

discovered everywhere. “It is the name that can be given to a historical construct; not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another in accordance with a few major strategies of power and knowledge” (*HS* 105, 106).

Sex is the historical fiction which provides the link between the biological sciences and the normative practices of bio-power. When sex was categorized as an essentially natural function that could be disoperative, it followed that this drive had to be contained, controlled, and channeled. Being natural, sex was supposedly external to power. But, Foucault counters, it is exactly the successful cultural construction of sex as a biological force which enabled it to link up with the micropractices of bio-power. “Sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations and pleasures” (*HS* 155).

The Subjectifying Social Sciences

At the end of the discussion on disciplinary technology (chapter 7), we saw a range of objectifying social sciences which emerged with the spread of the disciplines. In a parallel fashion, a wide range of interpretive sciences emerged with the spread of confessional technology. The aims and techniques of the two kinds of science are quite distinct. The construction of sex as the deepest underlying meaning and of sexuality as a web of concepts and practices is associated with—in fact, needs—a series of subjectifying methods and procedures to interpret confessions, rather than an objectifying set of procedures to control bodies.

The examination and the confession are the principal technologies for the subjectifying sciences. It was through the clinical methods of examining and listening that sexuality became a field of signification and the specific technologies developed. As opposed to other forms of medical examination which continued in a parallel but separate development of medical science, certain nineteenth-century medical and psychiatric examinations required the subject to speak and a duly recognized authority to interpret what the subject said. Hence, in a fundamental way, these procedures were hermeneutic.

The first requirement was a change of locale for the confession. In a clinical setting the doctor could combine the discussion of confession with the techniques of examination. These techniques, as we saw earlier, had already produced results on the “object” side. The task was now to elaborate procedures of examination which could code and control the signify-

ing discourse of the subject. While the interventions enacted on the mute and docile bodies were essentially corrective, the interventions on the side of the subject were essentially therapeutic. Sexuality was now a medical question: "Spoken in time, to the proper party and by the person who was both the hearer of it and the one responsible for it, the truth healed" (HS 67).

Still, there were theoretical dilemmas about what to do with these techniques for confessions: How should one treat the material gained through introspection? What kind of evidence did experience provide? How does one treat consciousness as the object of empirical investigation? In short, was a science of the subject possible? Posed in Foucault's terms, the problem was, "Can one articulate the production of truth according to the old juridico-religious model of confession and the extortion of confidential evidence according to the rules of scientific discourse?" (HS 64). How could all this talk be incorporated into a science, even a bastard one?

The need to create a scientific structure to explain sex in turn meant that only the trained scientist, not the individual subject, could understand what was being said. In the confessional paradigm, the more the subject talks (or is forced to talk), the more science knows; the more the scope of legitimate examination of consciousness grows, the finer and wider the web of confessional technology. As this power spread, it became clear that the subject himself could not be the final arbiter of his own discourse. Since sex was a secret, the subject himself was not simply hiding it because of reserve, moralism, or fear; the subject did not and could not know the secrets of his own sexuality.

The significance of sexuality, extracted in a clinical setting, ultimately could only be brought to its full importance by an active, forceful Other. The clinician who listened to this discourse had the imperative to decipher it. The Other became a specialist in meaning. He became adept at the art of interpretation. The one who listens became a "master of the truth." What had originally been a judgmental, moralizing role was transformed into an analytic, hermeneutic one. "With regard to the confession, his power was not only to demand it before it was made, or to decide what was to follow it, but also to constitute a discourse of truth on the basis of its decipherment, and by making sexuality something to be interpreted the nineteenth century gave itself the possibility of causing the procedures of confession to operate within the regular formation of a scientific discourse" (HS 67). Hermeneutics—that discipline which deals with deep meaning, meaning necessarily hidden from the subject, but nonetheless accessible to interpretation—now occupied one pole of the sciences of man.

For Foucault, the modern development of these hermeneutic sci-

ences passed, *grosso modo*, through two stages. In the first, the subject was capable, through confession, of putting his desires into an appropriate discourse. The listener provoked, judged, or consoled the subject, but the essential intelligibility of the discourse was still accessible, at least in principle, to the subject himself. Foucault gives the example of a mid-nineteenth-century psychiatrist, Luria, who used the technique of cold showers; not only confessions of madness, but also the patient's own recognition of madness were the essential dimension of the cure. In the second stage, roughly contemporary with Freud, the subject was no longer considered capable of making his own desires fully intelligible to himself, although he still had to confess them in speech. Their essential meaning was hidden from him, either because of their unconscious nature or because of deep bodily opacities which only a specialist could interpret. The subject now needed an interpretive Other to listen to his discourse and also to bring it to fruition, to master it. Yet despite this fundamental detour, the subject still had to acknowledge, and thus establish for himself, the truth of this expert interpretation. Individuality, discourse, truth, and coercion were thereby given a common localization.

Interpretation and the modern subject imply each other. The interpretive sciences proceed from the assumption that there is a deep truth which is both known and hidden. It is the job of interpretation to bring this truth to discourse. This is obviously *not* to say that all of the interpretive sciences can be accounted for by this schematic account of confessional technology in the deployment of sexuality. Just as Foucault was not claiming that the role of the objective social sciences was a simple reflex of the prisons, so too he is not reducing the arts and sciences of interpretation, which had such a prominent role in nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought, to psychiatric examination. It would be an important and rewarding task to analyze the growth of other interpretive practices and to show their relations with and differences from those Foucault has discussed. (One only has to think of the sudden importance given to participant observation in anthropology at roughly the same period. But one could not simply transfer Foucault's scheme.)

Nonetheless, part of the power of these interpretive sciences is that they claim to be able to reveal the truth about our psyches, our culture, our society—truths that can only be understood by expert interpreters. Foucault ends *The History of Sexuality* by saying, "The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our liberation is in the balance" (*HS* 159). As long as the interpretive sciences continue to search for a deep truth, that is, to practice a hermeneutics of suspicion, as long as they proceed on the assumption that it is the Great Interpreter who has privileged access to meaning, while insisting that the truths they uncover lie outside the sphere of power, these sciences seem fated to contribute to

the strategies of power. They claim a privileged externality, but they actually are part of the deployment of power.

There is a striking parallel here between the methodological problems raised by the hermeneutic study of the subject and the would-be objective and social sciences. In both cases we find a "superficial" kind of social science which takes human beings uncritically, simply as subjects or objects, and studies their self-interpretations or their objective properties as if these gave the investigator access to what was really going on in the social world. In both cases too, there is a critical perspective which points out that one cannot take at face value the subject's account of what his behavior means, or the objective social scientist's account of the social world. Critical reflection consequently leads, on the one hand, to a deep interpretation of the subject which attempts to get at what his behavior really means, a meaning unknown to him; and, on the other, to the attempt to develop an objective theory of the historical background practices which make objectification and theory possible.

In both cases, this attempt to save subjective and objective social science by going "deeper" runs into problems. As Nietzsche and Foucault have pointed out, the very project of finding a deep meaning underlying appearances may itself be an illusion, to the extent that it thinks it is capturing what is really going on. The hermeneutics of suspicion rightly has the uneasy suspicion that it has not been suspicious enough. The objective social sciences, insofar as they want to have a theory of the whole, run into the problem that the meaning of the practices they study seems to be part of the whole story but falls outside their domain. This forces them to treat the actor's point of view and, more importantly, the meaning of the background practices themselves, as if they were objectively graspable. This leads to programmatic assertions that all this "meaning" will eventually be taken into account in terms of "belief systems," "genetically based programs," or "quasi-transcendental constitutive rules." We have seen in our discussion (chapter 4) how Foucault's *Archaeology*, one of the most sophisticated versions of this third alternative, fails; the other two alternatives (cognitive science and sociobiology, respectively) have their serious problems as well.¹ Not that these fundamental methodological problems in any way diminish the output and impact of all forms of the social scientific enterprise, but the truth of their assertions is not what keeps them going.

1. For a criticism of the cognitive sciences see H. Dreyfus, *What Computers Can't Do* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979). For a critique of sociobiology see several of the essays in *Sociobiology and Human Nature*, ed. by Anita Silvers et al. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Press, 1978).

There are also definite limits for the interpretive social sciences, even within their own terms of supposedly being outside the matrix of power. The objective social sciences cannot account for their own possibility, legitimacy, and access to their objects because the practices which make objectification possible fall out of their range of investigation. So too, the "subject" social sciences must remain unstable, and can never become normal, because they attribute the final explanatory power either to everyday meaning or to deep meaning, while that which makes subjectivity and meaning possible escapes them. Both surface meaning and deep significance are produced within a particular set of historical practices and therefore can only be understood in terms of those practices.

The cultural practices which tend toward objectification are not at all necessarily doomed to failure, however. This leads us back to bio-power. As we have seen, one of the distinctive characteristics of modern power is the portrayal of knowledge as external to power. Again, the repressive hypothesis—the lynchpin of bio-power—rests on this assumption of externality and difference. The conditions of the rise of the objectifying human sciences were such that it seems that the only logical way to achieve a fully objective science of human beings would be with the totally successful production of human beings as objects. Foucault does not foreclose this possibility. But even if this were to occur (and there are good reasons to think it hasn't and won't), even then such a theory would still mask the practices that had produced its very actuality.

Each type of social science develops an important partial insight. Individual subjects in their everyday affairs do know, with an appropriate pragmatic degree of accuracy, what they are saying and what they are doing. But (and this is the insight of the hermeneutics of suspicion) this same behavior may have another significance of which the actor is unaware. On the objective side, many aspects of social life are indeed mechanically regimented, and are therefore appropriately treated by objective social science. But—here those social scientists who want to have a theoretical account of the overall pattern, including the background practices, have a point—the particular objective characteristics studied by "naïve" objective social science is part of a larger organized and structured pattern.

Finally, if Foucault is right, the very difficulties which plague the social sciences are a rich source of anomalies. The promise that these anomalies will eventually yield to their procedures justifies the grant proposals, enlarged research facilities, and government agencies by which the social sciences nourish themselves and spread. As in the case of prisons, their failure to fulfill their promises does not discredit them; in fact, the failure itself provides the argument they use for further expansion. The inverse relationship between their cognitive advances and their

social success can only be understood when one sees the role of social sciences in our society and the way that role is made necessary and significant by the long term development of confessional and disciplinary background practices.

But the parallel between the object side and the subject side of Foucault's story stops there. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault holds out no promise of a better objective social science. What he does offer in *The History of Sexuality* is an incisive example of what a better interpretation looks like. By taking the story of the historical construction of the interpretive sciences as a component of bio-power—one in which their function is to construct a nonexistent object, sex, which they then proceed to discover—Foucault is offering us an interpretation of these events which is not a theory, nor is it an interpretation based on deep meaning, a unified subject, signification rooted in nature, privileged access of the interpreter. If we label the misguided kind of interpretive method "hermeneutics," then we can call Foucault's current method "interpretive analytics." Interpretive analytics avoids the pitfalls of structuralism or hermeneutics by proceeding to analyze human seriousness and meaning without resort to theory or deep hidden significance. Just as Foucault attempted in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to reflect on the method in his earlier works and to give us a theoretical description of the right way to do theory, he now owes us an interpretive description of his own right way to do interpretation. He has not provided one yet, although *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish* are certainly examples of what such a method could produce. While waiting for Foucault to produce this interpretation of interpretation, in the sections which follow we sketch the contours of the questions it would have to confront, and the kind of positions it would have to articulate.