

6 From the Repressive Hypothesis to Bio-Power

historical particulars of Foucault's account, we attempt to outline Foucault's historical material in as clear a form as seems appropriate. This entails leaving out the great quantity of minutiae and the meticulous layering by which Foucault, the genealogist, seeks to demonstrate specificity, local variation, and texture. It also omits some of the labyrinthine presentation with which Foucault covers his historical tracks. Our aim is not to resolve matters of fact but to be clear about the type of approach Foucault is pursuing. If this is made more accessible, then perhaps some of the debate about the idiosyncrasies of Foucault's presentation of events might at least take place in a context whose contours are known to participants on both sides.

Foucault clearly owes us a more explicit account of how he is proceeding in many areas. The limits and standards of evidence, refutation, and interpretation presumably exist for his interpretive analytics or his history of the present, but they can only be guessed at if one uses Foucault's own books as exemplars. This does not mean that Foucault owes us a theory of history or a manual of methodology. But as his interpretations gain more adherents and become—as they already have—stimuli to research, these problems will have to be thematized more explicitly or else they will all too likely be incorporated into empiricist historical procedures. (This latter eventuality is not something Foucault can prevent, but he obviously does not want to lend his support to this development. His silence does not help his cause. What may be an effective tactic in the intellectual field of Paris takes on a rather different function in the halls of American academia.)

The two interconnected concepts around which Foucault organizes his writing of the 1970s are the repressive hypothesis and bio-technico-power (or bio-power). In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues against the repressive hypothesis (the view that truth is intrinsically opposed to power and therefore inevitably plays a liberating role.) This position in the name of a more radical individual or school. It is

tion is not directly attributed to any parodic individual or source—set up as a kind of *Nietzschean* parody of current received opinion—at least for French leftist circles. (As with the historical accounts Foucault gives us, there is also a form of French provincialism in his theoretical claims. Although other countries are certainly mentioned—examples are drawn from England and America, among others—the bulk of the historical material, its real frame of reference, and the theoretical opponents Foucault secretly jousts with are all French.) But it should also be understood that *The History of Sexuality* is a broad overview of a larger project that will take many years to complete. Therefore the general interpretation Foucault presents should be considered to be an interpretive exaggeration, a way of setting out markers of terrain to be covered, issues to be confronted, connivances to be recast, and figures to be reevaluated.

The return to an analysis of social practices is found in the lectures, interviews, and books that Foucault published in the 1970s. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1977), he presents important parts of a far-reaching interpretation of modernity. In this section of our book, we lay out a synoptic overview of Foucault's general story, an account which, not surprisingly, follows the broad line of argumentation used here. We should stress that Foucault has never presented his work in quite this form. His work is still very much in a process of change and refinement. There are areas of uncleanness and sketchiness which can be read either as confusion or, more sympathetically, as problems he has opened up for further exploration, either by his subsequent work or by others.

The relations between the historical details Foucault chooses to emphasize and the more standard historiography also remain problematic and controversial.¹ As we are in no position to evaluate the detailed subsequent work of other scholars,

1. There is obviously no simple appeal to the facts involved in evaluating Foucault's historical theses. Within the historical profession in France the evaluation of his work is sharply divided. In *L'Impossibile Prison* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1980) a group of nineteenth century specialists discuss *Discipline and Punish*. Their reactions vary from cautious to condescending although they succeed in demonstrating very few places where Foucault is not in control of 'the facts.' As Foucault caustically points out, most of these historians have misunderstood his argument and hence even their minor factual corrections are simply beside the point. This was clearly an occasion missed; one would hope for a more fruitful and perceptive historical attention to detail than the one presented there. On the other hand, Paul Veyne, Professor of Roman History at the Collège de France, in an essay entitled "Foucault révolutionne l'histoire" (in *Comment on Ecrit L'Histoire*, Editions de Seuil, 1978) praises Foucault as a historian for his brilliance, his precision, and his historical acumen.

Against the foil of the repressive hypothesis, Foucault develops a strikingly different interpretation of the relations of sex, truth, power, the body, and the individual. He calls this alternative synthesis biotechnico-power or bio-power. The juxtaposition of the repressive hypothesis and bio-power serves us here as a means of laying out the main issues one encounters in Foucault's work. Gilles Deleuze has said cryptically that Foucault should be seen not as a historian, but as a new kind of map-maker—maps made for use not to mirror the terrain.

The Repressive Hypothesis

Stated broadly, the repressive hypothesis holds that through European history we have moved from a period of relative openness about our bodies and our speech to an ever-increasing repression and hypocrisy. During the seventeenth century, or so the story goes, a lively frankness still prevailed: "It was a time of direct gestures, shameless discourse, and open transgressions, when anatomies were shown and intermingled at will, and knowing children hung about amid the laughter of adults" (HS 3). By the middle of the nineteenth century things had altered dramatically—and for the worse. The laughter was replaced by the "monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie." Sexuality, or what was left of it, was now confined to the home, and even there it was restricted to the parents' bedroom. A rule of silence was imposed. Censorship reigned. What sex there was became joyless and utilitarian. In the nuclear family, it was geared only to reproduction. The exclusion of all acts, speech, and desires which did not conform to a strict, repressive, and hypocritical code was strictly enforced. The law, repression, and the basest of utilities held sway. This logic obtained even at the fringes of Victorian society where concessions to licentiousness and debauchery were grudgingly made. Even there, or especially there, a policed and profitable trade was allowed to be the exception which confirmed the rule. The counter-Victorians only reaffirmed the triumph of the dour moralism represented by the unsmiling queen.

For those who hold it, the great attraction of this view of repression is that it is so easily linked with the rise of capitalism. "The minor chronicle of sex and its trials is transposed into the ceremonious history of the modes of production; its trifling aspect fades from view" (HS 5). Sex was repressed because it was incompatible with the work ethic demanded by the capitalist order. All energies had to be harnessed to production. The dialectic of history neatly weaves the trivial and the profound into one whole cloth. Sexuality is only an appendage to the real story of history—the rise of capitalism—but it is an important one, since repression is the general form of domination under capitalism.

Still, the tables could be turned on Foucault rather easily here. If one

substituted the word "power" for the word "production" in the above quotation it would not be an unjust characterization of Foucault's project. Though Foucault is not attempting to uncover the laws of history, nor to deny the importance of capitalism, he is trying to show us the importance that sexuality has recently attained in our civilization, precisely because of its links with power. Since, as we shall see, he does not think that there is a transhistorical, cross-cultural sexuality, he will be at pains to show that our sexuality is linked to something else. This "something else" turns out, at least in part, to be specific forms of power. How to develop a view of power that does not turn into an underlying essence, a metaphysical notion, or an empty catchall is the central problem confronting Foucault's recent work.

(Another inherent appeal of the repressive hypothesis is the conclusion that sexual liberation or resistance to repression would be an important battle to fight, albeit a hard one to win.) Even Freud made only minor gains in this view, for his work was quickly recuperated through its inclusion in the scientific establishment of medicine and psychiatry. It is certainly the case that, since the nineteenth century, (speaking openly and defiantly about sexuality has come to be seen in and of itself as an attack on repression, as an inherently political act.) After all, sexual liberation and the overthrow of capitalism are still considered to be on the same political agenda. By this argument, when we speak of sex we are denying established power. We offer ourselves the "opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation and manifold pleasures; to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervor of knowledge, the determination to change the laws, and the longing for the garden of earthly delights" (HS 7). Who could resist?

(The repressive hypothesis is anchored in a tradition which sees power only as constraint, negativity, and coercion. As a systematic refusal to accept reality, as a repressive instrument, as a ban on truth, the repressive forces of power prevent or at least distort the formation of knowledge. Power does this by suppressing desire, fostering false consciousness, promoting ignorance, and using a host of other devices. Since it fears the truth, power must suppress it.)

It follows that power as repression is best opposed by the truth of discourse. When the truth is spoken, when the transgressive voice of liberation is raised, then, supposedly, repressive power is challenged. Truth itself would not be totally devoid of power, but its power is at the service of charity, nondomination, and one form or another of higher good, even if the higher good is nothing more substantive than clarity. Even though Foucault is presenting parodies here, they are often close to the

target. Perhaps the most sophisticated counter-project available today, that of Jürgen Habermas, argues for a quasi-transcendental concept of reason as a means of criticizing and resisting the distortions of domination.

Foucault calls this view of power the "juridico-discursive". It is thoroughly negative; power and truth are entirely external to each other. Power produces nothing but "limit and lack." It lays down the law, and the juridical discourse then limits and circumscribes. Punishment for disobedience is always close at hand. Power is everywhere the same: "It operates according to the simple and endless reproduced mechanisms of law, taboo and censorship" (HS 84). Power is domination. All it can do is forbid, and all it can command is obedience. Power, ultimately, is repression, ultimately, is the imposition of the law; the law, ultimately, demands submission.

Foucault offers two additional reasons why this view of power has been so readily accepted into our discourse. First, there is what he calls the speaker's bent (HS 67). In the pose of the universal intellectual which, he tells us, will surely be better. The tone of prophecy and promised pleasure neatly mesh. After all, to utter truths and promise bliss is a not unattractive position from which to speak. The intellectual as spokesman for conscience and consciousness locates himself in this privileged spot. He is outside of power and within the truth. His sermons—statements of oppression and promises of a new order—are pleasurable to pronounce and easy to accept. Of course, this could be taken as a description of Foucault's own privileged stance and to some extent he is not exempt from this charge. However, as genealogist he is certainly not claiming to be outside of power, nor to promise us a path to utopia or bliss.

The ease of acceptance is Foucault's second point. He argues that modern power is tolerable on the condition that it mask itself—which it has done very effectively. If truth is outside of and opposed to power, then the speaker's benefit is merely an incidental plus. But if truth and ways in which modern power operates. It masks itself by producing a discourse, seemingly opposed to it, but really part of a larger deployment of modern power. As Foucault puts it, "Power as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability" (HS 86).

The root of this is historical. According to Foucault, before it took sex as a key target, power in fact acted through prohibition and restraint. The major institutions of power—the monarch and the state—arose from a sea of local and conflicting forces. Out of myriad local bonds and battles

the rise of monarchy operated, *grosso modo*, to regulate, arbitrate, and demarcate. At the same time, it sought to break the bond of feudal tradition and custom. It worked to establish a more centralized order from these multilocal fiefdoms. Faced with a myriad of clashing forces, these great forms of power functioned as a principle of right that transcended all the heterogeneous claims, manifesting the triple distinction of a unitary regime, of identifying its will with the law, and of acting through mechanisms of interdiction and sanction" (HS 87). The power that emerged was far from unified. It operated with many weapons, but its language was that of the law. The law justified the sovereign both to himself and to his subjects. The particular historical realities of such legal legitimization of power are, of course, extraordinarily complex. Given the recent work of Georges Duby and his students on this period, and given the centrality of these themes, we expect a rich elaboration of these points in later volumes.

One of Foucault's main points is that the discourse of law as legitimation found a form which is still in use. He points out that even the opponent of a political regime speaks the same discourse regarding the law as the regime itself. During the Classical Age, criticism of the French monarchy was cast as an attack on the monarchy's abuse of the law. Later radical critiques of the state tried to demystify the way bourgeois regimes manipulated legal codes to their own advantage. What was wrong with this manipulation, presumably, was that it distorted the rule of law. In a sense, this also applies to Foucault himself, who challenges the modern institutions and discourses of power by hinting that ideals of the law are in permanent tension with the social order established by political technologies.

Foucault has clearly set up the concept of the repressive hypothesis as a deception to be revealed. He will not succeed in his attack simply by proposing the reverse, by merely changing the terms of the discourse, for the issue is not which discourse is true or even truly critical of power. Nor does he claim that the concept of the repressive hypothesis ignores the latest empirical advances, and so can be corrected by the right information. Rather, Foucault takes seriously the positions that were, at the time, taken seriously by their adherents; his aim is to give a genealogy of how the repressive hypothesis came to be and what functions it has played in our society. He reads the various components of the repressive hypothesis not as evasions, but as fundamental parts of the modern interplay of truth and power that he is seeking to diagnose. However, the analytic dimension is still undeveloped in *The History of Sexuality*. Presumably the contours will be clearer after the publication of the later volumes. Where Foucault himself stands, in relation to his descriptions of the repressive hypothesis, is not explicitly clear. He coyly sidesteps the

problem of whether he is exempt from the descriptions he is providing. It seems clear that he is presenting his analyses of power and truth because he thinks that there is something problematic about their relationship in our society. He is genealogically problematizing the way that others have related the terms as a means of showing us that these relationships are not at all absolute. This might lead to the assumption that Foucault sees himself as beyond the hold of these terms. But, as we have been arguing, Foucault considers himself, as an intellectual, to be no longer external to what he is analyzing. The archaeological method enables him to achieve a partial distancing—but only a partial one. Further, the genealogical method is one of commitment. But trying to show that the relations of truth and power have for good reasons been mistakenly held to be opposed is still a matter of applying a new and modified form of reason against a more highly complex version of power (which includes a component of truth as one of its most characteristic elements). In this, Foucault is not so terribly far from Adorno, or even from Weber.

Foucault does differentiate himself from Weber methodologically. For him, Weber's ideal type is a device which retrospectively brings together a variety of historical considerations, so as to highlight the "essence" of the historical object being studied, for example, Calvinism, capitalism, worldly asceticism. It is the ideal type which brings disparate phenomena into a meaningful model from which the historian can explain them. Foucault maintains that his approach differs in that he is interested in isolating "explicit programs" like the Panopticon, which functioned as actual programs of action and reform. There is nothing hidden about them; they are not invented by the historian to bring together an explanation. Hence, as he told a group of French historians, "discipline is not the expression of an 'ideal type' (that of the disciplined man); it is the generalisation and the connection of different techniques which are themselves responses to local objectives (apprenticeship in school, the formation of troops capable of handling rifles)" (IP 49). At the same time, these explicit programs were never directly and completely realized in institutions. This is not because reality never totally imitates an ideal, but rather because there were counter-programs, local conflicts, and other strategies which were perfectly analyzable, even if they were finally distinct from the initial program. Foucault's effort, as genealogist, is to stay as much as possible on the surface of things, to avoid recourse to ideal significations, general types, or essences. However, if one skips from the few methodological pronouncements Weber wrote—the several lines about ideal types have been given a vastly disproportionate attention—to his historical analyses, the gap between Foucault and Weber diminishes considerably.

Substantively, Foucault's assertion that the "problem of reason"

has to be treated historically and not metaphysically is certainly something with which Weber and Adorno would agree. Foucault is clear: "I think that we must limit the sense of the word 'rationalisation' to an instrumental and relative use...and to see how forms of rationalisation become embodied in practices, or systems of practices" (IP 47). Foucault's advance over Nietzsche, Weber, and Adorno is to have taken this prescription to heart and to have produced concrete analyses of specific historical practices in which truth and power are the issue. He has isolated and identified the mechanisms of the power of rationalization with a finer grained analysis than Weber. But this should be seen as an advance, not a refutation of the Weberian project.

Finally, Foucault is not attacking reason but rather showing how a historical form of rationality has operated. As he says, "to see in this analysis a critique of reason in general is to postulate that reason can only produce the Good and that Evil can only flow from a refusal of reason. This would have little sense. The rationality of the abominable is a fact of contemporary history. But his does not give to irrationality any special rights" (IP 31). As we argue throughout this book, Foucault's method of interpretive analytics was constructed as a powerful and necessary tool to avoid the dilemma of value-freedom which haunted Weber or the temptation of irrationalism and despair (or a recourse to art) which was never far from the Frankfurt thinkers. Foucault is eminently reasonable; this has led him to center his work on the practical operation of "the truth" in modern regimes of power.

Bio-Power

W 17.1

Foucault genealogically recasts the repressive hypothesis by historically locating its components. These components extend back to the Greek polis, the Roman army, the Roman Republic, the Roman Empire, and to the Oriental bases of Christianity. However, it was only in the seventeenth century that bio-power emerged as a coherent political technology, and even then it was not actually the dominant technology during the Classical Age. Yet this was a period when the fostering of life and the growth and care of populations became a central concern of the state, when a new type of political rationality and practice found a coherent form. Foucault compares the import of the new modality of political rationality to the Galilean revolution in the physical sciences. In the sciences of nature, the freeing of things from the traditional structures of understanding produced a successful theoretical change of the greatest magnitude. In the political realm, however, philosophers continued to espouse and take seriously traditional theories of sovereignty, natural law, and social contract. Foucault argues that this discourse helped mask the radical shifts that were in fact taking place at the level of cultural

practices. Modern "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms" (HS 86).

Parallel with the persistence of earlier political theories, the Classical Age developed a new technical and political rationality. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the systematic, empirical investigation of historical, geographic, and demographic conditions engendered the modern social sciences. This new knowledge was unmoored from older ethical or prudential modes of thinking and even from Machiavellian advice to the prince. Instead, technical social science began to take form within the context of administration. This was not a general, context-independent, universal and "tending towards formalization" knowledge such as what was emerging in the physical sciences. It was instead a mode of understanding aimed at particulars. The modern social sciences branched off from traditional political theory which sought practical wisdom, and from the Hobbesian line which sought a general theory of society imitative of the physical sciences. In chapter 7 we will consider what this alliance between the sciences of man and the structures of power entails for contemporary social sciences. Here we are specifically concerned with the way in which certain social sciences came to be connected with technologies of bio-power. "Bio-power brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge/power an agent of transformation of human life... Modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence in question" (HS 143).

Foucault's story, bio-power coalesced around two poles at the beginning of the Classical Age. These poles remained separate until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when they combined to form the technologies of power which still recognizable characterize our current situation.

One pole was concern with the human species. For the first time in history, scientific categories—species, population, and others—rather than juridical ones became the object of political attention in a consistent and sustained fashion. Efforts to understand the processes of human reproduction were closely tied to other, more political ends. These regulatory controls of the vitality of life, will be the focus of the sixth volume of Foucault's history of sexuality. We in turn will take up Foucault's present analysis of sex and sexuality in more detail in chapter 8.

The other pole of bio-power centered on the body, not so much as the means for human reproduction, but as an object to be manipulated. A new science, or more accurately a technology of the body as an object of power, gradually formed in disparate, peripheral localizations. Foucault labels this "disciplinatory power" and he analyzes it in detail in *Discipline and Punish* (see chapter 7). The basic goal of disciplinary power was to

produce a human being who could be treated as a "docile body." This docile body also had to be a productive body. The technology of discipline developed and was perfected in workshops, barracks, prisons, and hospitals; in each of these settings the general aim was a "parallel increase in the usefulness and docility of individuals and populations. The techniques for disciplining bodies were applied mainly to the working classes and the subproletariat, although not exclusively, as they also operated in universities and schools.

Disciplinary control and the creation of docile bodies is unquestionably connected to the rise of capitalism. But the economic changes which resulted in the accumulation of capital and the political changes which resulted in the accumulation of power are not entirely separate. The two depend on each other for their spread and their successes. For example, the massive projection of military methods into industrial organization was an example of the modelling of the division of labor following the model laid down by the schemata of power. But this schemata did not arise in the economic sectors and it was not restricted to it" (DP 221). Foucault places the two major alterations in a noncausal parallelism but clearly indicates that the development of political technology, in his interpretation, preceded the economic. He contends that it was the disciplinary technologies which underlay the growth, spread, and triumph of capitalism as an economic venture. Without the insertion of disciplined, orderly individuals into the machinery of production, the new demands of capitalism would have been stymied. In a parallel manner, capitalism would have been impossible without the fixation, control, and rational distribution of populations on a large scale. These techniques of discipline, Foucault argues, supported and underlay the grander and more visible changes in the production apparatus. At least in France, the slow growth of disciplinary technology preceded the rise of capitalism—in both a temporal and a logical sense. These technologies did not cause the rise of capitalism but were the technological preconditions for its success. As we said earlier, Foucault maintains that disciplinary technologies remained relatively hidden while they spread. They did not simply eliminate the discourse of political theory, of law, of rights and responsibilities, of justice. Practitioners of disciplinary technologies in fact used several distinct theories of the state, each of which had been elaborated at a particular time in the past. These different theories could coexist in different settings of power in factories, in schools, in universities, in state administrative offices. This does not mean that such theories were unimportant. Rather, the intricacy and indeed even the competition between the theoretical positions masked the fact that radically new practices of the time, those of bio-power, were gaining widespread acceptance. To take an example, the eighteenth-century humanist discourse of equality fired

political movements of an unprecedented scale. But at the same time, in a quieter way, tighter discipline in manufacturing workshops, regimented corvées of vagabonds, and increased police surveillance of every member of the society assured the growth of a set of relations which were not and could not be ones of equality, fraternity, and liberty. Whereas a certain progress in terms of political representation and equality is unquestionable in the institutions of the state, the disciplines assured that all members of society were neither equal nor equally powerful: "The real, corporeal disciplines, constituted the foundation of the formal, juridical liberties. The contract may have been regarded as the ideal foundation of law; disciplinary technology constituted the technique, universally widespread of coercion and subjection" (DP 222, translation modified).

Although this political technology escaped from the grid of traditional political theory, it was not irrational or unthematized. Indeed it had its own distinctive political rationality. It is precisely that rationality, in association with the new technologies of bio-power, which Foucault is attempting to analyze. To understand this distinctive political body of thought, one must contrast the position that emerged during the Classical Age with earlier theories of politics and knowledge.

Traditionally in Western culture, political thinking was concerned with the just and good life. Practical reason sought to change character, as well as community and political life, based on a larger metaphysical understanding of the ordered cosmos. Christian versions, like those of Saint Thomas, were in a line with Aristotle. Thomas was concerned with an order of virtue that was anchored in an ontotheoretical world view. Politics served a higher goal. This higher goal rested on a larger order, which could be known. Political thinking was that art which, in an imperfect world, led men toward the good life, an art which imitated God's government of nature.

A second type of political rationality emerged during the Renaissance and is usually associated with the name Machiavelli. The Prince was given counsel on how best to hold onto his state. The link between the power of the prince and the type of state he ruled became the object of examination. This was, as many others have remarked, a major break from the earlier Western tradition of political thought. There were no metaphysical considerations, nor any serious attention paid to goals beyond that of the Prince's power. The increase and solidarity of this power—not the freedom or virtue of the citizens, nor even their peace and tranquility—was the ultimate goal set by these treatises. Practical, technical knowledge was raised above metaphysical considerations, and strategic considerations became paramount.

A third development in political thought, usually referred to as the

theory of *raison d'état*, differentiated itself from the other two. Although the earliest of these theorists appeared at the same time as Machiavelli and are often grouped together with him, Foucault sees them in a decisively different light, for he looks particularly to the authors of the police and technical manuals of the age. His point is that these men, whose names are not familiar to most of us, laid down policies for actual application. They elaborated precise techniques for ordering and disciplining individuals, while still using the mainstream Western tradition of political thought to mask their particular tactics. Yet they also represent a change in political philosophy. The tacticians of the *raison d'état* were concerned with the state as an end in itself: the state freed from a larger ethical order and from the fate of particular princes. Their aim, Foucault argues, was the most radical and modern of all. For them, political rationality no longer sought to achieve the good life nor merely to aid the prince, but to increase the scope of power for its own sake by bringing the bodies of the state's subjects under tighter discipline.

The first principle of this new political rationality was that the state, not the laws of men or nature, was its own end. The existence of the state and its power was the proper subject matter of the new technical and administrative knowledge, in contrast to juridical discourse, which had referred power to other ends: justice, the good, or natural law. This does not mean that the law became irrelevant or disappeared, only that it gradually came to have other functions in modern society.

The object to be understood by administrative knowledge was not the rights of people, not the nature of divine or human law, but the state itself. However, the point of this knowledge was not to develop a general theory; rather, it was to help define the specific nature of a specific historical state. And this required the gathering of information on the state's environment, its population, its resources, and its problems. As we saw earlier, a whole array of empirical methods of investigation had to be developed or advanced to generate this knowledge. The history, geography, climate, and demography of a particular country became more than mere curiosities. They were crucial elements in a new complex of power and knowledge. The government, particularly the administrative apparatus, needed knowledge that was concrete, specific, and measurable in order to operate effectively. This enabled it to ascertain precisely the state of its forces, where they were weak and how they could be shored up. The new political rationality of bio-power was therefore connected with the nascent empirical human sciences. What was first a study of population, for instance, soon became political arithmetic. One thinks here of the numerous sections in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* on climate, geography, population, and so on, sections that are often

abridged or avoided by modern commentators. In Foucault's optic, these passages, and not the ones on virtue, are the most significant ones in the treatise.

It follows that the administrators would need such detailed knowledge not only about their own state, but about other states as well. If the end of this political rationality was the power of the state, then it had to be measured in terms of force. Since all other states were playing the same political game, comparison between them was crucial. Welfare and even survival were functions not of virtue, but of strength. Here too empirical knowledge, not moral theory, was the essential component.

Politics thus became bio-politics. Once the politics of life was in place, then the life of these populations, and their destruction as well, became political choices. Since these populations were nothing more or less than what the "state cares for in its own sake," the state was entitled to relocate them or to slaughter them, if it served the state's interest to do so. In sum,

from the idea that the state has its own nature and its own finality, to the idea that man is the true object of the state's power, as far as he produces a surplus strength, as far as he is a living, working, speaking being, as far as he constitutes a society, and as far as he belongs to a population in an environment, we can see the increasing intervention of the state in the life of the individual. The importance of life for these problems of political power increases; a kind of animalization of man through the most sophisticated political techniques results. Both the development of the possibilities of the human and social sciences, and the simultaneous possibility of protecting life and of the holocaust make their historical appearance. (SL)

In his analysis of this new type of political rationality, Foucault isolates a new relationship between politics and history. A wise legislator could no longer bring together and relate all the elements of the state to create a situation of perfect harmony. Instead he must continually oversee a set of changing forces that are periodically strengthened or weakened by the political choices a regime makes. Since there is no longer any external limit to the possible strength a state might achieve. Power, unmoored from the limitations of nature and theology, enters into a universe that is capable, at least in principle, of unbounded expansion. Expansion—or destruction—takes place on the stage of history. There are, of course, material forces acting on the course of history. The emergence of this political era is obviously related to major economic and demographic changes, above all the rise of capitalism. Yet, after more than a century of Marxist historiography, the specific importance of this particular political

rationality remains relatively unanalyzed. It is the identification and analysis of these distinctive political practices which are at the center of Foucault's project.

For instance, although the new breed of administrators concerned themselves largely with populations, there was, at the same time, a concomitant administrative definition of politics and the individual. In the expanding arena of the modern state, and its administrative apparatus, human beings within a given domain were considered as a resource. The individual was of interest exactly insofar as he could contribute to the strength of the state. The lives, deaths, diseases, activities, work, miseries, and joys of individuals were important to the extent that these everyday concerns became politically useful. Sometimes what the individual had to do, from the state's point of view, was to live, work, and produce in certain ways; and sometimes he had to die in order to enforce the strength of the state. The emergence of the modern individual as an object of political and scientific concern and the ramifications of this for social life now become Foucault's major problematic.

The job of the police was the articulation and administration of techniques of bio-power so as to increase the state's control over its inhabitants. While the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French police were part of the juridical administration, they dealt with individuals not as juridical subjects but as working, trading, living human beings. (This dimension was treated archaeologically in detail in *The Order of Things*.) Through a reading of administrative manuals of the age, Foucault shows that the chief role of the police, which took more and more precedence over time, was the control of certain individuals and of the general population as they related to the state's welfare. The functions of the police were therefore very broad indeed: "Men and things envisioned as to their relationships to property, what they produce, men's coexistence on a territory, what is exchanged on the market. It also includes how they live, the diseases and the accidents which can befall them. What the police see to is a live, active, productive man. Under Louis XIV one manual says, 'the true object of the police is man'" (SL). State power had previously centered on men as subjects with rights and duties. Now the police were concerned with men in their everyday activities, as the essential components of the state's strength and vitality. It was the police and its administrative adjuncts who were charged with men's welfare—and with their control.

The administrative apparatus of the state posed welfare in terms of people's needs and their happiness. Both of these were, of course, goals to which previous governments had dedicated themselves. But the relations have been reversed. Human needs were no longer conceived of as ends in themselves or as subjects of a philosophic discourse which sought

to discover their essential nature. They were now seen instrumentally and empirically, as the means for the increase of the state's power. Foucault thus demonstrates the relationship between the new administrative concept of human welfare and the growth of bio-power. State administrators expressed their concepts of human welfare and state intervention in terms of biological issues such as reproduction, disease, work, or pain.

The two poles of bio-power—control of the body and control of the species—which had developed separately in the eighteenth century, were brought together in the nineteenth-century preoccupation with sex. In addition to the state, other forms of power came into play, and they too used a discourse about sexuality and new tactics for controlling sexual practices. Sex became the construction through which power linked the vitality of the body together with that of the species. Sexuality and the significance invested in it was now the principal medium through which bio-power spread.

We will discuss Foucault's important insights about the topic of sex (what he calls the deployment of sexuality) in chapter 8. At this point, we simply want to emphasize the emergence of this topic as part of the growing field of bio-power. This discourse on sexuality should not be understood in the Weberian manner as the rise of a secular asceticism. In the interpretive grid of bio-power, the deployment of sexuality led not to a decreased interest in sexuality but to an enormous explosion of discourse and concern about the vitality of the body. There was, Foucault claims, "an intensification of the body, a problematization of health and its operational terms; it was a question of techniques for maximizing life. The primary concern was...the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that 'ruled'" (HS 123). Never, it seems, had so much attention been focused on every aspect of the body and every dimension of its sexuality. Sex became the object of a major investment of signification of power, and of knowledge.

By the end of the nineteenth century the general deployment of sexuality had spread widely through the social body. Just as the middle classes had differentiated themselves at the beginning of the century from the nobility and its "symbolics of blood," they now differentiated themselves from the working classes who were being drawn into the web of sex and bio-power. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, bourgeois moralists exhorted their classmates to pay careful attention to sex, calling attention to the life hidden in it as well as the dangers it held. By the end of the century, the dangers came in for increased attention; repression and secrecy were advised. As Foucault characterizes the new discourse: "Not only is sex a formidable secret, as the directors of conscience, moralists and pedagogues, and doctors always said to former generations, not only must we search it out for the truth it conceals, but if it carries

with it so many dangers, this is because—whether out of scrupulousness, an overly acute sense of sin, of hypocrisy, no matter—we have too long reduced it to silence" (HS 128, 129). Once the sexualization of individuals and populations had spread through the society, the differentiating mark of class could no longer be the bourgeois preoccupation with sexuality. Sex as meaning now expands to sex as administrative control.

It is at this point in the spread of bio-power that social welfare programs became professionalized. While the bourgeoisie were talking and writing about incestuous fantasies, they were now organizing social welfare programs in rural areas and in urban slums. Various reform societies sought to eradicate the actual practices of incest and other unallowable perversions among the working classes. Innumerable reports and journalistic exposés alerted the public to these ever present dangers. In addition, municipalities set up dispensaries to treat venereal disease, while an elaborate system of medical dossiers and licensed houses attempted to regulate prostitution. This extension of a disciplinary grid was carried out in the name of public hygiene and the fear of racial degeneracy. Appeals to the very fate of the race and the nation seemed to turn in large part on its sexual practices.

Shortly after, psychoanalysis entered—that is, for the bourgeoisie and the law, of secret and wonderful signification; it was the remedy for repression, at least for some. Psychoanalysis announced that the connection between sexuality and the law as repression was absolutely universal; it was the basis of civilization. But the incestuous desires which founded all societies in the act of repression could, via psychoanalysis, safely be put into discourse. When the bourgeoisie gave up its exclusive hold on the discourse on sexuality, it invented another privilege for itself: the ability to talk about repressed sexuality, the deepest desires. "The task of truth was now linked to the challenging of taboos," at least for this class. Confession became linked to the command to talk about that which power forbade one to do.

Both the disciplinary and the confessional components of bio-power, although differentiated by their class applications, were unified by their common assumptions about the significance of sex. One of Foucault's examples clarifies the point. At the turn of the century, the incest taboo was scientifically pronounced as the universal law of all societies; at the same time, the administrative apparatus attempted to stamp it out in the rural and working class populations; and, through psychiatric science, intellectuals convinced themselves that by talking about this taboo they were resisting repression. The circle had been closed. The repressive hypothesis became the cornerstone for the advance of bio-power.

Thus, to return to the rhetorical question Foucault posed at the beginning of *The History of Sexuality*, the question of whether critical discourse about repression was a block to power or a part of the power mechanism it denounced, we can now answer that it was a central part. Foucault sums up this point: "Thus the law would be secure, even in the new mechanics of power. For this is the paradox of a society which, from the eighteenth century to the present, has created so many technologies of power that are foreign to the concept of the law: it fears the effects and proliferations of those technologies and attempts to recode them in forms of law" (HS 109).

Foucault's argument has come full circle, too. Bio-power has incorporated the repressive hypothesis. The historical conditions for the emergence of the repressive hypothesis—the cultural practices from which this theory of sexuality emerged—now dovetail with the conditions for its acceptance. In good interpretive fashion, both can only be understood when they are placed in a more comprehensive “grid of historical decipherment.” Given this grid, we can now backtrack and look at these technologies and their associated rationality in more detail.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault presents the genealogy of the modern individual as a docile and mute body by showing the interplay of a disciplinary technology and a normative social science. As he puts it, “This book is intended as a correlative history of the modern soul and of a new power to judge; a genealogy of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives its basis, justifications and rules, from which it extends its effects and by which it masks its exorbitant singularity” (DP 23). Foucault’s book is obviously not a litany of progress. Rather, it is a somber recounting of the growth of disciplinary technology within the larger historical grid of bio-power. For Foucault the rise of the modern individual and that of the concept of society (as understood in the social sciences) are joint developments. The story Foucault is telling, however, is not the triumphant scientific one of Durkheim, in which the emergence of a science of society announces the increasing autonomy of the individual and the objectivity of the social. It is rather the other way round. Foucault tells of the emergence of an objective science of society—one which treats social facts as things—and of the “mute solidity” of the modern individual, in order to show that both developments are what he calls instrument-effects of specific historical forms of power.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault proposes that we approach punishment and prisons as a complex social function, not merely a set of repressive mechanisms. Punishment should be considered not as a purely juridical matter nor as a reflection of social structures nor as an indication of the spirit of the age. Rather, Foucault’s approach to the prison is a way of isolating the development of a specific technique of power. Punishment is political as well as legal; it is important to be clear about this point.

7 The Genealogy of the Modern Individual as Object