CHAPTER 5

RESPONSES:
DERRIDA AND HABERMAS
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This chapter has two basic aims: the first is partly by way of a response to Derrida's criticism against Foucaultian discourse that it combines a commitment to a structural study with a historicist conception of the relationship between the text and the world. The second is Habermas' explicit criticisms of the Foucaultian project. At the same time, the attempt here is not to take part in this debate as critical theorists and the school of deconstruction did. The objective is a critical assessment of the principles at issue in the controversy between these discourses.

A. TEXT AND DISCOURSE

Jacques Derrida's essay "Cogito and the history of Madness" raises several questions about the project of Madness and Civilisation as a whole. It strongly criticises Foucault's reading of Descartes. Derrida points out that the separation of madness and error exists in Descartes' texts only in a hypothetical, pre-philosophical stage of natural doubt. By doing so, Descartes establishes the possibility of madness within the Cogito itself and refuses to let any knowledge escape from its connection to doubt. Derrida argues further that the division between reason and madness that Foucault ascribes to Descartes and to the Classical Age in general is not really a choice between the two separate realms of madness and thought. It is rather a "dissension" within thought. It is an internal
In his response to Derrida's criticism, Foucault in his essay "My Body, This Paper, This fire"² argues that the exclusion of madness from philosophical discourse is an absolute necessity for Descartes. Derrida is forced to deny this aspect of Descartes because it establishes philosophical discourse as essentially "other" than madness, exterior to it. Hence it is not the "program to surpass all finite and determined totality". According to Foucault, Derrida represents the long tradition of classical interpreters who have misread Descartes' text through a systematic reduction of it to its "discursive practices" to "textual traces." Hence it grants an illusory authority to the act of interpretation and the role of the interpreter. Foucault is not entirely just to the rigour and the intellectual range of Derrida's texts which often manifest a "relentless erudition" comparable to Foucault's theatre. Foucault writes:

I shall say that what can be seen here so visibly is a historically well-determined little pedagogy. A pedagogy which teaches the pupil that there is nothing outside the text, but that in it, in its gaps, its blanks and its silences, these reigns the reserve of the origin; that is, therefore unnecessary to search elsewhere, but that here, not
in the words, certainly but in the words under erasure, in their grid, the sense of being is said. A pedagogy which gives conversely to the Masters' voice the limitless sovereignty which allows it to restate the text indefinitely (DPP: 27).

Foucault has accurately portrayed much that today is called the Derridean pedagogy proliferating in American academic circles under the name of deconstruction. Like any orthodoxy, as Foucault has done so much to show, Derridean deconstruction closes off many avenues of thought. It excludes certain kinds of statements and certain kinds of inquiry. It claims absolute priority for exegesis, for reading and interpretation which are produced by no other forces than the collision of text with reader.

Foucault's "polemic" thus challenges Derrida on some fundamental points: that Derrida's readings are ahistorical, that Derrida's own discourse merely revives familiar hermeneutical models which are themselves historically determined and that instead of liberating the text from worn-out and tiresome traditions of reading and interpretation, Derrida has enclosed the text in a hermetic casing which enshrines the text's sovereignty. At the same time this guarantees the sovereignty of the Derridean reader. Like the Bible in a scriptural hermeneutics, the Derridean text becomes a scared object. The difference between Derrida and Foucault is the difference between the exegetical and the poetic-creative, resembling that between the interpretation of the Bible by the church Fathers and the
creative revision of the Bible by Blake. The alternative presented for contemporary criticism by Derrida and Foucault are roughly the endless repetition of "commentary" versus the energetic production of the "new archivist".

But Foucault's critique of Derrida's "little pedagogy" is perhaps not a just presentation of Derrida's position. From the moment he burst upon the intellectual scene with books like Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference, he has spoken a revolutionary rhetoric, announcing the closure of western philosophy, the birth of grammatology, the end of the book and the beginning of writing. His work stressed the themes of violence, usurpation and transgression. From "Tymphan" onwards he has been effectively tolling this bell. Derrida's works undertake a radical critique of the western tradition in philosophy. The position from which he launches his critique is within that tradition, even though at times he claims to be on its "margins". He writes in Of Grammatology:

We must begin wherever we are and the thought of the trace, which cannot take the scent into account, has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. Wherever we are: in a text where we already believe ourselves to be.

The beginning and continuing question raised by Derrida is the epistemology of the text in an era of ontological uncertainty. His "departure" is "radically empiricist. It
proceeds like a wandering thought on the possibility of itinerary and method.

Derrida's writing begins within a text and yet it aims at an explosion of the text itself in the activity of reading. Derrida's "general text" is that of western philosophy, literature, the human sciences. In short all writing in the west. Moreover, the local instances are almost invariably the major authors in the literary and philosophical tradition, Rousseau, Hegel, Mallarmé, Plato, Heidegger, Husserl. Derrida writes:

The writer writes in language and in a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system. And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses. This relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or of force, but a signifying structure that critical reading should produce.

Reading is commentary, but it is also much more. Derrida believes that the "moment of doubling commentary should no doubt have its place in a critical reading", but, truly critical reading goes further. At the same time reading "cannot ultimately transgress the text toward something other than it".
Derrida virtually in the same breath says: "There is nothing outside of the text". Reading does not so much confront the text's hegemony. The resistance of the text to this disentangling or "instituting" produces the signifying structure of the reading. Reading and text are mutually constitutive and irreducible.

But such an extension of textuality is inherently problematic. It begs the question of who or what produces critical reading. Derrida has addressed this question in a number of places. But each time he has essentially artfully managed the point by producing yet another reading which does not establish the grounds of its own possibility. Rather it shows how the attempt to reach such a stable beginning ground is always already differentiated into oppositions that undermine the project of such a pure beginning. In effect, Derrida constructs himself through what he has called "deconstruction". Deconstruction is thus a constitutive process that proceeds by a kind of pure Hegelian negation but rejects the Hegelian conclusion that negation is at the same time an "Aufhebung". As he says in the Positions interview: "If there were a definition of differance, it would be precisely the limit, the interruption, the destruction of the Hegelian releve wherever it operates". Derrida's readings are at once free and determined acts of willing that can never realise more than a rewriting of what has been recorded and preserved elsewhere.
Derrida finds in the text he reads (Pharmakon, Supplement, hymen) and others he conceives himself (differance, deconstruction, dissemination). These anti-words or anti-concepts all share in the fundamental semantic "undecidability" that Derrida believes is characteristic of all texts. Derrida cites this "undecidability" with respect to the concept of "allusion" in Mallarmé:

Allusion or suggestion as Mallarme says elsewhere, is indeed that operation we are here by analogy calling undecidable .... Undecidability is not caused here by some enigmatic equivocality, some inexhaustible ambivalence of a word in a natural language .... In dealing herewith hymen, it is not a matter of repeating what Hegel undertook to do with German words like Aufhebung, Urtiel, Mienen, Beispial, etc. Marvelling over that lucky accident that installs a natural language within the element of speculative dialectics.... What counts here is the formal or syntactical praxis that composes and decomposes it.

Derrida carries out a rigorous critique of formalist and thematic criticism. He demonstrates how this criticism can never escape the reductive position of "semanticising" what is without determinate semantic content. A text for Derrida is always unstable, impenetrable and illogical. Hence, the practically endless task of reading and interpretation noted by Foucault.
To reside comfortably in the belief that all texts are undecidable is an evasion of the very problem that Derridean reading sets out to attack. The concepts which Derrida uses do not have any privileged status within language. Derrida is certainly aware of this difficulty and attempts to deal with it directly in "The Double Session":

What holds for "hymen" also holds mutatis mutandis, for all other signs which like pharmakon, supplement, différance and others, have a double, contradictory, undecidable value that always derives from their syntax, whether the latter is in a sense internal, articulating and combining under the same yoke, hyph’hen, two incompatible meanings, or external, dependent on the code in which the word is made to function. But the syntactical composition and decomposition of a sign renders this alternative between internal and external inoperative. One is simply dealing with greater or lesser syntactical units at work and with economic differences in condensation... Is it by chance that all these play effects, these words that escape philosophical mastery, should have in widely differing historical contexts, a very singular relation to writing? These words admit into their games both contradiction and non-contradictions.14

But once again Derrida has merely substituted instability, indecisions, doxa for stability, decidability, episteme. Derrida’s "Double Session" becomes a kind of inviolable system
that denies the possibility of any reading reaching a point other than the terminus of undecidability.

It is at this point that the Derridean pedagogy becomes subject to the critique begun by Foucault. The central question for Foucault has always been one of method; of how to do historical work that is not bound by the constraints of traditional intellectual history. In their methods of criticism and analysis Foucault and Derrida differ profoundly. In his response to Derrida's unfavourable reading of Madness and Civilisation, Foucault argues that it is not enough for Derrida merely to read the text of Descartes' *Meditations* even in the intense and precise way that Derrida reads any text. Derrida is not seeing the regularities of discursive practice which govern Descartes' *Meditation* and which produces the Cartesian discourse under the pressure of intra and extra-textual determinants.

For Foucault, the production of the Cartesian discourse does not depend upon an absolutely pure philosophical beginning. But Derrida argues it does. For Foucault this depends upon the discursive practice which enables that discourse to be produced at all. According to Foucault any reading of Descartes must, thus, not only take into account but must describe and analyse the rule of meditative practice which makes Descartes' *Meditation* possible. Neither the Cartesian meditation nor the reading of it is free from the constraints of discursive regularities. They are specific to the historical and political moments which they inhabit.
At this point, the essential opposition between Derrida and Foucault emerges. Derrida contends that Foucault's language cannot possibly escape from the traps of ordinary language. His writing is merely a reaffirmation of the Cartesian cogito. Foucault's writing is radically determined by the sedimentation of the western family of languages. This privileges unity, presence and reason over heterogeneity, absence and madness. Hence, Foucault's desire to write the history of madness is chimerical. According to Derrida, no writing can do more than reinscribe the series of terms representing reason's sovereignty over the production of madness. Foucault in his turn challenges Derrida on the grounds of the inability of Derridean reading to specify differences. According to Foucault, for Derrida all thinkers are one thinker, the history of western thought is a series of permutations on a central theme - presence, God, logocentrism, the transcendental reduction and the cogito. Derrida collapses the Cartesian distinction between reason and madness into a unitary concept of reason. In short, Foucault claims that for Derrida, Foucault says the same thing as Descartes, who says the same thing as Husserl, who says the same thing as Plato and so on. Foucault, who has been accused of being unable to account for historical change takes Derrida to the task for reducing history to a platonic series. Peter Miller writes:

Madness for Descartes is seen to reside at a level other than that of the subject that thinks. The impossibility of being mad is ascertained not at the level
of the object of thought but at that of the thinking subject. Madness is both the condition of impossibility of thought as well as that which is excluded by the subject that doubts. For Descartes, the possibility of madness is expelled from the exercise of Reason .... It is precisely Foucault's search elsewhere in the relations he identifies between philosophical, literary, juridical, administrative and finally medical practices that the novelty of his enterprise resides.**

Now we can ask the question: how can Foucault's archaeologies avoid the textual destiny, described by Derrida? If Derrida is correct in his argument that the tropes of language fix the boundaries of all discourse, can we then say that Foucault's archaeologies arise from within and are governed by precisely those tropes of presence and logocentrism? Archaeology is a descriptive procedure that transforms a body of knowledge by articulating its rules of organisation and transformation. But archaeological description does not merely repeat the terms in which the body of knowledge itself is formulated. It is not what Derrida calls the "double commentary" which has its moment in every interpretation of a text. In this way, Archaeology is never bound to the text or discourse-object in the way of Derridean reading. Rather Archaeology maps a historically later discourse into an earlier one. Any archaeological description is thus a mode of knowing, hence an exercise of power over what has been said in the past. Archaeology constitutes "a critique of our own time, based upon retrospective analyses".
Foucault's methodological elaboration of the procedure of arachaeological description can be seen to have emerged from the historical investigations he undertook into the theories of knowledge as they were manifested in various discourses. What these archival investigations showed is how knowledge is not something transparent or accessible to an act of simple perception. It is an organised, disciplined rigorous system that separates objects into categories and arranges them in a grid. Knowledge is a radical distortion, derangement and rearrangement of objects into regular structures or functions. It is never simply the given, just as reality is never simply what is "out there". Knowledge is always produced through the agency of some knower or group of knowers. At the same time for Foucault, the knower is not so much an individual or a culture as a discourse. What is known, what can be known is what can be described. Description must proceed according to rules of intelligibility. These rules change. Arachaeology is a description of these rules. Then the question is: what are the rules of transformation and procedures established by Foucaultian theatre. Like Derrida, Foucault evolves a set of terms to describe his practice: discursive formation, archive, statement, episteme, positivities, discourse and so on. But unlike Derrida, Foucault does not carry over these terms into his subsequent works.

Still, Derrida's question looms large over Foucault's enterprise: How can Foucault differentiate himself from the discourses he analyses? How can Foucault hope to do more than reinscribe the relations which he has exposed to scrutiny?
Foucault's writing does not claim to stand outside the discursive regularities of the modern administrative society. Rather it asserts its right to speak within this discursive practice about things not generally spoken of. Discourses always create the possibility of their reversal. No discourse can exhaust the possibilities for action and for counter-discursive practices which it brings into existence in its articulation. It is this excess, this residuum of non-formalised language which knowledge produces but cannot completely control. He writes:

Discourse ceases to be what it is for the exegetic attitude: an inexhaustible treasure from which one can always draw new, and always unpredictable riches... an asset that consequently from the moment of its existence (and not only in its practical applications) poses the question of power; an asset that is, by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle. (AK: 120).

The question that arises then is: What is the status of the text in Foucault and Derrida? For Foucault the significance of *Meditations* is its effort to qualify the kind of subject who has the right to think and question. This is concealed through a discursive strategy. This strategy can be deciphered when it is seen in the context of the social practices that determines it. This will be impossible if the text is as a "sign in itself".

For Derrida, text does not function as an expression of something outside itself. That which appears external to the text is produced by the resources of the text itself. Foucault in his reply to Derrida focuses on the fundamental issue of
historicism. According to Foucault, we are in the middle of a traditional question: is philosophical discourse itself conditioned? If there is something extra-textual that determines and constrains the production of discourse, then philosophy cannot claim to be a foundational discourse. Foucault argues that Derrida has tried to preserve for philosophy its old autonomy. By doing so he has revived the classical function of criticism which attempted to protect philosophy from its determination by social and historical forces.

Foucault begins his essay by arguing that in designating the dream as more universal Derrida really erases the double function of dream in the discourse of the *Meditations*. A meditation functions both as an argument of logic and an exercise of demonstrations. Descartes discredits the example of madness at the level of an exercise. It is this structure inherent in the *Meditations* as a discourse that leads Descartes to choose the "customary" over the "extravagant". This is what Foucault meant when he argued that madness for Descartes concerns not the objects of thought but the subject who thinks.

Derrida proposes a voice behind the text. Derrida has to insert the voice behind the text, to read this into the text. As regards the text, this approach effaces the distinction between the original and its readings. The aim of the reading is not to discover the purity of the original. It aims to show the operation and functioning of the text itself as text. Texts do not face the world directly but are embedded in networks of
practices and their operations as texts within the intertextual universe. This is what Foucault would call "rules" discoverable in a discursive formation. The discovery of such rules or strategies according to Foucault, is designed against metaphysical closures. Moreover, texts as objects have independent objective relations with other objective formations. In such ways any given text deploys a politics or ethics. For example, Descartes' text itself deploys a strategy that sets up possible practices. These practices or strategies are in the text to be discovered and utilised. They are not in Descartes. The text is not a natural object, it does not have a "mute" relationship to itself and its world.

Another aspect which Derrida finds problematic is the issue of historicism. Does a philosophical text exhibit an "unconscious exclusion" determining the movement of its argument? According to Derrida, the text imposes itself, its own closures forces and constraints on reading and writing practices. In Derrida's view, one must not be carried away by the discovery of reading as closure and strategy. As we have seen above, for Foucault, this claim takes us to the question of whether philosophical discourse itself is conditioned?

Now we can turn Derrida's question to his own enterprise. What is the status of his texts? As readings, do they reveal the mechanisms of other texts or simply of themselves? The position constructed here which forms from the exchange between Derrida and Foucault is indeed a strange and difficult way to think about

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the history of philosophy. Between Derrida and Foucault there is no traditional philosophical dispute which is why the debate is elusive. What is left is the absence of older certainties.

B. Habermas and Foucault

It is to the credit of Jurgen Habermas to have recently broken the seals on the hermetic casks of the question of Modernity versus post-Modernity. He thus opened a crucial debate. The main focus of his attack is the new aesthetic substrate of modern philosophy itself. Habermas locates Foucault's project in the history of several attempts at a totalising critique of reason. He argues that Foucault is still caught up in the "conceptual straightjacket" of the philosophy of the subject which his theory tried to overcome.

For Habermas cultural modernity comprises theoretical, practical and aesthetic spheres which attain autonomy from one another from the end of the eighteenth century. The assumption here is that social modernisation is accompanied by such a three-fold differentiation in the cultural sphere. The negative consequences of this for Habermas lie in the autonomisation of the aesthetic realm. In this context, the aesthetic realm is completely separated from every daylife. Aesthetic modernity in effect undermines theoretical and practical reason.17

Habermas' attack on French philosophy follows from his attacks on aesthetic modernity. He claims that the privilege attributed to the aesthetic sphere by the "neo-Nietzscheans"
tends to undermine theoretical and practical rationality. He contends that such a primacy of the aesthetic entails an absence of social mediation. Moreover, it shows a lack of articulation between cultural modernity/postmodernity and everyday social practices.

In this discussion we shall see that the "neo-Nietzscheans" indeed have conceived of their works in terms of social mediations and in close conjunction with the micro-politics of the new social movements. Their view of the aesthetic realm is in no way a transcendental aesthetics. For the French philosophers, the aesthetic is paramountly a matter of political practice. Habermas operates with a core notion of moral or natural rights that is systematically excluded by the theoretical framework of the French philosophers. The strong notion of consensus and the banishment of the aesthetic in communicative action theory is problematic regarding the issue of power and subjugation.

For Habermas the substantively rational goal of critical theory, a life-world free from forms of subjugation is inherent in the "truth". The speech-acts are situated in this inter-subjective realm. Speech acts, taken generically are intended to bring about a specific set of interpersonal relations. According to him, speech acts can be accepted or rejected by the hearer. Speech acts are accepted by hearers if they are recognised as valid. In this sense they are accompanied by validity claims. The difficulty arises here. Speech acts
must be comprehensible to the hearer to be recognised as valid. But the validity claims include assertions about the truth of expressions in regard to the extralinguistic world. They thus involve thus claims to the truth of expressions in connection with the external world. It includes claims to the rightness or appropriateness of locutions in connection with the social world and claims to the sincerity of locutions in regard to the subjective world. Habermas speaks of "constative" speech acts in relation to the external world, of "regulative" speech acts in relation to the world of social norms and of "expressive" speech acts in regard to the subjective world. 18

Constative and regulative speech acts stand in a special proximity to a world of "discourse" or of "argumentation". If a constative act is rejected and attempts at its empirical groundings are also rejected, then we are likely to move into the world of "theoretical discourse". If a regulative act is rejected and the extent a social norm in which the speaker attempts to ground it is also rejected, speaker and hearer may move into the world of "practical discourse". In the world of "practical discourse" arguments are put forward for the validity of the norms themselves. 19

The substantive rationality that serves as objective for Habermas should be understood as entailing substantive natural rights because all norms contain an imperative, whose binding nature stems from a source that is external to the norm itself. All obligations entail the existence of rights. Habermas wants
the enlightenment type formal rationality of social norms to be
extended and developed into substantive rationality.

Habermas' theory is "procedural". According to him, norms
are accorded validity to the extent that they are chosen by
rational autonomous individuals. Habermas' "practical discourse"
can be understood as a theory of natural rights. In an interview
with French Maoists on popular justice Foucault objected to even
the slim residues of legality that remained in the people's
courts of Maoist China. He writes:

Now my hypothesis is not so much that the court is
the natural expression of popular justice, but rather its
historical function is to ensnare it, to control it and to
strangle it, by reinscribing it within institutions which
are typical of state apparatus .... can we not see the
embryonic, albeit fragile form of a state apparatus
reappearing here? A way of disarming it in the struggle it
is conducting in reality in favour of an arbitration in the
realm of the ideal? This is why I am wondering whether the
court is not a form of popular justice but rather its first
deformation? " (PK: 1-2).

According to Foucault, the classical period (1650-1800) is
associated with dualist epistemologies and a dualist paradigm of
power that Foucault calls "juridico-discursive". In the modern
period dualisms disappear and power operates no longer
represively and negatively. It operates positively in "the
Capillaries of Society" as a normalising and individuating force.

For Foucault such notions associated with the classical period
are inadequate for the present analysis. The four basic characteristics of the modern here are: (a) the break with epistemological dualisms toward an immanent relationship of concepts and their referents, (b) that power begins to operate positively rather than transcendentally and repressively, (c) the birth of the human sciences, (d) the elevation to a position of priority of the social. In the interview with Gerard Raulet, Foucault seemed to gloss over the modern as a series of "formalisms" that were characteristic of the twentieth century thought. Foucault writes:

The Americans were planning a kind of seminar with Habermas and myself. Habermas has suggested the theme of modernity for the seminar. I feel troubled here because I do not grasp clearly what might mean; though the word itself is unimportant, we can always use any arbitrary model. But neither do I grasp the kind of problems intended by the term - or how they would be common to people thought of as being "Postmodern" (PPG : 34).

Habermas locates emancipation in the juridical complex that Foucault depicted as being shot full of domination. Foucault's works present an alternative understanding of modernity that allows for some liberatory claims without also advancing formal, rational and juridically-based claims of domination. We will examine the extent to which Foucault separated himself from Habermas in evaluating the politics of consensus. By reframing the question of priority, Foucault interrogated the concept of
consensus as a technique of power. He writes:

I would say, rather, that it is a critical idea to maintain at all times: to ask oneself what proportion of nonconsensuality is implied in such a power relation, and whether that degree of nonconsensuality is necessary or not, and then one may question every power relation to that extent. The farthest I would go is to say that perhaps one must not be for consensuality, but one must be against nonconsensuality. (FR: 379).

Foucault was reluctant to endorse such a seemingly benign principle of rule as consensus. This was because he understood the notion of consensus to be a partial representation of the multiple and contingent relations between politics and ethics that arbitrate the arrangements of power in a given regime of truth. Foucault opposed nonconsensuality because it rules people without their consent. Yet he also refused to place nonconsensuality, whether actual or ideal, beyond criticism. According to Foucault, it contains artifice and blurs the contingency of its own truth and participates in the defeat of otherness.

Foucault attempted to distinguish his position from those who profess to consensual solutions by scrutinising the meaning of consensus against a backdrop of danger. He writes:

I am not looking for an alternative; you can't find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by another people. You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions and that's the
reason I don't accept the word alternative. My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper- and pessimistic activism. (FR: 343).

If everything is dangerous, then it follows that there can be no privileging of any aspect of experience over others in the hope of ordering all experiences. The greater the concentration of hope in a particular realm, the more dangerous matters become. Habermas contends that Foucault's early work on madness duplicated Bataille's important romanticisation of the "other" of reason. Habermas reconstructs Foucault's position and the ways in which it evolved over a period of years largely as a process of intellectual problem-solving. Thus his approach to Foucault's work is itself based on a conception of intellectual history which Foucault rejects. Habermas writes:

Foucault takes up the heritage of Bataille's heterology in his Archaeology of Knowledge. What differentiates him from Bataille is the merciless historicism before which even the pre-discursive reference point of sovereignty dissolves.

Let us turn to this question by looking at the project of Madness and Civilisation. In this book, the mid-seventeenth century heralded a new relationship between words and things. It was the condition of existence for a different discourse on madness, one that systematically excluded the mad forcing it into the realm
of the other. This space was previously occupied by death. In the sixteenth century, words and their referents both of whose consistency was of a certain substantiality or materiality were connected through similitude. Serious speech facts functioned to preserve life by keeping death and not the mad, who were not in any completely extended from discourse. This sixteenth-century episteme that Foucault characterised in terms of "hermeneutics" did not advocate the realist notions of truth that could separate the world into realms of light and knowledge on the one hand and darkness and madness on the other. The Cartesian synthesis of the seventeenth century protected man's ability to control his environment. But at what price? The new discursive space was made possible through the trans-substantiation of madness from opacity into darkness and its exclusion into the realm of the Other. The other of the non-discursive language is inhabited by figures of madness, sexuality and death. The non-discursive language in the space between the Same and Other persists in a struggle against death. If Foucault sees Blanchot in terms of the new aesthetic poised against death, he understands Bataille in terms of the drawing of such non-discursive language on sexuality. Here the key concept is "transgression". Foucault characterises transgression as a violent act. It is neither negative nor positive (LCP : 29-52). It is not a "victory over limits" nor does it transform the other side of the limit "into a gathering expanse". It is an affirmation of difference, an affirmation which confirms the alterity of the different without recapitulation.
It should be clear now, that in contrast to Habermas's criticism, what is at stake here is more than an aesthetic. When theory acts through transgression on the realm of discourse it mobilises a critique. It is preeminently practical and political. The practical and political nature of such a critique is clear in Foucault's conscious relation to the social movement and micro-politics of the nineteen seventies. Foucault's aesthetics are, in brief, as Edward Said has noted, an "ethics of language".


2. "My Body, This Paper, This Fire" is Foucault's response to Derrida's essay in *Writing and Difference* about *Madness and Civilisation*.


5. Normalisation is one of the most important concept in Foucault's work. It is related to the concepts of discipline, surveillance and the administration of power.


8. Idem.


