

A New Cartographer

(Discipline and Punish)

Foucault never looked on writing as an aim or an end in itself. This is precisely what makes him a great writer and imbues everything he writes with an increasing sense of joy and gaiety. The Divine Comedy of punishment means we can retain the basic right to collapse in fits of laughter in the face of a dazzling array of perverse inventions, cynical discourses and meticulous horrors. A whole chain of phenomena, from anti-masturbation machines for children to the mechanics of prison for adults, sets off an unexpected laughter which shame, suffering or death cannot silence. The torturers rarely laugh, at least not in the same way. Vallès has already contrasted the revolutionaries' unique sense of gaiety in horror with the horrible gaiety of the torturer. Provided the hatred is strong enough something can be salvaged, a great joy which is not the ambivalent joy of hatred, but the joy of wanting to destroy whatever mutilates life.

Foucault's book is full of a joy or jubilation that blends in with the splendour of its style and the politics of its content. It is punctuated by horrible descriptions which are lovingly rendered: the botched torture of Damien; the plague-ridden city and the way it was sealed off; the chain gang passing through town calling out to people; or the new isolating machine, such as prison or the prison van, evidence of a new 'sensitivity in the art of punishment'. Foucault always managed to illustrate his theatrical analyses in a vivid manner.

Here analysis becomes increasingly microphysical and the illustrations increasingly physical, expressing the 'effects' of analysis, not in a causal way but through the use of optics and colour: the red on red of the tortured inmates contrasts with the grey on grey of prison. Analysis and illustration go hand in hand, offering us a microphysics of power and a political investment of the body. These illustrations are coloured in on a minutely drawn map. This book can be taken as continuing Foucault's previous books as much as representing a decisive new step forward.

In a general or even confused way, leftism has been characterized theoretically as having raised again the problem of power, a question which has been directed against Marxism as much as against bourgeois conceptions; and practically as a certain form of local and specific struggle whose relationships and necessary unity could no longer come from a process of totalization or centralization, but rather, as Guattari put it, from a transversality. These two aspects, the practical and the theoretical, were closely linked. But leftism still continued to retain or reintegrate certain elements that were too basically Marxist, and once again fell back into Marxism as part of the general centralization that brought groups back to the old ways, Stalinism included. Perhaps from 1971 to 1973 the GIP (Group for Information about Prisons), under the encouragement of Foucault and Defert, managed to function in a way that avoided this resurgence by keeping up a kind of original link between prison struggle and other struggles. And when Foucault returns in 1975 to a theoretical publication he appears to be the first to invent this new conception of power, which everyone had unsuccessfully tried to find and articulate.

This is the subject matter of *Discipline and Punish*, even though Foucault touches on it only in a few pages at the beginning of his book. Only a few pages, since he adopts a method that is completely different from the 'thesis'. He is content to suggest abandoning a certain number of postulates

which have traditionally marked the position of the left.¹ And we have to wait until *The History of Sexuality* for a more detailed exposition.

As the postulate of property, power would be the 'property' won by a class. Foucault shows that power does not come about in this way: it is less a property than a strategy, and its effects cannot be attributed to an appropriation 'but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings'; 'it is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the "privilege", acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions.' This new functionalism or functional analysis certainly does not deny the existence of class and class-struggle but illustrates it in a totally different way, with landscapes, characters and behaviour that are different from those to which traditional history, even of the Marxist variety, has made us accustomed. We are shown 'innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, of an at least temporary inversion of the power-relations.' Instead of analogy, homology or univocality, we have a new kind of possible continuity. In brief, power is not homogeneous but can be defined only by the particular points through which it passes.

As the postulate of localization, power would be power of the State and would itself be located in the machinery of State to the point where even 'private' powers would only apparently be dispersed and would remain no more than a special example of the machinery of State. Foucault shows that, on the contrary, the State itself appears as the overall effect or result of a series of interacting wheels or structures which are located at a completely different level, and which constitute a 'microphysics of power'. Not only private systems but explicit parts of the machinery of State have an origin, a behaviour and a function which the State ratifies, controls or is even content to cover rather than institute.

One of the basic ideas in *Discipline and Punish* is that modern

societies can be defined as 'disciplinarian'; but discipline cannot be identified with any one institution or apparatus precisely because it is a type of power, a technology, that traverses every kind of apparatus or institution, linking them, prolonging them, and making them converge and function in a new way. This holds even when the particular parts or wheels are as obvious a part of the State as the police or prison:

Although the police as an institution were certainly organized in the form of a state apparatus, and although this was certainly linked directly to the centre of political sovereignty, the type of power it exercises, the mechanisms it operates and the elements to which it applies them are specific,

charging itself with forcing the discipline to penetrate right into the ephemeral detail of a social field, thereby revealing its relative independence from the judicial and even political apparatus.² This is all the more so since the origin of the person does not lie in the 'juridico-political structure of a society': it is wrong to make it depend on the evolution of law, even penal law. In so far as it administers punishment, prison also possesses a necessary autonomy and in turn reveals a 'disciplinary supplement' which goes beyond the machinery of State, even when used by it.³ In brief, Foucault's functionalism throws up a new topology which no longer locates the origin of power in a privileged place, and can no longer accept a limited localization (this conception of social space, like the continuity mentioned above, is as new as that of contemporary physics and mathematics). Here we can see that 'local' has two very different meanings: power is local because it is never global, but it is not local or localized because it is diffuse.

As the postulate of subordination, this power embodied in the machinery of State would be subordinate to both a mode of production and an infrastructure. No doubt it is possible to

make the great systems of punishment and the various systems of production tally: the disciplinary mechanisms in particular cannot be separated from the demographic upsurge of the eighteenth century, or a growth in production that seeks to increase yield, compose forces and extract every useful force from the body. But it is difficult to discern an economic determination 'in the last analysis', even if one endows the superstructure with the ability to react or turn back on itself. It is rather the whole economy – for example the workshop or the factory – which these mechanisms of power presuppose as they already act from within on bodies and souls, as they already act inside the economic field on the forces and relations of production: 'Relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships . . . [they] are not in superstructural positions . . . they have a directly productive role, wherever they come into play.'⁴ A functional microanalysis takes whatever is still pyramidal in the Marxist image and replaces it with a strict immanence where centres of power and disciplinary techniques form multiple segments, linked to one another which the individuals of a mass traverse or inhabit, body and soul (family, school, barracks, factory, if need be prison). The thing called power is characterized by immanence of field without transcendent unification, continuity of line without global centralization, and contiguity of parts without distinct totalization: it is a social space.⁵

As the postulate of essence or of attribute, power would have an essence and be an attribute, which would qualify those who possess it (dominators) as opposed to those on whom it is practised (dominated). Power has no essence; it is simply operational. It is not an attribute but a relation: the power-relation is the set of possible relations between forces, which passes through the dominated forces no less than through the dominating, as both these forces constitute unique elements: 'Power invests [the dominated], passes through them and with the help of them, relying on them just

as they, in their struggle against power, rely on the hold it exerts on them.'

Analysing the *lettres de cachet*, Foucault demonstrates that 'the king's arbitrator' does not operate in a downward direction like an attribute of his transcendent power, but is solicited by the most humble, by the relatives, neighbours and colleagues of a nasty little troublemaker who want to have him locked up and who use the absolute monarchy like an immanent 'public service' that can settle family or conjugal arguments, professional quarrels or disputes over byways.⁶ In this respect, the *lettre de cachet* therefore becomes the predecessor of what psychiatry calls a 'willing investment'. Far from operating in a general or appropriate sphere, the power-relation establishes itself wherever individual features, however tiny, are to be found: relations between forces such as 'boundary disputes, quarrels between parents and children, domestic tiffs, drunkenness and debauchery, public squabbles and a load of secret affairs'.

As the postulate of modality, power would act through the use of violence or ideology by reprimanding, by tricking or persuading, by acting as police or as propaganda. Even here, this alternative does not seem pertinent (this can clearly be seen even at a political party congress: the violence may be either in the hall or out in the street, while the ideology is always to be found on the platform; but the problem of the organization of power is settled privately in the adjoining room). Power does not come about through ideology, even when it concerns the soul; it does not necessarily separate through violence and repression, even when it weighs on the body. Or rather, violence expresses well the effect of a force on *something*, some object or being. But it does not express the power relation, that is to say the *relations between force and force*, 'an action upon an action'.⁷ A relation between forces is a function of the type 'to incite, to provoke, to combine . . .'. In the case of disciplinary societies, we should say: to allocate, to classify, to compose, to normalize. The first is indefinite and

varies in each case. Power 'produces reality' before it represses. Equally it produces truth before it ideologizes, abstracts or masks.⁸

By highlighting sexuality as a special case, *The History of Sexuality* will therefore show how we can believe in a sexual repression operating within language if we concentrate on words and phrases but not if we isolate the dominant statements, and especially the verbal procedures in use in churches, schools and hospitals, which simultaneously search for the reality of sex and the truth in sex. It will also show how repression and ideology explain nothing but always assume an organization or 'system' within which they operate, but not vice versa. Foucault does not in any way ignore repression and ideology; but as Nietzsche had already seen, they do not constitute the struggle between forces but are only the dust thrown up by such a contest.

As the postulate of legality State power would express itself in law, where the latter is conceived either as a state of peace imposed on brute force or as the result of a war or struggle won by the stronger party, but where in either case law is defined by the forced or voluntary cessation of war, in contrast to illegality, which it defines by way of exclusion. Here revolutionaries can only demand a different legality which comes from winning power and installing a new machinery of State. One of the strongest themes in Foucault's book consists of replacing the crude opposition of law and illegality with the subtle correlation made between *illegalisms and laws*. Law is always a structure of illegalisms, which are differentiated by being formalized. We need only look at the law of commercial societies to see that laws are not contrasted worldwide with illegality, but that some are actually used to find loopholes in others. Law administers illegalisms: some it allows, makes possible or invents as the privilege of the dominating class; others it tolerates as a compensation for the dominated classes, or even uses in the service of the dominating class; others again it forbids, isolates and takes as both its object and its means of domination.

For this reason changes in the law brought about in the

eighteenth century were ultimately designed to create a new distribution of illegalisms, not only because offences tended to change in nature, focusing increasingly on property rather than on people, but also because disciplinary powers categorized and formalized these infractions in a new way, defining a new form called 'delinquency' which in turn gave rise to a new classification and control of illegalisms.⁹ Certain popular movements of resistance in the 1789 revolution can obviously be explained by the fact that the illegalisms tolerated or installed by the old regime became intolerable to republican power. But what is common to both republics and monarchies in the West is that they raised the whole entity of Law to the status of the assumed principle of power, in order to give themselves a homogeneous representation of jurisdiction: the 'juridical model' became the blueprint for all strategies.¹⁰ This chart of illegalisms, however, continues to function according to the model of legality. And Foucault shows that the law is now no more a state of peace than the result of a successful war: it is war itself, and the strategy of this war in action, just as power is not the property of the dominant class but the strategy of that class in action.

It is as if, finally, something new were emerging in the wake of Marx. It is as if a complicity about the State were finally broken. Foucault is not content to say that we must rethink certain notions; he does not even say it; he just does it, and in this way proposes new co-ordinates for praxis. In the background a battle begins to brew, with its local tactics and overall strategies which advance not by totalizing but by relaying, connecting, converging and prolonging. The question ultimately is: *What is to be done?* The theoretical privilege given to the State as an apparatus of power to a certain extent leads to the practice of a leading and centralizing party which eventually wins State power; but on the other hand it is this very organizational conception of the party that is justified by this theory of power. The stakes of Foucault's book lie in a different theory, a different praxis of struggle, a different set of strategies.

Foucault's previous book had been *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. What kind of development does *Discipline and Punish* represent? This archaeology was not just a book of reflections or a general method but a new orientation, like a new folding acting on the earlier books. Archaeology put forward a distinction between two types of practical formations: the one 'discursive', involving statements, the other 'non-discursive', involving environment. For example, clinical medicine at the end of the eighteenth century is a discursive formation; but as such it relates to a mass and a population who depend on another kind of formation and so bring in non-discursive environments such as 'institutions, political events, economic practices and processes'. Naturally, environments also produce statements, just as statements determine environments. But the fact remains that the two formations are heterogeneous, even though they may overlap: there is no correspondence or isomorphism, no direct causality or symbolization.¹¹ *The Archaeology of Knowledge* therefore marked a turning point: it posited a firm distinction between the two forms but, as it proposed to define the form of statements, it contented itself with indicating the other forms in a negative way, as the 'non-discursive'.

Discipline and Punish marks a new stage. Even a 'thing' like prison is seen as an environmental formation (the 'prison' environment) and a form of content (where the content is the prisoner). But this thing or form does not refer back to a 'word' designating it, or to a signifier for which it would be the signified. It refers to completely different words and concepts, such as delinquency or delinquent, which express a new way of articulating infractions, sentences and their subjects. Let us call this formation of statements a *form of expression*. The two forms may have emerged at the same time, in the eighteenth century, but they are still none the less heterogeneous.

Penal law undergoes a development that obliges it to speak of crime and punishment in terms of the defence of society (and no longer in terms of vengeance or the restoration of

sovereign power): signs addressed to the soul or mind which establish certain mental associations between the crime and the punishment (a code). But prison is a new way of acting on bodies, and evolves from something entirely different to penal law: 'Prison, that concentrated and austere figure of all the disciplines, is not an endogenous element in the penal system as defined at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.'¹² Penal law concerns those aspects of criminal material that can be articulated: it is a system of language that classifies and translates offences and calculates sentences; a family of statements that is also a threshold. Prison, for its part, is concerned with whatever is visible: not only does it wish to display the crime and the criminal but in itself it constitutes a visibility, it is a system of light before being a figure of stone, and is defined by 'Panopticism': by a visual assemblage and a luminous environment (a central tower surrounded by cells) in which the warder can see all the detainees without the detainees being able to see either him or one another.¹³

A system of light and a system of language are not the same form, and do not have the same formation. We begin to understand now why Foucault studies these two forms in his earlier books: the visible and the articulable, as he called them in *The Birth of the Clinic*; and, in *Madness and Civilization*, madness as seen in a general hospital and folly (which was not treated in a seventeenth-century hospital) as it is described in medicine. What *The Archaeology* recognized but still only designated negatively, as non-discursive environments, is given its positive form in *Discipline and Punish*, a form that haunted the whole of Foucault's work: the form of the visible, as opposed to the form of whatever can be articulated. For example, at the beginning of the nineteenth century masses and populations become visible, and emerge into the light of day at the same time as medical statements manage to articulate new objects (tissular lesions and the anatomico-physiological correlations).¹⁴

Of course, as a form of content prison itself has its own statements and regulations. Equally penal law, as a form of expression, statements of delinquency, has its contents: even if these are only a new series of offences, carried out against property rather than against people.¹⁵ And the two forms continue to come into contact, seep into one another and steal bits for themselves: penal law still leads back to prison and provides prisoners, while prison continues to reproduce delinquency, make it an 'object', and realize the aims which penal law had conceived differently (the defence of society, the moral conversion of the condemned man, the changes made to the sentence, individuation).¹⁶

There is a mutual presupposition operating between the two forms, yet there is no common form, no conformity, not even correspondence. It is here that *Discipline and Punish* poses the two problems that *The Archaeology* could not raise because the latter remained tied to Knowledge, and the primacy of the statement in knowledge. On the one hand, outside forms, is there in general a common immanent cause that exists within the social field? On the other, how do the assemblages, adjustments and interpenetration of the two forms come about in a variable way in each particular case?

Form here can have two meanings: it forms or organizes matter; or it forms or finalizes functions and gives them aims. Not only the prison but the hospital, the school, the barracks and the workshop are formed matter. Punishment is a formalized function, as is care, education, training, or enforced work. The fact is that there is a kind of correspondence between them, even though the two forms are irreducible (in fact, care was not the function of the seventeenth-century hospital and the penal law in the eighteenth century does not refer essentially to prison). So how can we explain such a coadaptation? The reason lies in the fact that we can conceive of pure matter and pure functions, abstracting the forms which embody them.

When Foucault defines Panopticism, either he specifically

sees it as an optical or luminous arrangement that characterizes prison, or he views it abstractly as a machine that not only affects visible matter in general (a workshop, barracks, school or hospital as much as a prison) but also in general passes through every articulable function. So the abstract formula of Panopticism is no longer 'to see without being seen' but *to impose a particular conduct on a particular human multiplicity*. We need only insist that the multiplicity is reduced and confined to a tight space and that the imposition of a form of conduct is done by distributing in space, laying out and serializing in time, composing in space-time, and so on.¹⁷ The list is endless, but it is always concerned with unformed and unorganized matter and unformalized, unfinalized functions, the two variables being indissolubly linked.

What can we call such a new informal dimension? On one occasion Foucault gives it its most precise name: it is a 'diagram', that is to say a 'functioning, abstracted from any obstacle [. . .] or friction [and which] must be detached from any specific use'.¹⁸ The *diagram* is no longer an auditory or visual archive but a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field. It is an abstract machine. It is defined by its informal functions and matter and in terms of form makes no distinction between content and expression, a discursive formation and a non-discursive formation. It is a machine that is almost blind and mute, even though it makes others see and speak.

If there are many diagrammatic functions and even matters, it is because every diagram is a spatio-temporal multiplicity. But it is also because there are as many diagrams as there are social fields in history. When Foucault invokes the notion of diagram it is in connection with our modern disciplinarian societies, where power controls the whole field: if there is a model it is that of the 'plague', which cordons off the stricken town and regulates the smallest detail. But if we consider the ancient sovereign societies we can see that they also possess a diagram, even if it relates to different matters

and functions: here too a force is exercised on other forces, but it is used to deduct rather than to combine and compose; to divide the masses rather than to isolate the detail; to exile rather than to seal off (its model is that of 'leprosy').¹⁹

This is a different kind of diagram, a different machine, closer to theatre than to the factory; it involves a different relation between forces. More importantly, it creates intermediary diagrams in which we shift from one society to another: for example, the Napoleonic diagram, where the disciplinary function merges with the sovereign function 'at the point of junction of the monarchical, ritual exercise of sovereignty and the hierarchical, permanent exercise of indefinite discipline'.²⁰ This is because the diagram is highly unstable or fluid, continually churning up matter and functions in a way likely to create change.

Lastly, every diagram is intersocial and constantly evolving. It never functions in order to represent a persisting world but produces a new kind of reality, a new model of truth. It is neither the subject of history, nor does it survey history. It makes history by unmaking preceding realities and significations, constituting hundreds of points of emergence or creativity, unexpected conjunctions or improbable continuums. It doubles history with a sense of continual evolution.

Every society has its diagram(s). Foucault was careful to work on a well-determined series and never interested himself directly in so-called primitive societies. None the less they would be a particularly good example, perhaps too good. For far from being devoid of politics or history, they have a network of alliances which cannot be reduced to a hierarchical structure or to relations of exchange between filial groups. Alliances take place between small local groups, which constitute relations between forces (gift and counter-gift) and direct power. Here the diagram shows how it is different from structure in so far as the alliances weave a supple and transversal network that is perpendicular to vertical structure; define a practice, proceeding or strategy distinct from any

single combination; and form an unstable physical system that is in perpetual disequilibrium instead of a closed, exchangist cycle (which accounts for Leach's polemic with Lévi-Strauss, or Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of strategies).

The conclusion to be drawn from this is not so much that Foucault's conception of power is particularly apt in the case of primitive societies, about which he says nothing; but that the modern societies he discusses in turn develop diagrams which expose their relations between forces or the particular strategies. In fact, within the overall categories, basic lineages or modern institutions we can still find those microrelations which, far from destroying these larger unities, actually compose them. This is precisely what Gabriel Tarde did when he founded a microsociology: he did not explain the social by reference to the individual; instead he accounted for the all-embracing categories by having recourse to minutely small relations such as 'imitation', the propagation of a current of belief or desire (*quanta*) or 'invention', the meeting of two imitative trends. These are the real relations between forces, in so far as they transcend mere violence.

What is a diagram? It is a display of the relations between forces which constitute power in the above conditions:

The panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations functions in a function, and of making a function through these power relations.²¹

We have seen that the relations between forces, or power relations, were microphysical, strategic, multipunctual and diffuse, that they determined particular features and constituted pure functions. The diagram or abstract machine is the map of relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which proceeds by primary non-localizable relations and at every moment passes through every point, 'or rather in every relation from one point to another'.²² Of course, this has nothing to do either with a transcendent idea or with an

ideological superstructure, or even with an economic infrastructure, which is already qualified by its substance and defined by its form and use. None the less, the diagram acts as a non-unifying immanent cause that is coextensive with the whole social field: the abstract machine is like the cause of the concrete assemblages that execute its relations; and these relations between forces take place 'not above' but within the very tissue of the assemblages they produce.

What do we mean here by immanent cause? It is a cause which is realized, integrated and distinguished in its effect. Or rather the immanent cause is realized, integrated and distinguished by its effect. In this way there is a correlation or mutual presupposition between cause and effect, between abstract machine and concrete assemblages (it is for the latter that Foucault most often reserves the term 'mechanisms'). If the effects realize something this is because the relations between forces, or power relations, are merely virtual, potential, unstable, vanishing and molecular, and define only possibilities of interaction, so long as they do not enter into a macroscopic whole capable of giving form to their fluid matter and their diffuse function. But realization is equally an integration, a collection of progressive integrations that are initially local and then become or tend to become global, aligning, homogenizing and summarizing relations between forces: here law is the integration of illegalisms.

The concrete assemblages of school, workshops, army, etc., integrate qualified substances (children, workers, soldiers) and finalized functions (education, etc.) and this carries on right up to the State, which strives for global integration, at least in the form of a universal Marketplace.²³ And ultimately this realization and integration is a differentiation: not because the cause being realized would be a sovereign Unit, but on the contrary because the diagrammatic multiplicity can be realized and the differential of forces integrated only by taking diverging paths, splitting into dualisms, and following lines of differentiation without which

everything would remain in the dispersion of an unrealized cause.

Things can be realized only through doubling or dissociation, creating diverging forms among which they can then be distributed.²⁴ It is here, then, that we see the great dualities: between different classes, or the governing and the governed, or the public and the private. But, more than this, *it is here that two forms of realization diverge or become differentiated*: a form of expression and a form of content, a discursive and a non-discursive form, the form of the visible and the form of the articulable. It is precisely because the immanent cause, in both its matter and its functions, disregards form that it is realized on the basis of a central differentiation which, on the one hand, will form visible matter, and on the other will formalize articulable functions. Between the visible and the articulable a gap or disjunction opens up, but this disjunction of forms is the place – or ‘non-place’, as Foucault puts it – where the informal diagram is swallowed up and becomes embodied instead in two different directions that are necessarily divergent and irreducible. The concrete assemblages are therefore opened up by a crack that determines how the abstract machine performs.

This, then, is the reply made to the two problems posed by *Discipline and Punish*. On the one hand, the duality of forms or formations does not exclude a common, immanent cause which works informally. On the other, the common cause envisaged in each case or in each concrete mechanism will go on measuring the mixtures, captures, and interceptions taking place between elements or segments of the two forms, even though the latter are and remain irreducible and heteromorphous. It is not an exaggeration to say that every mechanism is a mushy mixture of the visible and the articulable: ‘The prison system combines in a single figure discourses and architectures’, programmes and mechanisms.²⁵ *Discipline and Punish* is the book in which Foucault expressly overcomes the apparent dualism of his

earlier books (although even then this dualism was already moving towards a theory of multiplicities). If knowledge consists of linking the visible and the articulable, power is its presupposed cause; but, conversely, power implies knowledge as the bifurcation or differentiation without which power would not become an act: 'There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.'²⁶

This shows up the error, even hypocrisy, that consists in thinking that knowledge appears only wherever the relations between forces are suspended. There is no model of truth that does not refer back to a kind of power, and no knowledge or even science that does not express or imply, in an act, power that is being exerted. All knowledge runs from a visible element to an articulable one, and vice versa; yet there is no such thing as a common totalizing form, not even a conformity or bi-univocal correspondence. There is only a relation of forces which acts transversally and finds in the duality of forms the conditions for its own action and realization. If there is such a thing as coadaptation of forms, it arises from their 'encounter' (provided the latter is forced), and not the other way round: 'the encounter is justified only by the new necessity it has established'. In this way an encounter occurs between the visibilities of prison and the statements of penal law.

What is it that Foucault calls a machine, be it abstract or concrete (he speaks of the 'machine-prison', but equally of the machine-school, the machine-hospital, and so on)?²⁷ The concrete machines are the two-form assemblages or mechanisms, whereas the abstract machine is the informal diagram. In other words, the machines are social before being technical. Or, rather, there is a human technology which exists before a material technology. No doubt the latter develops its effects within the whole social field; but in order for it to be even possible, the tools or material machines have to be chosen first of all by a diagram and taken up by assemblages. Historians have often been confronted by this requirement: the so-called

hoplite armies are part of the phalanx assemblage; the stirrup is selected by the diagram of feudalism; the burrowing stick, the hoe and the plough do not form a linear progression but refer respectively to collective machines which vary with the density of the population and the time of the fallow.²⁸ In this respect, Foucault shows how the rifle exists as a tool only in the sense that it is 'a machinery whose principle would no longer be the mobile or immobile mass, but a geometry of divisible [and composable] segments'.²⁹

Technology is therefore social before it is technical:

Compared with the blast furnaces or the steam engine, panopticism has received little attention [. . .] But it would be unjust to compare the disciplinary techniques with such inventions as the steam engine [. . .] They are much less: and yet, in a way, they are much more.³⁰

And if the techniques – in the narrow sense of the word – are caught within the assemblages, this is because the assemblages themselves, with their techniques, are selected by the diagrams: for example, prison can have a marginal existence in sovereign societies (*lettres de cachet*) and exists as a mechanism only when a new diagram, the disciplinary diagram, makes it cross 'the technical threshold'.³¹

It is as if the abstract and the concrete assemblages constituted two extremes, and we moved from one to the other imperceptibly. Sometimes the assemblages are distributed in hard, compact segments which are sharply separated by partitions, watertight barriers, formal discontinuities (such as school, army, workshop, and ultimately prison, and as soon as you're in the army, they tell you 'You're not at school any more'). Sometimes, on the other hand, they communicate within the abstract machine which confers on them a supple and diffuse microsegmentarity, so that they all resemble one another and prison extends throughout the rest, like the variables of the one continuous, formless function (school, barracks and the workshop are already prisons).³²

If we continue to move from one extreme to the other, this is because each assemblage sets off the abstract machine, but in varying degrees: it resembles coefficients needed to make the diagram, and the higher the degree of variation, the more the assemblage in question becomes diffused in all the others and can suit the whole social field. Foucault's method itself here acquires a maximum flexibility. For the coefficient varies first of all from one assemblage to the next: for example, the military naval hospital is situated at the meeting-place of various circuits and sends out filters and exchangers in every direction, controlling mobilities of every sort, which make it a crossroads to a high degree, a medical space which can accommodate the complete diagram.³³ But the coefficient also varies for the same assemblage from one social field to the next, or within the same social field. Consequently, prison has three stages: in sovereign societies it exists only at the periphery of other organized forms of punishment, because it fulfils the diagram of sovereignty only to a low degree. On the other hand it becomes dispersed in every direction, and not only takes charge of the aims and penal law but impregnates the other organized forms because it fulfils to a high degree the requirements of the diagram of discipline (it still has to live down the 'bad reputation' which it gained from its previous role). And, lastly, it is doubtful whether disciplinary societies will let it keep this coefficient if in the process of development they find other ways of realizing their penal aims and of fulfilling the diagram's full range: from this we get the theme of penitentiary reform that will come increasingly to haunt the social field and ultimately deprive prison of its exemplary status, reducing it once more to the state of an assemblage that is localized, limited and separate.³⁴ Everything took place as if prison, like a Cartesian diver,* rose and fell on a scale

* (also known as Cartesian devil, or bottle imp) A device used in physics, or as a toy. A glass tube is filled with water, with an airtight membrane at the top. The tube contains a hollow object, open at the bottom, with enough water trapped to enable it to float. Pressure variations on the membrane affect the relative air density in the object, causing it to rise or fall.

gauging the degree to which the disciplinary diagram was fulfilled. There is a history of assemblages, just as there is development and change in the diagram.

This is not merely characteristic of Foucault's method but has serious consequences for his whole thought. Foucault has often been treated as above all the thinker of confinement (the general hospital in *Madness and Civilization*, the prison in *Discipline and Punish*). But this is not at all the case, and such a misinterpretation prevents us from grasping his global project. For example, Paul Virilio believes he stands in opposition to Foucault when he claims that the problem of modern societies, the problem for the 'police', is not one of confinement but concerns the 'highways', speed or acceleration, the mastery and control of speed, circuits and grids set up in open space. But this is just what Foucault has said, as is proved by the analysis of the fortress carried out by both authors, or by Foucault's analysis of the naval hospital. This misunderstanding is not serious in Virilio's case, because the force and originality of his own work testifies to the fact that encounters between independent thinkers always occur in a blind zone. On the other hand it is much more serious when less gifted authors swallow the critique whole, and either reproach Foucault for sticking to confinement, or congratulate him for having analysed it so well.

In fact, Foucault has always considered confinement a secondary element derived from a primary function that was very different in each case: there is no similarity between the way in which the general hospital or the asylum locked up madmen in the seventeenth century and the way prison locked up delinquents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The imprisonment of madmen was imposed like an 'exile' and took the leper as its model, while the confinement of delinquents was carried out by 'partitioning' and took its model from the plague victim.³⁵ This analysis contains some of Foucault's most beautiful pages. But exiling and partitioning are first of all precisely functions of exteriority which are only afterwards

executed, formalized and organized by the mechanisms of confinement. Prison, as a hard (cellular) segmentarity refers back to a flexible and mobile function, a controlled circulation, a whole network that also crosses free areas and can learn to dispense with prison. It is a little like Kafka's 'endless procrastination' which no longer has any need of arrest or condemnation. As Maurice Blanchot says of Foucault, confinement refers to an outside, and what is confined is precisely the outside.³⁶ It is by excluding or placing outside that the assemblages confine something, and this holds as much for physical interiority as physical confinement. Foucault often invokes a form of the discursive, or a form of the non-discursive; but these forms neither enclose nor interiorize anything; they are 'forms of exteriority' through which either statements or visible things *are dispersed*. It is in general a question of method: instead of moving from an apparent exteriority to an essential 'nucleus of interiority' we must conjure up the illusory interiority in order to restore words and things to their constitutive exteriority.³⁷

We must even distinguish between several correlative agencies, of which there are at least three. There is first of all *the outside* which exists as an unformed element of forces: the latter come from and remain attached to the outside, which stirs up their relations and draws out their diagrams. And then there is *the exterior* as the area of concrete assemblages, where relations between forces are realized. And lastly there are *the forms of exteriority*, since the realization takes place in a split or disjunction between two different forms that are exterior to one another and yet share the same assemblages (the confinements and interiorizations being only transitory figures on the surface of these forms).

Later we shall try to analyse this whole group as it appears in the form of 'the thought of the outside'. But no doubt it already shows that nothing in Foucault is really closed off. The history of forms, the archive, is doubled by an evolution of forces, the diagram. The forces appear in 'every relation

from one point to another': a diagram is a map, or rather several superimposed maps. And from one diagram to the next, new maps are drawn. Thus there is no diagram that does not also include, besides the points which it connects up, certain relatively free or unbound points, points of creativity, change and resistance, and it is perhaps with these that we ought to begin in order to understand the whole picture. It is on the basis of the 'struggles' of each age, and the style of these struggles, that we can understand the succession of diagrams or the way in which they become linked up again above and beyond the discontinuities.³⁸ For each diagram testifies to the twisting line of the outside spoken of by Melville, without beginning or end, an oceanic line that passes through all points of resistance, pitches diagrams against one another, and operates always as the most recent. And what a strange twist of the line was 1968, the line with a thousand aberrations! From this we can get the triple definition of writing: to write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map: 'I am a cartographer'.³⁹