was replaced by the 'madhouse'; instead of embarkation there was *confinement*. Men did not wait until the seventeenth century to 'shut up' the mad, but it was in this period that they began to 'confine' them.

Why was this? Foucault argues that during the second half of the seventeenth century social sensibility, common to European culture, began to manifest itself; a 'sensitivity to poverty and to the duties of assistance, new forms of reaction to the problems of unemployment and idleness, a new ethic of work'.<sup>3</sup> And so, enormous houses of confinement (sometimes called 'houses of correction') were created throughout Europe. To these places a (strangely) mixed group of people, poor vagabonds, the unemployed, the sick, the criminals and the insane were sent. No differentiation was made between them.

Confinement was a massive phenomenon, a 'police' matter whose task was to suppress beggary and idleness as a source of disorder.

The unemployed person was no longer driven away or punished; he was taken in charge, at the expense of the nation but at the cost of his individual liberty. Between him and society an implicit system of obligation was established: he had the right to be fed, but he must accept the physical and moral constraint of confinement.<sup>4</sup>

The repressive function of the houses of confinement was combined with a new use: the internees were made to work. In the Middle Ages the great sin had been pride, in the seventeenth century it was sloth. Since sloth had become the absolute form of rebellion, the idle were forced to work. Labour was instituted as an exercise in moral reform. Confinement played a double role: it absorbed the unemployed in order to mask their poverty and it also avoided the social or political disadvantages of agitation.

In the Renaissance madness had been present everywhere, but the houses of confinement hid it away. Confinement marked a decisive event: 'The new meanings assigned to poverty, the importance given to the obligation to work, and all the ethical values that are linked to labour, ultimately determined the experience of madness and infected its course.'<sup>5</sup> Most of Foucault's book is a detailed description of how madness was thought about in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: he writes about mania and melancholia, hysteria and hypochondria; how it was thought that the savage danger of madness

nineteenth century began to be categorized as social failure. The doctor gained a new social status and increasingly the patient surrendered to the medical profession. In short, the asylum of the age of positivism was not a free realm of observation, diagnosis and therapeutics. In the hands of Tuke and Pinel it became a juridical space where one was accused, judged and condemned – an instrument of moral uniformity. Invoking the names of those who have gone mad, such as Artaud, Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche and Van Gogh, Foucault reminds us that we are in the habit of calling this gigantic moral imprisonment the 'liberation' of the insane.

Foucault's book has a sense of great loss. It states that during the Middle Ages mad people were not locked up; indeed they possessed a certain freedom. There was a notion of the 'wise fool' – like the character in *King Lear*. Even in the eighteenth century madness had still not lost its power; but in the nineteenth century the dialogue between reason and unreason was broken. There is now only the monologue of reason *on* madness. Foucault suggests that there are dimensions that are missing in reason or, to put it in another way, there may be a wisdom in madness.

Human beings have been released from the physical chains, but these have been replaced by mental ones. One of the main themes of the book is how external violence has been replaced by internalization. The birth of the asylum can be seen as an allegory on the constitution of subjectivity. It is an indictment of modern consciousness. *Madness and Civilization* is as much concerned with the plight of everyday consciousness in the modern world as with the specific fate of those labelled insane. Foucault implies that modern forms of public provision and welfare are inseparable from ever tighter forms of social and psychological control. From the beginning, intervention and administrative control have defined the modern state.

According to Foucault madness can never be captured; madness is not exhausted by the concepts we use to describe it. His work contains the Nietzschean idea that there is more to madness than scientific categorization; but in associating freedom with madness he seems to me to romanticize madness. For Foucault, to be free would be *not* to be a rational, conscious being. Though Foucault's position is a relativist one, he actually had deep-seated preferences. Critics of Foucault asked, 'How could Foucault capture the spirit of madness when he was so obviously writing from the viewpoint of reason?'<sup>8</sup> Shouldn't he, logically, have given up writing altogether?

was related to the danger of the passions, and how madness was conceived as a form of animality to be mastered only by discipline.

Gradually in the eighteenth century confinement came to be seen as a gross error; it began to be said that charity was a cause of impoverishment and that vagabonds should seek employment. Moreover, legislators were beginning to be embarrassed because they no longer knew where to place mad people – in prison, hospital or the family. Measured by their functional value alone, the houses of confinement were a failure: when the unemployed were herded into forced-labour shops, there was less work available in neighbouring regions and so unemployment increased. Thus the houses of confinement, a social precaution clumsily formulated by a nascent industrialization, disappeared throughout Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

### *The birth of the asylum*

The legislation passed to segregate criminals and poor people from fools was prompted, as often as not, by a desire to protect the poor and the criminal from the frightening bestiality of the madman. A hallowed tradition has associated Tuke in England and Pinel in France with the liberation of the insane and the abolition of constraint. But, Foucault argues, we must be sceptical of this claim. In fact, Tuke created an asylum where the partial abolition of physical constraint was part of a system whose essential element was the constitution of a self-restraint. 'He substituted for the free terror of madness the stifling anguish of responsibility . . . The asylum no longer punished the madman's guilt, it is true, it did more, it organized that guilt.'<sup>6</sup>

The Quaker Samuel Tuke organized his Retreat so that it had a religious ethos. In it work was imposed as a moral rule, a submission to order. Instead of repression there was surveillance and judgement by 'authority'. Everything at the asylum was arranged so that the insane were transformed into minors and given rewards and punishments like children. A new system of education was applied; first the inmates were to be subjugated, then encouraged, then applied to work: 'The asylum would keep the insane in the imperative fiction of the family; the madman remains a minor, and for a long time reason will retain for him the aspect of the Father.'<sup>7</sup>

During the 'classical period' poverty, laziness, vice and madness mingled in an equal guilt within unreason. Madness during the

Most of Foucault's books are really analyses of the process of modernization. One of the characteristics of his work is the tendency to condense a general historical argument into a tracing of the emergence of specific institutions. His second main work, *The Birth of the Clinic*, is subtitled 'An Archaeology of Medical Perception'.<sup>9</sup> This perception or 'gaze' is formed by the new, untrammelled type of observation made possible for the doctor at the bedside of the hospitalized patient intersecting with a system of monitoring the state of health of the nation through the new teaching hospital.

Foucault's subsequent books, *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, deal largely with the structure of scientific discourses. (Discourses are perhaps best understood as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.) Foucault is concerned with the question, what set of rules permit certain statements to be made?

In *The Order of Things* Foucault argues that in certain empirical forms of knowledge such as biology, psychiatry, medicine, etc., the rhythms of transformation do not follow the continuist schemas of development which are normally accepted. In medicine, for example, within a period of about twenty-five years there arose a completely new way of speaking and seeing. How is it that at certain moments and in certain knowledges there are these sudden transformations? There seem to be changes in the rules of formation of statements which are accepted as scientifically true. There is a whole new 'regime' of discourse which makes possible the separation not of the true from the false but of what may be characterized as scientific from what may not be characterized as scientific.

Unlike most of Foucault's other work, *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* are not concerned with the emergence of modern forms of administration. One reason for this may be that the structuralists during the 1960s veered away from any form of political analysis and that he was influenced by them.

Looking back on his early work, Foucault conceded that what was missing was a consideration of the effects of power:

When I think back now, I ask myself what else it was that I was talking about, in *Madness and Civilization* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, but power? Yet I'm perfectly aware that I scarcely ever used the word and never had such a field of analysis at my disposal.<sup>11</sup>

In his later work, where Foucault is concerned with power and knowledge, he is much more inclined to talk about 'apparatuses'. An

apparatus is a structure of heterogeneous elements such as discourses, laws, institutions, in short, the said as much as the unsaid. The apparatus contains strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge.

#### A struggle over meaning

Foucault returned to some of the topics discussed in *Madness and Civilization* in a book which he edited twelve years later called *Pierre Rivière . . . A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century*.<sup>12</sup> One of the main themes of this 'dossier' is the problematic division between the innocence of unreason and the guilt of crime. This work is truly interdisciplinary in that one can approach it from the point of view of history, politics, literature, psychiatry, or the law.

It raises many important questions about these forms of knowledge and their interrelationship. The case of Pierre Rivière marked the border where many types of discourse, institutions and powers confronted one another. To anyone wishing to read a case study of a struggle over meaning or wanting to understand what Foucault means by a 'battle among discourses through discourses' I would recommend this book.

Pierre Rivière was, in two different ways but in virtually a single deed, an 'author'. In 1835 the twenty-year-old peasant killed his mother, his sister and his brother. While he was detained he wrote a memoir giving particulars and an explanation of the crime. Though he had received only a village education he produced a text that has beauty and eloquence. The memoir is of interest to historians and others because it raises so many questions. Frightful crimes were being committed in the countryside at that time, but what were those acts saying and why did they speak such a terrifying language? Why was parricide equated with regicide?

The life story of this obscure peasant (who resembles Julien Sorel) has considerable literary value; and as there are so many interpretations it raises the question, 'How do we read a text?' What is fascinating is that the book shows how two conflicting arguments (that advanced by the doctors and that put forward by the lawyers) could be constructed from two different accounts of Rivière's life, both of them based on the same sources of information. Of course, the frontier between rationality and madness is hard to establish, but can they coexist in the form of a partial

delusion and the lucid interval? While some people saw in Rivière's memoir a proof of rationality and therefore wanted to condemn him to the guillotine, other people saw in the memoir a sign of madness and hence wanted to isolate him in an asylum.

Some said that the same signs of madness could be found alike in the fact of premeditated murder and in the particulars of what was narrated; others said that the same signs of lucidity could be found both in the *preparation and circumstances* of the murder and in the fact that Rivière had written it down. In other words, the fact of killing and the fact of writing, the deeds done and the things narrated, coincided since they were elements of a like nature.

While the doctors presented Rivière as always having been mad, the lawyers claimed that he was always sane. The doctors stressed his 'bizarre behaviour' as a sign of his madness; lawyers, by stressing Rivière's intelligence, ascribed to him full responsibility for his crime. What was really happening in this competition between the medical and the penal authorities was an attempt to pathologize a sector of criminality. Emergent psychiatry was attempting to gain a space for its intervention and create a new apparatus. There is an interesting section in the book on how the development of the theory of limited responsibility, the existence of extenuating circumstances, opened the way in introducing not merely psychiatry but all the social and human sciences, psychology, sociology, genetics and so on, into judicial procedure.

This book, then, gives us an idea of how a particular kind of knowledge such as medicine or psychiatry is formed. Foucault tells us that the documents in the book give us a key to the relations of power, domination and conflict within which discourses emerge and function, and hence provide material for a potential analysis of discourse which may be both tactical and political and therefore strategic. In short, the book exemplifies one of Foucault's main preoccupations: the attempt to rediscover the interaction of discourses as weapons of attack and defence in the relations of power and knowledge.

### Disciplinary power

I have mentioned several times that Foucault's work owes much to Nietzsche. Many of the themes that have reappeared in post-structuralism, such as relativism and the relationship between knowledge

and power, can be found in Nietzsche's work. Foucault inverts, following Nietzsche, the common-sense view of the relation between power and knowledge. Whereas we might normally regard knowledge as providing us with power to do things that without it we could not do, Foucault argues that knowledge is a power over others, the power to define others. In his view knowledge ceases to be a liberation and becomes a mode of surveillance, regulation, discipline.

Foucault's masterpiece, *Discipline and Punish*, focuses on the moment when it became understood that it was more efficient and profitable to place people under surveillance than to subject them to some exemplary penalty. This transition in the eighteenth century corresponds to the formation of a new mode of exercise of power.<sup>13</sup> The book begins with a horrifying description of a regicide's torture and public execution. The author then describes how within eighty years vast changes occurred: torture disappeared, there was regulation of prisoners, and the new mechanisms of surveillance began to be applied in barracks, hospitals, prisons and schools.

Foucault suggests that under a feudal and monarchical system individualization is greatest at the summit of society. Power is visibly embodied in the person of the king, who has unlimited power over an anonymous body of subjects. Under this type of regime the notion of crime is still not fully distinguished from that of sacrilege, so that punishment takes the form of a ritual intended not to 'reform' the offender but to express and restore the sanctity of the law which has been broken. In general, power in feudal societies tends to be haphazard and imprecise, whereas in modern societies the agencies of punishment become part of a pervasive, impersonal system of surveillance and correction which pays an ever-increasing attention to the psychology of the individual. Intention rather than transgression now becomes the central criterion of culpability.

Let me restate Foucault's argument. In feudal societies, under *monarchical power*, the judiciary only arrested a very small proportion of criminals and it was argued that punishment must be spectacular so as to frighten the others. The new theorists of the eighteenth century objected to this: such a form of power was too costly in proportion to its results. In contrast to monarchical power, there is *disciplinary power*, a system of surveillance which is interiorized to the point that each person is his or her own overseer. Power is thus exercised continuously at a minimal cost.

Once you suppress the idea of vengeance, which previously was the

act of a sovereign threatened in his very sovereignty by the crime, punishment can only have a meaning within a technology of reform. Foucault's hypothesis is that the prison was linked from its beginning to a project for the transformation of individuals. The failure of the project was immediate and this was realized virtually from the start. People knew that prisons did not reform but on the contrary manufactured criminals and criminality. It was soon discovered that criminals could be put to good use as informers, pimps, policemen. Foucault writes that at the end of the eighteenth century people dreamed of a society without crime. And then the dream evaporated. Crime was too useful to dream of anything as dangerous as a society without crime. 'No crime means no police. What makes the presence and control of the police tolerable for the population, if not fear of the criminal?'<sup>14</sup> In short, supervised illegality was directly useful. It provided a justification and a means for the general surveillance, the policing of the entire population.

The transformation of Western societies from monarchical (or sovereign) power to disciplinary power is epitomized in Foucault's description of the Panopticon, an architectural device advocated by Jeremy Bentham towards the end of the eighteenth century. In this circular building of cells no prisoner can be certain of not being observed from the central watch-tower, and so the prisoners gradually begin to police their own behaviour.

This new mode of power, which we can call panopticism, was used first of all in schools, barracks and hospitals. People learned how to establish dossiers, systems of marking and classifying. Then there was the permanent surveillance of a group of pupils or patients; and at a certain moment in time these methods began to be generalized.

If you have already read *Discipline and Punish* you will have noticed the likeness between the Panopticon (the 'all-seeing') and the Christian God's infinite knowledge. It is also similar to Freud's concept of the super-ego as the internal monitor of unconscious wishes. Another parallel is between the Panopticon and the computer monitoring of individuals in advanced capitalism. Foucault hints that the new techniques of power were needed to grapple with the increase in population: to undertake its administration and control because of newly-arising problems of public health, hygiene, housing conditions, longevity, fertility, sex. As we shall see in a moment, sex is politically significant because it is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population.

At times *Discipline and Punish* regresses to a totalizing logic in which

the Panopticon becomes the model for all forms of domination. Moreover, though Foucault makes a powerful case against the modern prison system, he offers nothing as a constructive alternative to it. One point that puzzles me is that, according to Foucault, the Panopticon is a machine in which everyone is caught and which no one knows. What, then, is the origin of this strategy, how do these tactics arise? Foucault does not give a clear answer; he merely states that all these tactics were invented and organized from the starting points of local conditions and particular needs, that they took shape in piecemeal fashion, prior to any class strategy.

### Technical rationality

What was the problem that really worried Foucault? Bourgeois thought stresses the idea of the conscious subject who calculates means and ends. The subject is rational, autonomous and capable of initiating action. But the more autonomous one becomes the more important the criterion of means and ends becomes. Now, the work of Foucault has often been compared with that of Max Weber, one of whose central themes was rationalization. Weber held that action could be rational in its ends or its means. Bureaucracies stressed efficiency of means. In impersonal, bureaucratic organizations reason was shaped into scientific rationality. The objective of scientific rationality is to gain mastery over the physical and the social environment. Weber, following Nietzsche, argued that scientific rationality focused on means but not on ends. Instrumental reason cannot tell us anything about how to live our lives. In a sense Foucault reiterates the fears of (Nietzsche and) Weber: science uncovers the mythology in the world, but science itself is a myth which has to be superseded. Scientific knowledge has brought about a disenchantment of the world. Means can be calculated with efficiency – this is what is called technical rationality – but ends, values, become increasingly problematic to determine. One effect of the rise of technical or instrumental rationality is the process of reification which has produced disenchantment.

This analysis is in some ways close to the one made by the 'critical theorists' of the Frankfurt School. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, much influenced by Weber, analysed the capitalist economy as merely one form of the autonomous dynamic of a means-end rationality. This makes possible not only an unprecedented increase

in the forces of production, and therefore in the domination of external nature, but also in the domination of human beings who are adapted to the system of production through social engineering and psychological manipulation. According to Adorno and Horkheimer the calculating instrumental rationality required of the subject in its struggle to gain independence from the overwhelming powers of external nature requires a corresponding repression of the spontaneity of inner nature.<sup>15</sup> For Weber and the Frankfurt School the social forms engendered by (technical or) instrumental rationality represent a profounder threat to human freedom than class oppression. Adorno and Horkheimer believed that even the space for individual responsibility and initiative, which was opened during the early phases of capitalism, is now closed by the administered society.

Foucault, too, was worried about the productivity and efficiency of those instrumental-rational forms of organization which Weber detected in modern bureaucracies and in the capitalist organization of the labour process. Foucault's view that power cannot be considered a possession of groups or individuals should be understood in the light of Weber's account of the transition from 'traditional' to 'legal-rational' forms of domination. That is to say, power in modern societies does not depend upon the prowess and prestige of individuals but is exercised through an impersonal administrative machinery operating in accordance with abstract rules.

### Sexuality and power

Foucault is generally known as the historian who stresses discontinuities. But in fact, when he writes about other thinkers he often emphasizes the continuities in their work. For example, at the time Althusser was emphasizing the epistemological break in Marx's work (separating the early 'ideological' texts from the later anti-humanist, economic work) Foucault argued that Marx's concepts were only a development of those of David Ricardo and, what is more, that Marxism fitted into nineteenth-century thought like a fish in water; that is, it was unable to breathe anywhere else. Similarly, Freud's work does not represent a radical break; psychoanalysis is, in fact, an episode in the machinery of the confession. (By confession Foucault means all those procedures by which subjects are incited to produce a discourse of truth about their sexuality which is capable of having effects on the subjects

themselves.) In the usual histories one reads that sexuality was ignored by medicine and psychiatry and that at last Freud discovered the sexual origin of neuroses. Now everyone knows, says Foucault, that that is not true; the problem of sexuality was massively inscribed in the medicine and psychiatry of the nineteenth century.

Psychoanalysis was established in opposition to a certain kind of psychiatry, the psychiatry of degeneracy, eugenics and heredity. In relation to that psychiatry psychoanalysis played a liberating role; some of its activities, however, have the function of control and normalization. In Foucault's view psychoanalysis grew out of the institutionalization of confessional procedures which has been so characteristic of our civilization. Viewed over a shorter span of time, it forms part of that medicalization of sexuality which is another phenomenon of the West.

These are some of the views expressed in *The History of Sexuality; Volume One: An Introduction*.<sup>16</sup> One of the main points of the book is that sexuality is far more a positive product of power than power was ever repression of sexuality. Foucault states that we have only had sexuality since the eighteenth century, and sex since the nineteenth. What we had before that was, no doubt, the flesh.

Foucault argues that at one time the Christian confession was the locus of sexuality. In the Middle Ages the priest was concerned with what people did; the faithful were asked in detail about their sexual activities. In that period sexuality, in the understanding of society, concerned only the body. With the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation the discourse on sexuality takes another form. In the confession the priest begins to inquire not only about actions but also about intentions. Sexuality begins to be defined in terms of the mind as well as the body. This is similar to the pattern of change discovered by Foucault in his history of crime and punishment; there also, discourse intensifies from a concern with action and the body to a concern with the mind and its intentions.

Foucault's work shows how in the eighteenth century processes of training and regulation of human bodies emerged in a wide range of specific institutional locations: in factories, prisons and schools. The overall outcome of these disciplinary practices were bodies that were useful and docile, productive and subjected. And then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the discourse on sex became a matter of science. Foucault's main example of a modern discourse on sexuality, a new scientific confessional, is psychoanalysis. He says that by positing a

sexual instinct Freud opened up a new realm for the domination of science over sexuality.

Foucault draws attention to the dissolution of the forms of group identity characteristic of traditional societies, and their replacement by a form of identity which depends increasingly upon the capacity of the individual to reflect upon and articulate the domain of private experience. It is an attack on what he calls 'the repressive hypothesis', the assumption that the asceticism and work discipline of bourgeois society demanded a repression of sexuality. The sexual-repression hypothesis is associated with Wilhelm Reich and the Frankfurt School. Reich's story, to put it simply, is that with the onset of capitalism there was an increasing repression and confinement of (natural) human sexuality. The authoritarian bourgeois father, devoted obsessively to accumulating capital, hoarded his energies for the market place and the factory. Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* opens with an attack on this Freud-Marxist position. He claims that it was precisely during this period that there was 'a veritable explosion' of discourses about sexuality in, for example, medical, psychiatric and educational theories and the practices that were both informed and presupposed by these discourses.

Foucault's main objection to the repressive hypothesis is its reliance upon a negative conception of power as prohibition or limitation. Against this he maintains that since the eighteenth century power has become increasingly positive or productive, involving the careful construction of new capacities rather than the repression or removal of pre-existing ones. The fundamental thesis of the book is that sexuality is not a natural reality but the product of a system of discourses and practices which form part of the intensifying surveillance and control of the individual. Foucault suggests that liberation is a form of servitude, since our apparently 'natural' sexuality is in fact a product of power.

Foucault's primary objective is to provide a critique of the way modern societies control and discipline their populations by sanctioning the knowledge claims and practices of the human sciences: medicine, psychiatry, psychology, criminology and sociology. The human sciences have established certain norms and these are reproduced and legitimized through the practices of teachers, social workers, doctors, judges, policemen and administrators. The human sciences have made man a subject of study and a subject of the state. There has been an unrelenting expansion of rationalized systems of administration and social control. It is time to examine Foucault's theory of power.

### Power and knowledge

In structuralism all relations were seen as linguistic, symbolic, discursive. After a while such a linguistic model was seen to be limited and some theorists became increasingly interested in power. Foucault's writings are an example of this trend. His work in the 1960s focused on language and the constitution of the subject in discourse. The individual subject was an empty entity, an intersection of discourses. In his later work Foucault shifted from linguistic determination to the view that individuals are constituted by power relations, power being the ultimate principle of social reality.

Foucault remarked that Nietzsche's contemporary presence is increasingly important. It was Nietzsche who specified the power relation as the general focus, whereas for Marx it was the production relation. Nietzsche is the philosopher of power, a philosopher who managed to think of power without having to confine himself within a political theory in order to do so. Historians have studied those who held power and there have been many anecdotal histories of kings and generals; contrasted with this there has been the history of economic processes. Again distinct from this we have histories of institutions. But power in its strategies and its mechanisms has never been studied. What has been studied even less is the relation between power and knowledge. It is, of course, the interdependence of power and knowledge (*gouvernement*) that constitutes the strategic fulcrum of Foucault's later work.

Traditionally, power has often been thought of in negative terms and been seen as an essentially judicial mechanism: as that which lays down the law, which limits, obstructs, refuses, prohibits and censors. It presupposes a sovereign whose role is to forbid: to have power is to say no. And the challenging of power thus conceived can appear only as transgression.

This is the view that Foucault accepted in his early work; but by around 1971-2 he realized that the question of power needed to be reformulated. He replaced a judicial, negative conception of power with a technical and strategic one. This positive view can be seen in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*. Modern power operates through the construction of 'new' capacities and modes of activity rather than through the limitation of pre-existing ones.

Foucault argues that power is not a possession or a capacity.<sup>17</sup> It is not something subordinate to or in the service of the economy. He insists that relations of power do not emanate from a sovereign or a state; nor

should power be conceptualized as the property of an individual or class. Power is not simply a commodity which may be acquired or seized. Rather it has the character of a network; its threads extend everywhere. Foucault suggests that an analysis of power should concentrate not on the level of conscious intention but on the point of application of power. In other words, he wants to shift attention from questions such as 'Who has power?' or 'What intentions or aims do power holders have?' to the processes by which subjects are constituted as effects of power.

He rejects analyses which locate the source of origin of power within a structure or an institution at a centre or summit. Foucault's view calls into question the Marxist notion of conflict between a ruling class and a subordinate class. Foucault states that the mechanisms, techniques and procedures of power were not invented by the bourgeoisie, were not the creation of a class seeking to exercise effective forms of domination; rather they were deployed from the moment that they revealed their political and economic utility for the bourgeoisie.

For Foucault, then, conceiving of power as repression, constraint or prohibition is inadequate: power 'produces reality'; it 'produces domains of objects and rituals of truth'. Foucault remarks that we often hear the cliché 'power makes mad', but we should consider the fact that the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge. Conversely, knowledge induces effects of power. It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.

I now want to say something about Foucault's views on power and the role of intellectuals. Foucault's constant emphasis on power and on discourse provides a unifying core to his work. As I implied above, Foucault argues that power no longer operates through a straightforward 'top-down' mechanism where those in authority exert various forms of coercive restraint upon the mass of more or less compliant subjects. In his view complex differential power relationships extend to every aspect of our social, cultural and political lives, involving all manner of (often contradictory) 'subject-positions', and securing our assent not so much by the threat of punitive sanctions as by persuading us to internalize the norms and values that prevail within the social order.

Foucault asserts that we should not view the subject as the knowing, willing, autonomous, self-critical or 'transcendental' subject of Kantian discourse. We should now understand the subject as a locus of multiple, dispersed or decentred discourses. The death of the 'transcendental

subject' removed the very ground of truth-telling moral authority that Noam Chomsky and Jean-Paul Sartre occupied.

Foucault is highly critical of those 'universal' intellectuals (like Sartre) who know a lot about a specialized topic and then exploit their position in order to pose as the intellectual conscience of their age. In contrast, he believes in 'specific intellectuals', those who work in particular, well-defined areas of local expertise. This seems to go with his belief in the micro-politics of localized struggles and specific power relations. Specific intellectuals do not have universalist aspirations.

In Foucault's view, intellectuals now have to acknowledge that the Enlightenment was one particular historically dated and culture-specific discourse whose truth-claims and values amounted to no more than a transient episode in the modern history of ideas. History is often used to describe a homogenizing approach to the past and is often associated with a master narrative. In contrast, Foucault adopts a Nietzschean or genealogical perspective which treats all truth-claims as products of the ubiquitous will-to-power within language, discourse or representation.

### Foucault and Althusser

Foucault's thesis that subjects are constituted by power derives from Nietzsche (who remarked that an internalized moral control of behaviour can only be inculcated through threats and violence).<sup>18</sup> Like Nietzsche Foucault analyses the transition from a state of overt violence and brutality to a condition of internalized restraint. As I said earlier, Foucault argues that the physical confinement and repression that occurred in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries left a greater power and freedom to madness than modern methods of treatment, which aim at transforming the consciousness of the insane. Where formerly there had been the 'free terror of madness' there now reigns the 'stifling anguish of responsibility'. This regime of incessant observation and judgement forms the conditions for the internalization of morality. As Peter Dews has observed, what Foucault is really talking about here is not the specific regime of the modern asylum but the makings of modern subjectivity.<sup>19</sup>

Foucault is against the philosophical tradition which takes for granted that human subjects are responsible and autonomous. He is critical of the notion of the subject throughout his work. You will remember that in

specificity of mechanisms of power. He writes: 'The project, tactics, and goals to be adopted are a matter for those who do the fighting. What the intellectual can do is to provide instruments of analysis, and at present this is the historian's essential role.'<sup>27</sup>

Foucault thinks that many people are obsessed with a determination to make a science out of Marxism. He is particularly critical of those Marxists who say, 'Marxism, as the science of sciences, can provide the theory of science and draw the boundary between science and ideology.'<sup>28</sup> Those who are trying to establish the scientificity of Marxism he asks, 'What types of knowledge do you want to disqualify in the very instant of your demand: "Is it a science?"'<sup>29</sup> In his view the method of genealogy involves a painstaking rediscovery of struggles, an attack on the tyranny of what he calls 'totalizing discourses' and a rediscovery of 'fragmented, subjugated, local and specific knowledge'. It is directed against great truths and grand theories. But he provides no grounds for distinguishing between different struggles and does not seem to be able to commit himself to a conception of the human good.<sup>30</sup>

### Some criticisms of Foucault's work

Having outlined some of Foucault's arguments against Marxism, I now want to make some criticisms of his work. The first criticism is this: Foucault refuses to be committed to a general ontology of history, society or the human subject, or to advance any general theory of power. Many commentators, however, believe that this is precisely his strength; his value lies in *particular* analyses (of the clinic, the asylum, the prison). While there is much that is valuable and insightful in these studies, it must be admitted that Foucault's refusal to deal with epistemological questions means that it is difficult to evaluate them. As he does not present his own methodological protocols we do not know what standards should be used to assess his work.<sup>31</sup> What are the procedures by which one archaeologist of knowledge can confirm or question the analyses of another? If we are to engage seriously with Foucault's writings, considerable theoretical work on his epistemological and ontological protocols will have to be done.

In his writings Foucault often describes a coherent rational strategy, but it is not possible to identify a person who conceived it. It seems to be *a strategy without a subject*. In an interview Foucault was asked who or

what it is that co-ordinates the activities of agents. His reply, in my opinion, does not answer the question:

Take the example of philanthropy in the early nineteenth century: people appear who make it their business to involve themselves in other people's lives, health, nutrition, housing; then, out of this confused set of functions there emerge certain personages, institutions, forms of knowledge: public hygiene, inspectors, social workers, psychologists. And we are now seeing a whole proliferation of different categories of social work.<sup>32</sup>

Consider another example: the strategy for the moralization of the working class. Foucault insists that one cannot say that the bourgeois class (on the level of its ideology or its economic project) invented and forcibly imposed this strategy on the working class.<sup>33</sup> The objective existed and the strategy was developed with ever-growing coherence but without it being necessary to attribute to it a subject.

The Panopticon is Foucault's apt metaphor for the anonymous centralization of power. But what is the principle, force or entity which power crushes or subdues? In other words, what does this modern power operate against? How would a situation change if an operation of power was cancelled? Foucault is vague in his replies to these questions. He has difficulty in defining what this power operates against. It seems that power is almost a metaphysical principle. Power is everywhere: it filters up from below, it is produced at every moment. Now, though he remarks that wherever there is power there is resistance, he offers no grounds for encouraging resistance or struggle. This is partly because he believes that there is no constant human subject in history. History does not reveal the gradual triumph of human rationality, nor does it fulfil an ultimate goal. History is uncontrolled and directionless.

In an interview Foucault was asked: 'Given that there are relations of forces and struggles, the question inevitably arises of who is doing the struggling and against whom?' He replied: 'This is preoccupying me. I'm not sure what the answer is.' The interviewer persisted: 'So who ultimately are the subjects who oppose each other?' Foucault answered:

This is just a hypothesis, but I would say it's all against all. There aren't immediately given subjects of the struggle, one the proletariat, the other the bourgeoisie. Who fights against whom? We all fight each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights something else.<sup>34</sup>

Underlying Foucault's work there seem to be the following presuppositions: One, social power is omnipotent with respect to the psychic formation of the individual. Two, human individuals exist merely as an embodied nexus to be transformed by the deployment of external causal powers. This ontology is immediately qualified by Foucault. Power, he says, always produces resistance. But the question is, why should it? If power cannot be identified with repression (Foucault insists that it is both productive and regulative), what is the mechanism that generates resistance? Why do people resist? Why do they obey? People obey laws because of external reasons (physical force) or because of internal reasons (ideology). Foucault says that people obey or resist for *many* reasons. This may not seem very helpful, but perhaps his work reminds us that we should avoid easy answers.

When Foucault was pressed to explain resistance he was forced back to saying that there is 'something in the social body, in classes, groups, and individuals themselves which in some sense escapes relations of power . . . an inverse energy, a discharge . . . a plebeian quality or aspect'.<sup>35</sup> It is not surprising that Nicos Poulantzas scorned this attempt to ground resistance in an essentialized, absolutized, externalized spirit of refusal. In short, though the phrase 'wherever there is power there is resistance' is an appealing one, there is no doubt that 'resistance' is really a residual category in Foucault's work. It remains unanalysed.

One useful way of thinking about Foucault has been provided by Poulantzas, who found Foucault helpful as a theorist of specific techniques of power and of aspects of the state, but who carefully rejected his more general theoretical project. Poulantzas conceded that Foucault's analysis of normalization and the state's role in shaping corporality was superior to his own. Indeed, there are several interesting parallels between the work of Poulantzas and Foucault.<sup>36</sup> The latter considered that power is immanent in all social relations; Poulantzas also argued that all social relations are relations of power. Both theorists adopt a relational approach to power and explore the links between power and strategies. They also agree that power is productive rather than simply repressive and negative. Another similarity is their interest in 'micro-revolts'. Foucault emphasized that there is a multiplicity of dispersed micro-power relations. Poulantzas, too, was interested in the autonomous role of new social movements but he focused more on the question of how such micro-diversity culminates into the macro-necessity of bourgeois domination.

In spite of these similar interests Poulantzas goes on to make some

trenchant criticisms. In his view Foucault neglects to study the modern form of the state and how it is derived from capitalist relations of production. He does not see that all social phenomena always occur in relation to the state and class division. To put this in another way, Foucault disregards the fact that domination has its basis in the relations of production and exploitation and in the organization of the state.

Foucault exaggerates the importance of disciplinary techniques in the modern state and thus neglects the continued importance of violence, legal coercion and law in general. Poulantzas argues that law and the state are each characterized equally by negative and positive features. The law is not only involved in organizing repression but is also essential for reproducing consent. Likewise the state is not only involved in repression and police measures, it is also active in constituting social relations and winning mass support.

According to Poulantzas Foucault emphasizes only the repressive, prohibitive side of law and the positive productive side of (state) power. In emphasizing the internalized repression achieved through disciplinary normalization, Foucault ignores the direct role coercion plays in sustaining the web of disciplinary and ideological mechanisms as well as the continued importance of overt violence in the state's activities. On the other hand, some commentators have remarked that the tacit social theory of *Discipline and Punish* describes all social relations in terms of power, domination and subordination and that Foucault neglects aspects of human sociability, in the family and in civil society generally, which are based on co-operation and reciprocity.<sup>37</sup>

Let me now try to summarize the main points. Foucault's historical analyses of specific institutions focus on the themes of centralization, increasing efficiency (technical rationality), and the replacement of overt violence by moralization. Power in modern societies is essentially orientated towards the production of regimented, isolated and self-policing subjects. According to Foucault power is everywhere. The idea that 'power' is located at, or emanates from, a given point seems to him to be based on a misguided analysis. In his view power is not always exercised from above in a negative or repressive way but is an open cluster of relations. Power is not an institution, a structure, or a certain force with which certain people are endowed; it is a name given to a complex strategic relation in a given society. All social relations are power relations. But if all social relations are power relations, how do we choose between one society and another?

When Foucault had to answer a question such as this he became

evasive. Theoretically he had put himself in a situation where he could not use terms like equality, freedom, justice. These concepts are merely tokens in a game, in an interplay of forces. This is a viewpoint very much like that of Nietzsche (who wrote 'when the oppressed want justice it is just a pretext for the fact that they want power for themselves'). History, according to this view, is an endless play of domination.

I said earlier that Foucault does not conceptualize power in terms of the state or the intentionality of an agent, as a property or a possession, or as purely repressive. His analyses of power employ a conception of power as positive, productive and relational. It has been said that Foucault is trapped within a logical 'impasse'. Given his conception of power, there can be no escape, no locus of opposition or resistance, because *power itself has no specific basis or ground*.<sup>38</sup>

According to Foucault the existence of power relations presupposes forms of resistance. Just as power is present everywhere in the social network, so is resistance; there are a multiplicity of resistances which are constantly shifting and regrouping. Foucault does not say more than this. *The concept of resistance remains undeveloped*.

Additionally, *an analysis of the state is absent from his work*. Foucauldians like Donzelot have deliberately decentred the question of the state. They do not believe that the state is the locus or prime operator of power. To put it in another way, they have suspended assumptions concerning the unity, functionality and importance of the state.

Moreover, Foucault believes that it is no longer feasible to conceptualize relations of power simply in terms of the state, class struggle, relations of production and capitalist exploitation. And so it is not surprising that Foucault *underestimates the significance of social class and class struggle and neglects the role of law and physical repression*. He is so concerned with the anonymity of modern forms of administration that he neglects class domination.

Foucault's philosophy is embedded in the historical analyses that have been described. It is rooted in story-telling. Foucault neither claims nor seeks scientific status for his analyses. I refer to the fact that he said that his histories — which seek to forge connections, establish relationships and transcend the established — were fictions:

I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth . . .<sup>39</sup>

There are different systems or 'regimes' of truth; truth is conventional. Foucault wants to avoid questions of epistemology and so in his work truth plays no part in the transformation of knowledges. Instead he celebrates, like Nietzsche, the perspectivity of knowledge.

Foucault is acutely aware that there are different sorts of knowledge; there is disqualified knowledge, knowledge not only from above but from below. His claim that truth is always relative is not easy to accept. It is because of this position that he cannot say that one historical period or society or theory is better than another. This, of course, raises the question: from what position is Foucault able to write his own descriptions? What is the status of his own theory?

#### *A feminist criticism*

Some perceptive criticisms of Foucault's work have been made by Rosi Braidotti from a feminist perspective.<sup>40</sup> She contrasts the work of Foucault with that of Irigaray. She writes that Foucault elaborates a critique that remains within the confines of sexual sameness, whereas Irigaray is arguing for sexual difference, otherness, as a strategy for the assertion of feminine subjectivity.

Braidotti begins by reminding us that over a century ago Nietzsche stated that all decadent, diseased and corrupted cultures acquired a taste for 'the feminine'. She says that the feminine is often used as the sign, the metaphor or the symptom of illness, disorientation or crisis, and that this habit must be questioned. There is a kind of (male) philosophical thought at the present time that has a fascination for 'the feminine' but it neglects the dynamic impact of the women's movement. There seems to be a collision between patriarchal assumptions about the feminine and the existential reality of women's lives and thought. Let us now consider Foucault's blindness to sexual difference. Foucault's central theme is the critical, historical analysis of the modes of constitution of the subject: the ways in which, in our culture, human beings are made into subjects.<sup>41</sup> He outlines three main modes of objectification, which transform human beings into subjects. These correspond to different stages of his work.

In the first phase (*The Order of Things, The Archaeology of Knowledge*) Foucault analyses the type of discourse which claims the status of science, especially in the field of the human sciences. His work leads him to the critique of the role that the 'knowing subject' plays in the history of Western philosophy.

to elaborate a modern ethics, one suited to the here and now of our place of enunciation. Foucault declares that we are historically condemned to rethink the basis of our relationship to the values that we have inherited, especially from the nineteenth century.

In contrast, Irigaray stresses sexual difference as a way of asserting female subjectivity. (Her work will be fully discussed in Chapter 5 on French feminist theory.) She believes that conceptual thinking is not neutral but very gender-specific. Irigaray's project, in short, concerns the question: how can we learn to think differently about human subjectivity and alterity?

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show that Foucault was especially concerned with how knowledge is enmeshed in disciplinary power. He rejected the traditional liberal view that power interferes with the free formation of truth. For Foucault power is necessary for the production of knowledge and is an inherent feature of all social relationships. I want particularly to stress the fact that Foucault believed that Marxism was authoritarian and outmoded: 'one must try to think of struggle and its forms, objectives, means and processes in terms of a logic free of the sterilising constraints of the dialectic'.<sup>43</sup> His many followers, both in France and internationally, have propagated this view. Nietzsche's thought influenced Foucault so deeply that it is not surprising that he rejected Marx's view of economics, history, politics and method. In the next chapter I will consider the influence of Nietzsche's thought on some of the 'younger generation' of post-structuralist thinkers.

### Further reading

H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982.

An excellent book; it is an accessible and comprehensive exposition and discussion of the main works. The authors are particularly interested in Foucault's effort to develop a new method. It also contains an important Afterword by Foucault, 'The Subject and Power'.

C. Gordon, 'Birth of the Subject - Foucault' in R. Edgley and R. Osborne (eds), *Radical Philosophy Reader*, London: Verso, 1985.

The second phase of Foucault's work (*Madness and Civilization*, *Birth of the Clinic*, to *Discipline and Punish*) deals with the constitution of the subject through what he calls 'the dividing practices': exclusion, separation and domination within oneself as well as towards the others. Foucault states that the modes in which human beings are made into subjects in our culture rest on a complex network of power relations, which he defines in terms of 'the microphysics of power'. In his view the body is the privileged target of the mechanisms of power relations; it must be made docile, submissive, erotic, usable and productive.<sup>42</sup>

In the third phase of Foucault's work (*The History of Sexuality*) he concentrates on the ways in which a human being turns him/herself into a subject: the internal modes of submission and domination by the subject.

Braidotti argues that in his early texts Foucault's androcentric bias is manifest; he uses the term 'man' as a universal form, thus betraying his blindness to sexual difference. In his later works, however, he is conscious of the fact that the system of control of sexuality which he is analysing rests on a profound dissymmetry between the sexes. In short, he is aware of the *disqualification* of women as ethical agents and consequently as subjects.

Arguing that governing oneself, managing one's estate and participating in the administration of the city were three practices of the same kind, Foucault emphasizes the key value of 'ethical virility' as the ideal on which the system as a whole rests. In turn this implies perfect coincidence between one's anatomical sex - male - and the imaginary construction of masculine sexuality. Moreover, he stresses the accordance of both to the ruling representations of what ought to be the universal ethical standard: symbolic virility. Thus the male body is all at one with the body politic.

Braidotti remarks that it is a world for and about men. In her view the whole history of philosophy we have come to inherit has been conjugated in the male, masculine and virile mode. Foucault is a male philosopher who is bringing out the highly sexed rules governing philosophical discourse. Far from being universal, philosophy rests on the most gender-specific premises: those which posit the primacy of masculine sexuality as a site of social and political power. In Foucault's last work phallogocentric discourse is a specific political and libidinal economy - one which assigns the sexes to precise roles, and functions, to the detriment of the feminine.

In Braidotti's view Foucault elaborates a critique which emphasizes sexual sameness. What ultimately interests Foucault is the attempt to try

A useful discussion of the main themes in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*.

D. Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. An important collection of thirteen essays which are critical discussions of Foucault's archaeology, epistemology, ethics, politics, his views on power and the Enlightenment by writers such as Ian Hacking, Richard Rorty, Jürgen Habermas, Edward Said, Barry Smart, Martin Jay, Mark Poster and others. For more advanced work.

L. Martin, H. Gutman and P. Hulon (eds), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, London: Tavistock, 1988.

This interesting and readable book contains an interview with Foucault, two lectures by him on the differing ways in which self is formulated and becomes an object of knowledge, and five essays on this topic by other contributors.

J. G. Merquior, *Foucault*, London: Fontana Press, 1985.

There is a discussion of all the main texts in this lively critical assessment. It contains many cogent criticisms of Foucault's work, especially in the last chapter, 'Portrait of the Neo-Anarchist'.

M. Poster, *Foucault, Marxism, and History: Mode of Production versus Mode of Information*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984.

An interesting and accessible book. After a critique of Marxism and the dialectic, the author introduces Nietzsche's view of history (genealogy). There is then a clear discussion of two works – *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* – which exemplify a Nietzschean approach to history.

A. Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, London: Tavistock, 1980.

Still one of the best – and most readable – introductions to the whole of Foucault's work.

B. Smart, *Foucault, Marxism and Critique*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

The first half of this book emphasizes the limits and limitations of Marxism. Smart sees the necessity of deploying other modes of analysis. The second half is a commentary on the work of Foucault, his views on power, the state, discipline. I found the comparison of the work of Max Weber with that of Foucault useful.

The following books discuss Foucault from a feminist point of view:

J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge, 1990.

N. Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.

L. McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.