Introduction to Part IV

The work of Michel Foucault (1926–84) has had a tremendous impact on a number of disciplines. Although not a sociologist by training, his work addresses deeply sociological issues and it has had significant influence on the work of other sociologists. Foucault did not attempt to construct a systematic theory. Rather, as Cousins and Hussain (1984: 1) put it, one encounters certain “habitual features of Foucault’s analyses.” These features are both substantive and methodological in nature. Substantively, Foucault explores issues of power through his historical examination of different “discourses” such as madness, medicine, prisons, and sexuality. Methodologically, Foucault creatively employs archaeology and genealogy as analytical tools. While some scholars consider Foucault to be a neostructuralist (Wuthnow et al., 1984), he has been most closely associated with the intellectual movement known as “poststructuralism.” Others (most notably, Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983) oppose such categorizations of Foucault’s work. They suggest that he employs a unique interpretation of different intellectual traditions.

Foucault’s Life and Intellectual Context

Foucault was born in Poitiers, France in 1926. He received his early education at local state schools, and then transferred to a Catholic school where he attained his baccalauréat with distinction. Foucault went on to study philosophy and psychology at the prestigious École Normale Supérieure, and also obtained a diploma in psychopathology. At the École, Foucault became acquainted with Louis Althusser, who introduced him to Marxist structuralism. Foucault later acknowledged an intellectual debt to Jean Hyppolite, whose work focused on Hegel’s philosophy; to Georges Canguilhem, an historian of ideas; and to Georges Dumézil, whose interests included the history of myth, art, and religion. After receiving his diploma, Foucault worked as an intern at a mental hospital in Paris and taught courses in psychopathology at the Sorbonne. In 1954, Foucault left France to teach French at Uppsala University in Sweden, then at the University of Warsaw and the University of Hamburg. During this period, Foucault began a study of the history of psychiatry. This resulted in the Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique (later translated in
the focus away from human subjectivity and epistemology to the formal study of social and cultural life as symbolic systems. For instance, in his analysis of myth in *The Raw and the Cooked*, Lévi-Strauss claimed to reveal the underlying structure of the cultural system in the basic oppositions between the raw, the cooked, and the rotten.

Using a structuralist approach to analyze everyday life, Roland Barthes analyzed ordinary experiences, such as films, advertisements, and propaganda to reveal the semiological structure underlying communications in advanced capitalist societies. Although most structuralists tended to identify themselves as Marxists, it was Louis Althusser (among others, such as Godelier and Sebag) who provided a structuralist reading of Marx. Rejecting the focus on the subject and on historicism in humanist Marxism, structural Marxists sought to redefine dialectical materialism and historical materialism. In doing so, Althusser dismissed empiricism as a form of ideology because it conflated theoretical objects with real objects. In other words, he argued that the “real” world exists only as a product of the ideological representations we make of it. Taking inspiration from the later Marx, Althusser shifted attention instead to a more “scientific” analysis of the structures of society.

Structuralism began to lose favor in France in the 1980s. Poststructuralism arose out of, and in response to, structuralism. Incorporating Nietzschean and psychoanalytic concepts, poststructuralists emphasize the importance of language. For instance, Derrida, whose name has been closely associated with poststructuralism, argues that all claims of originary speech are misleading. Opposing a systemic approach to language, Derrida suggests instead that it is “différence” that marks writing. In other words, this term suggests both a differing and deferring of the presence of meaning for language. Like structuralists in general, poststructuralists seek to decenter the subject, but they propose that subjects are created by the discourse in which they are embedded.

Foucault's work has been read in light of this intellectual context in France. He has, for instance, been labeled both a structuralist and a poststructuralist. However, as Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983: xxiiiiff.) point out, Foucault constantly sought to move beyond the existing alternatives available for the study of human beings. He avoided the structuralist analysis which eliminates notions of meaning altogether; avoided the phenomenological project of tracing all meaning back to the autonomous, transcendental subject; and finally avoided the hermeneutic unearthing of the deeper meaning that social actors are only dimly aware of. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983: xxvii) suggest that Foucault managed to “criticize and utilize” the dominant methods available during his time.

**Foucault's Work**

In his work, Foucault sought to conduct a “genealogy of the modern subject as a historical and cultural reality” (cited in Smart, 1985: 18). His first major work was on madness. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault examines the historical conditions of the confinement and exclusion of different groups of people: lepers in the Middle Ages; the mad during the Renaissance; and the poor, the mad, and
the homeless during the Classical Age. This story of spatial exclusion is one of the classification of different categories of people as a technology of power. Providing a history of the birth of the asylum at the end of the eighteenth century, Foucault traces the historical conditions of the emergence of modern medical, psychiatric, and human sciences. He unravels the Enlightenment privileging of reason to reveal the connection between power and knowledge. In his next book, *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault conducts an archaeology of medicine. He reinterprets the standard explanation provided by the medical profession about its shift in the eighteenth century from superstition to objective truth about the body and disease. In a structuralist mode, Foucault demonstrates how the medical theories of the Classical Age were as much governed by structural “codes of knowledge” as are those of modern medicine. In this book, Foucault traces how the gaze of modern medicine has increasingly come to be directed on the constitution of “man” as an object of knowledge.

Foucault next shifted his attention from an archaeology of institutions to that of discourse. Specifically, he extended his investigation to the human sciences. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault attempts to study the structure of the discourses of various disciplines regarding society, individuals, and language. He identifies the epistemic systems (or relations between the sciences) that underlie three major epochs in Western thought: Renaissance, the Classical Age, and Modernity. Whereas there was no place for the representation of the activity of human beings in the classical episteme, Modernity is characterized as the Age of Man, in which “man” is the subject and object of his own knowledge. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault presents his method in the analysis of human sciences in greater detail. In the analysis of knowledge, he specifies the difference between his conceptual framework and those of conventional historical accounts in the history of ideas and the history of science. Discounting the standard conceptualization of history in terms of continuity, development, and progress, Foucault emphasizes discontinuity, rupture, and transformation in the analysis of discursive formations.

In the 1970s, Foucault’s interest shifted from discourse to the problem of power, from archaeology to genealogy. In his later works, *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explores the relations between power, knowledge, and the body in modern society. In *Discipline and Punish*, he conducts a genealogy of modern disciplinary technology. He analyzes the transformation of punishment from torture in medieval times to the representation of crime in the Classical Age to the rule of the prison and a normative social science in producing the modern individual. Power is increasingly exercised in the form of surveillance by a large array of apparatuses; through the classification and documentation of individuals; and the turning of subjects into objects of knowledge. Foucault extended his analysis of power relations to the area of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*. His argument is that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sexuality became an object of scientific investigation and social concern. This was the result of a spread of bio-power, which was deployed in the case of sexuality through the practice of the confessional. In his writings on power in general, Foucault makes the case that power is not restricted to political institutions. Rather, it is multidirectional, operating from above and from below.

**Foucault’s Legacy**

Until English translations of Foucault’s work began to appear in the 1970s, he was little known in the English-speaking world. By the time of his death in 1984, however, Foucault’s influence was so great that it was reported in newspapers around the world. This influence is also evident in the large body of literature that has been produced on Foucault’s work during his life and since. In particular, as O’Farrell (1989: 20–30) notes, many English-speaking critics have expressed an overwhelming interest in classifying Foucault’s work. In particular, these commentators have addressed the question of whether Foucault ought to be considered a philosopher or an historian. This elusiveness is probably the reason why some have criticized him for not doing good philosophy and others for not doing good history. Cousins and Hussain (1984: 3) suggest that the difference between routine historiography and Foucault’s work may lie in his employment of ‘case history,’ which relies more on intelligibility rather than the exhaustiveness of standard historiography. Notwithstanding these criticisms, Foucault’s work has inspired a new way of doing history. Among his other intellectual contributions, Foucault has legitimated the study of the body as a subject of inquiry.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


For a long time, one of the characteristic privileges of sovereign power was the right to decide life and death. In a formal sense, it derived no doubt from the ancient patra potestas that granted the father of the Roman family the right to "dispose" of the life of his children and his slaves; just as he had given them life, so he could take it away. By the time the right of life and death was framed by the classical theoreticians, it was in a considerably diminished form. It was no longer considered that this power of the sovereign over his subjects could be exercised in an absolute and unconditional way, but only in cases where the sovereign's very existence was in jeopardy: a sort of right of rejoinder. If he were threatened by external enemies who sought to overthrow him or contest his rights, he could then legitimately wage war, and require his subjects to take part in the defense of the state; without "directly proposing their death," he was empowered to "expose their life": in this sense, he wielded an "indirect" power over them of life and death. But if someone dared to rise up against him and transgress his laws, then he could exercise a direct power over the offender's life: as punishment, the latter would be put to death. Viewed in this way, the power of life and death was not an absolute privilege: it was conditioned by the defense of the sovereign, and his own survival. Must we follow Hobbes in seeing it as the transfer to the prince of the natural right possessed by every individual to defend his life even if this meant the death of others? Or should it be regarded as a specific right that was manifested with the formation of that new juridical being, the sovereign? In any case, in its modern form – relative and limited – as in its ancient and absolute form, the right of life and death is a dissymmetrical one. The sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring. The right which was formulated as the "power

is so essential to the structure and functioning of our society. There is a battle “for truth”, or at least “around truth” – it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean “the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted”, but rather “the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true”, it being understood also that it’s not a matter of a battle “on behalf” of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. It is necessary to think of the political problems of intellectuals not in terms of “science” and “ideology”, but in terms of “truth” and “power”. And thus the question of the professionalisation of intellectuals and the division between intellectual and manual labour can be envisaged in a new way.

All this must seem very confused and uncertain. Uncertain indeed, and what I am saying here is above all to be taken as a hypothesis. In order for it to be a little less confused, however, I would like to put forward a few “propositions” – not firm assertions, but simply suggestions to be further tested and evaluated.

“Truth” is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements.

“Truth” is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A régime of truth.

This régime is not merely ideological or superstructural; it was a condition of the formation and development of capitalism. And it’s this same régime which, subject to certain modifications, operates in the socialist countries (I leave open here the question of China, about which I know little).

The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticise the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people’s consciousnesses – or what’s in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional régime of the production of truth.

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

The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself. Hence the importance of Nietzsche.

---

Bentham’s Panopticon is the architectural figure of this composition. We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the periphery building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions – to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide – it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap.

To begin with, this made it possible – as a negative effect – to avoid those compact, swarming, howling masses that were to be found in places of confinement, those painted by Goya or described by Howard. Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication. The arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on...
him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. And this invisibility is a guarantee of order. If the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future, bad reciprocal influences; if they are patients, there is no danger of contagion; if they are madmen there is no risk of their committing violence upon one another; if they are school children, there is no copying, no noise, no chattering, no waste of time; if they are workers, there are no disorders, no theft, no coalitions, none of those destructions that slow down the rate of work, make it less perfect or cause accidents. The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities. From the point of view of the guardian, it is replaced by a multiplicity that can be numbered and supervised; from the point of view of the inmates, by a sequestered and observed solitude (Bentham, 60–4).

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. To achieve this, it is at once too much and too little that the prisoner should be constantly observed by an inspector: too little, for what matters is that he knows himself to be observed; too much, because he has no need in fact of being so. In view of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment, but he must be sure that he may always be so. In order to make the presence or absence of the inspector unverifiable, so that the prisoners, in their cells, cannot even see a shadow, Bentham envisaged not only venetian blinds on the windows of the central observation hall, but, on the inside, partitions that intersected the hall at right angles and, in order to pass from one quarter to the other, not doors but zig-zag openings; for the slightest noise, a gleam of light, a brightness in a half-opened door would betray the presence of the guardian. The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen.

It is an important mechanism, for it automatizes and disindividualizes power. Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up. The ceremonies, the rituals, the marks by which the sovereign's surplus power was manifested are useless. There is a machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference. Consequently, it does not matter who exercises power. Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine: in the absence of the director, his family, his friends, his visitors, even his servants (Bentham, 45). Similarly, it does not matter what motive animates him: the curiosity of the indiscreet, the malice of a child, the thirst for knowledge of a philosopher who wishes to visit this museum of human nature, or the perversity of those who take pleasure in spying and punishing. The more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed. The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power....

“Discipline” may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a “physics” or an “anatomy” of power, a technology. And it may be taken over either by “specialized” institutions (the penitentiaries or “houses of correction” of the nineteenth century), or by institutions that use it as an essential instrument for a particular end (schools, hospitals), or by pre-existing authorities that find in it a means of reinforcing or reorganizing their internal mechanisms of power (one day we should show how intra-familial relations, essentially in the parents–children cell, have become “disciplined”, absorbing since the classical age external schemata, first educational and military, then medical, psychiatric, psychological, which have made the family the privileged locus of emergence for the disciplinary question of the normal and the abnormal); or by apparatuses that have made discipline their principle of internal functioning (the disciplinarization of the administrative apparatus from the Napoleonic period), or finally by state apparatuses whose major, if not exclusive, function is to assure that discipline reigns over society as a whole (the police).

On the whole, therefore, one can speak of the formation of a disciplinary society in this movement that stretches from the enclosed disciplines, a sort of social “quarantine”, to an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of “panopticism”. Not because the disciplinary modality of power has replaced all the others; but because it has infiltrated the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them and above all making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements. It assures an infinitesimal distribution of the power relations.

A few years after Bentham, Julius gave this society its birth certificate (Julius, 384–6). Speaking of the panoptic principle, he said that there was much more there than architectural ingenuity: it was an event in the “history of the human mind”. In appearance, it is merely the solution of a technical problem; but, through it, a whole type of society emerges....

The formation of the disciplinary society is connected with a number of broad historical processes – economic, juridico-political and, lastly, scientific – of which it forms part.

1. Generally speaking, it might be said that the disciplines are techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities. It is true that there is nothing exceptional or even characteristic in this: every system of power is presented with the same problem. But the peculiarity of the disciplines is that they try to define in relation to the multiplicities a strategy of power that fulfils three criteria: firstly, to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost (economically, by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its
relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses); secondly, to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible, without either failure or interval; thirdly, to link this “economic” growth of power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial or medical) within which it is exercised; in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system. This triple objective of the disciplines corresponds to a well-known historical conjuncture. One aspect of this conjuncture was the large demographic thrust of the eighteenth century; an increase in the floating population (one of the primary objects of discipline is to fix; it is an antagonistic technique); a change of quantitative scale in the groups to be supervised or manipulated (from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the eve of the French Revolution, the school population had been increasing rapidly, as had no doubt the hospital population; by the end of the eighteenth century, the peace-time army exceeded 200,000 men). The other aspect of the conjuncture was the growth in the apparatus of production, which was becoming more and more extended and complex; it was also becoming more costly and its profitability had to be increased.

The development of the disciplinary methods corresponded to these two processes, or, rather, no doubt, to the new need to adjust their correlation. Neither the residual forms of feudal power nor the structures of the administrative monarchy, nor the local mechanisms of supervision, nor the unstable, tangled mass they all formed together could carry out this role; they were hindered from doing so by the irregular and inadequate extension of their network, by their often conflicting functioning, but above all by the “costly” nature of the power that was exercised in them. It was costly in several senses: because directly it cost a great deal to the Treasury; because the system of corrupt offices and farmed-out taxes weighed indirectly, but very heavily, on the population; because the resistance it encountered forced it into a cycle of perpetual reinforcement; because it proceeded essentially by levying (levying on money or products, and levying on time by corvées of press-ganging, by locking up or banishing vagabonds). The development of the disciplines marks the appearance of elementary techniques belonging to a quite different economy: mechanisms of power which, instead of proceeding by deduction, are integrated into the productive efficiency of the apparatuses from within, into the growth of this efficiency and into the use of what it produces. For the old principle of “levying-violence”, which governed the economy of power, the disciplines substitute the principle of “mildness-production-profit”. These are the techniques that make it possible to adjust the multiplicity of men and the multiplication of the apparatuses of production (and this means not only “production” in the strict sense, but also the production of knowledge and skills in the school, the production of health in the hospitals, the production of destructive force in the army).

In this task of adjustment, discipline had to solve a number of problems for which the old economy of power was not sufficiently equipped. It could reduce the inefficiency of mass phenomena: reduce what, in a multiplicity, makes it much less manageable than a unity; reduce what is opposed to the use of each of its elements and of their sum; reduce everything that may counter the advantages of number. That is why discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions. It must also master all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organized multiplicity; it must neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it: agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions – anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions. Hence the fact that the disciplines use procedures of partitioning and verticality, that they introduce, between the different elements at the same level, as solid separations as possible, that they define compact hierarchical networks, in short, that they oppose to the intrinsic, adverse force of multiplicity the technique of the continuous, individualizing pyramid. They must also increase the particular utility of each element of the multiplicity, but by means that are the most rapid and the least costly, that is to say, by using the multiplicity itself as an instrument of this growth. Hence, in order to extract from bodies the maximum time and force, the use of those overall methods known as timetables, collective training, exercises, total and detailed surveillance. Furthermore, the disciplines must increase the effect of utility proper to the multiplicities, so that each is made more useful than the simple sum of its elements: it is in order to increase the utilisable effects of the multiple that the disciplines define tactics of distribution, reciprocal adjustment of bodies, gestures and rhythms, differentiation of capacities, reciprocal coordination in relation to apparatuses or tasks. Lastly, the disciplines have to bring into play the power relations, not above but inside the very texture of the multiplicity, as discreetly as possible, as well articulated on the other functions of these multiplicities and also in the least expensive way possible: to this correspond anonymous instruments of power, coextensive with the multiplicity that they regiment, such as hierarchical surveillance, continuous registration, perpetual assessment and classification. In short, to substitute for a power that is manifested through the brilliance of those who exercise it, a power that insidiously objects those on whom it is applied, to form a body of knowledge about these individuals, rather than to deploy the ostentatious signs of sovereignty. In a word, the disciplines are the ensemble of minute technical inventions that made it possible to increase the useful size of multiplicities by decreasing the inconveniences of the power which, in order to make them useful, must control them. A multiplicity, whether in a workshop or a nation, an army or a school, reaches the threshold of a discipline when the relation of the one to the other becomes favourable.

If the economic take-off of the West began with the techniques that made possible the accumulation of capital, it might perhaps be said that the methods for administering the accumulation of men made possible a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, which soon fell into disuse and were superseded by a subtle, calculated technology of subjection. In fact, the two processes – the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital – cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them; conversely, the techniques that made the cumulative multiplicity of men useful accelerated the accumulation of capital. At a less general level, the technological mutations of the apparatus of production, the division of labour and the elaboration of the disciplinary techniques sustained an
The disciplines should be regarded as a sort of counter-law. They have the precise role of introducing insuperable asymmetries and excluding reciprocities. First, because discipline creates between individuals a “private” link, which is a relation of constraints entirely different from contractual obligation; the acceptance of a discipline may be underwritten by contract; the way in which it is imposed, the mechanisms it brings into play, the non-reversible subordination of one group of people by another, the “surplus” power that is always fixed on the same side, the inequality of position of the different “partners” in relation to the common regulation, all these distinguish the disciplinary link from the contractual link, and make it possible to distort the contractual link systematically from the moment it has as its content a mechanism of discipline. We know, for example, how many real procedures undermine the legal fiction of the work contract: workshop discipline is not the least important. Moreover, whereas the juridical systems define juridical subjects according to universal norms, the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate. In any case, in the space and during the time in which they exercise their control and bring into play the asymmetries of their power, they effect a suspension of the law that is never total, but is never annulled either.

Regular and institutional as it may be, the discipline, in its mechanism, is a “counter-law.” And, although the universal juridicism of modern society seems to fix limits on the exercise of power, its universally widespread panopticism enables it to operate, on the underside of the law, a machinery that is both immense and minute, which supports, reinforces, multiplies the asymmetry of power and undermines the limits that are traced around the law. The minute disciplines, the panopticisms of every day may well be below the level of emergence of the great apparatuses and the great political struggles. But, in the genealogy of modern society, they have been, with the class domination that traverses it, the political counterpart of the juridical norms according to which power was redistributed. Hence, no doubt, the importance that has been given for so long to the small techniques of discipline, to those apparently insignificant tricks that it has invented, and even to those “sciences” that give it a respectable face; hence the fear of abandoning them if one cannot find any substitute; hence the affirmation that they are at the very foundation of society, and an element in its equilibrium, whereas they are a series of mechanisms for unbalancing power relations definitively and everywhere; hence the persistence in regarding them as the humble, but concrete form of every morality, whereas they are a set of physico-political techniques.

To return to the problem of legal punishments, the prison with all the corrective technology at its disposal is to be resituated at the point where the codified power to punish turns into a disciplinary power to observe; at the point where the universal punishments of the law are applied selectively to certain individuals and always the same ones; at the point where the definition of the juridical subject by the penalty becomes a useful training of the criminal; at the point where the law is inverted and passes outside itself, and where the counter-law becomes the effective and institutionalized content of the juridical forms. What generalizes the power to punish, then, is not the universal consciousness of the law in each juridical subject; it is the regular extension, the infinitely minute web of panoptic techniques.
3. Taken one by one, most of these techniques have a long history behind them. But what was new, in the eighteenth century, was that, by being combined and generalized, they attained a level at which the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process. At this point, the disciplines crossed the “technological” threshold. First the hospital, then the school, then, later, the workshop were not simply “reordered” by the disciplines; they became, thanks to them, apparatuses such that any mechanism of objectification could be used in them as an instrument of subjection, and any growth of power could give rise in them to possible branches of knowledge; it was this link, proper to the technological systems, that made possible within the disciplinary element the formation of clinical medicine, psychiatry, child psychology, educational psychology, the rationalization of labour. It is a double process, then: an epistemological “thaw” through a refinement of power relations; a multiplication of the effects of power through the formation and accumulation of new forms of knowledge.

REFERENCES
Julius, N. H., *Leçons sur les prisons*, I, 1831 (Fr. trans.).