Chapter One

Introduction: Towards Tri-hierarchization
I. Statement of the Problem: Politics and Structuration

Art and literature, words that send ripples in so many minds, words that represent the height and might of human creativity, words that stand for sources of joy and relief in a fatiguing world full of intrigues and sorrow. And yet, these very words constitute the great divide between the cultured and the uncultured, the literate and the illiterate, between what is 'high' and what is 'low', these very forms construct in their social dispensation stereotypical notions about races and genders, demarcation between classes. In short, in spite of being entertaining, literature and art comprise the abode of hierarchization too, or to be more precise, it is only through weaving a complex web of hierarchies that literature entertains. The dialectics of discourse, as manifest between the author and the text at the level of its production, between market forces and critics, reviewers or social expectations at the level of circulation, and between the text and the reader at the level of consumption, is thus intrinsically related to a system of hierarchies that control the discourse and get transformed themselves in return. Hierarchies being the constitutive category of discursive formations, every reading becomes implicated in a game of power, every reading is political. The politics of course can be either an endorsement of the hierarchies posited in the text through its passive 'enjoyment', or a resistant unearthing of the same hierarchies, enjoyment in the latter case being derived from a discovery of the hidden text, a mastery over its multiple meanings, and a successful appropriation of the textual space. None of this is revelatory because most forms of literary theories and criticism have been saying the same things for the past hundred years or so. While there is neither novelty nor much problem in upholding the political nature of discursivization and believing that it is far desirable in such a situation to belong to the progressive resistant side than to the regressive endorsing one, the problem starts only after the adoption of such a stance. The problem arises from the simple fact that the hierarchies that control the dialectics of discourse are multiple: there is not just one mode of power that operates on discursive formations, there are, and as my illustrations have already shown, a plurality of diverse hierarchies working on representational forms. Therefore, a resistant reading of literature can adopt any of the following two stances: it can either restrict itself to any one of these hierarchies and totally unmask it while ignoring other hierarchic modes, or it can take into consideration all forms of hierarchies and choose to attack all of them uniformly. The first possible stance, which may be seen at work in a reductionist Marxism that does not take contradictions belonging to other domains like gender or race into consideration or a similarly reductionist feminism for which gender is the only determinant contradiction and so on, is simply reductionist and incomplete, and in its attempt to demolish hierarchies is likely to create other dogmatic hierarchic forms. On the other hand, the second stance is bound to lose much, if not all, of its bite if it gets lost in the multiplicity it pursues and fails to structure for itself a coherent and consistent anti-hierarchic method. This is my initial problem.
II. Towards ‘Tri-Hierarchization’ and Foucault

The problem warrants that either one should devise a ‘tool’ that can coherently deal with the multiplicity of hierarchies and unmask all of them without favouring one over the others and thereby creating a hierarchy within the contradictions themselves, or one should leave aside all pretensions to a truly resistant critical practice. It is a quest for this device that this study sets on. What should be added as a caution is that this ‘tool’, in spite of having the capacity to locate some ontological similarities between different modes of hierarchies and thereby making a coherent though pluralistic method possible, cannot be a grand unifying structure, dissolving all contradictions into a global edifice, because then its very purpose lies betrayed. It can be just a tool, a provisional category that helps one structure a limitless amorphous multiplicity into a manageable plurality for the sake of a truly practicable critical praxis, a tool that ceases to have any theoretical value once its political objective is attained.

Embarking on such a project, the first thing one notices is that contemporary radical literary criticism is broadly divided into three groups: one which talks about hierarchies emerging from different cultural markers like language, religion, nationality, ethnicity, etc., leading on to the politics of colonialism and race; a second which talks primarily about the historical role of class structures and the disparate material possessions of the classes; and a third which discusses hierarchies that belong to the domain of gender and sexuality, like marginalization of women, diatribe against homosexuality, etc. What can be noticed, at a very preliminary level is that the primary contradiction for the first type of hierarchies belongs to the domain of mental constructions and significational devices, though physiological disparities are important for a category like race, and disparate economic conditions can always be discovered at the root of colonialism, because it is primarily differences in culture, religion, language, and level of knowledge and civilization that determines racial hierarchies (this argument is discussed in detail in Chapter 10 below). Similarly, class hierarchies operate on disparities in the domain of material possession and control, with forces that are derivable from a socio-politico-economic materiality. And, though gender contradictions and marginalization of certain sexual preferences do have a cultural counterpart in stereotypical constructs which aid and abet the hierarchies, and a material dimension too, because women and homosexuals are segregated and denied certain professions and general access to the means of economic production, the primary contradiction for these hierarchies is definitely physiological, with the physical difference of sex and sexual preference primarily triggering off the hierarchic patterns. Thus, with some amount of generality, one can observe that hierarchies can be broadly classified into three groups, which for convenience’s sake one might label as ‘race’, ‘class’ and ‘gender’, and that they operate in the three domains of what I call, again for convenience alone, ‘mentality’, ‘materiality’ and ‘physicality’, respectively.
Thus, one arrives at two important assertions necessary to study the dialectics of discourse: first, the dialectics of discourse is essentially hierarchic; and second, these hierarchies can themselves be structured as originating from and operating within the three broad paradigms of mentality, materiality and physicality, or their intersective categories. Combining these two assertions, one arrives at the 'tool' the current study searches—the categorical device which I term 'tri-hierarchization'. It is this device, which asserts that discourses are connected to hierarchies and that these hierarchies can be analysed as bearing a particular tripartite form, that leads the study into Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Not only does Foucault subscribe to the first assertion when he says, in a 1975 interview, that 'literature functions as literature through an interplay of selection, sacralization, and institutional validation', but his entire theoretical universe can be seen as an unfolding of the second assertion too, whereby the device around which his thoughts revolve is the tripartition of hierarchic domains into mentality, materiality and physicality.

That the principle of tri-hierarchization governs Foucault's œuvre as a tool is clear even from a cursory glance at his works. He begins by relating power to knowledge in his earliest works, Mental Illness and Psychology (1954) and Madness and Civilization (1961), and soon includes the body into the schema in his The Birth of the Clinic (1963), thus foreboding a tripartite structure. By his The Order of Things (1966), the tripartition is sufficiently concretized, so that he can discuss the evolution of human sciences in terms of the three disciplines of language, economics and life sciences. The tripartition gets a political turn after 1968, to be reflected in Foucault's subsequent works, first in lectures and articles written on the political nature of linguistic discourse, next in his Discipline and Punish (1975), where he studies power in the domain of socio-politico-economic materiality, and finally in his three-volume The History of Sexuality (1976-84). Thus, Foucault invokes the principle of tri-hierarchization, and he makes this clear in his historical analysis of power in a 1976 article:

... from the heart of the Middle Ages power traditionally exercised two great functions: that of war and peace... To these functions were added—from the end of the Middle Ages—those of maintenance of order and the organisation of enrichment. Now in the eighteenth century we find a further function emerging, that of the disposition of society as a milieu of physical well-being, health and optimum longevity. The exercise of these three latter functions—order, enrichment and health—is assured...by an ensemble of institutions which in the eighteenth century take the generic name of ‘police’.

---

Two things should however be remembered in this context. The first is something that I have already stated, that this model of tri-hierarchization is an ontological category derived only for the sake of method, it is not a model of reality per se, not a reduced model of the whole of reality, but a device, or as Foucault would say, a 'tropological' tool, a construct around which a discourse tries to gain its elusive coherence. The second is that Foucault is not a transcendental subject who comes up with the novel idea of tri-hierarchization out of nowhere. Instead, as his formulations themselves suggest, ideas can only come out of the historical forces of what he calls an episteme, or a particular epistemological configuration, and the knowing subject can only be a historically informed and politically constituted subject. Therefore, a probe into the category of tri-hierarchization requires two complementary investigations, one into Foucault's method and the other into the historical genealogy of the Foucauldian sort of tri-hierarchist thought.

III. Archaeology and Genealogy: the Foucauldian Method

The method that I have been hinting at for some time now, the method which is coherent in itself, in spite of dealing with multiplicities and inconsistencies, the method which uses what I have called 'tri-hierarchization' as its tropological tool, is Foucault's two-pronged method of archaeology and genealogy. Foucault defines archaeology in detail in his Archaeology of Knowledge (1969) and genealogy in his article 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' (1971), which I take up for discussion in Chapters Six and Seven of this dissertation, respectively. Without going into any technical details here, I can list a few salient features of the two methodological components one after the other.

The term 'archaeology' itself suggests quite a few features of the method. First, it suggests that the method is connected to a historical quest. However, just as in a real archaeological enterprise one starts from the current ground level and moves deeper into farther levels of the past, in Foucault's archaeology too, the point of departure is always the present, the course in such a method being just the reverse of traditional historiography. The term also suggests a discontinuity, because as the archaeologist digs, he or she is not certain of finding a continuous chain of historical evidences but only a ruptured set of artefacts at different levels of a compartmental history. Finally, the term also suggests unearthing something that is as such beyond common appearance. Moreover, in addition to these four features that the term 'archaeology' itself entails, one can also notice in the archaeologist's enterprise a purposive unity, whereby the diverse and discontinuous findings are compared,

---

typologized, differentiated and related towards constituting, at least typologically, some
general historical finding. These five or six features can sum up Foucault’s notion of
archaeology, with it being a method to study history not in progressivist terms from the past
to the present, but in relation to the present, to find the ruptures in history, and locate how
certain epistemological breaks demarcate different epistemes, through which a discontinuous
current of thought passes through history, and from which archaeology unearths what eludes
the normal historian of ideas. Moreover, archaeology creates in the process a tropological tool
around which it tries to organize this diverse multiplicity which does not have any origin, any
locus, any line of continuous tradition, and also sets up a complex web of ‘similarities and
differences’, whereby it moves into different epistemes to find similar formations and
attempts to find heterogeneities within the same episteme.

To understand the second methodological component of genealogy is a little more
difficult, because while the features of the method archaeology are generally close to those of
the common noun it derives itself from, in the case of genealogy, Foucault departs radically
from what it would commonly suggest. While genealogy would normally involve a search for
origins, Foucault uses Nietzsche to define his genealogy not as a study of the Ursprung or the
origin, but of the Herkunft, or material descent, and Entstehung, or emergence, of phenomena.
For Foucault, Herkunft is not the result of a continuous and stable inheritance, but of a series
of accidents, deviations, reversals and errors, which give birth to things, while constantly
threatening the inheritor. Similarly, Foucault shows how Entstehung is not about the final
emergence of an event as the terminal stage in progressive historical development, but about
intermediate results of the constant interaction and struggle between contrary forces vying for
power. The emergence of discursive formations is thus the result of a power struggle, and the
hidden message that archaeology hinted at finally gets a political form in genealogy.

Finally, if one is to bring together the two methodological components of archaeology
and genealogy, it can be noticed that while archaeology gives the technical method towards
analysing discursive formations in history, genealogy gives the overall political perspective
with which it has to be done. To bring their features together, one realizes that one needs first
of all to keep the present as the point of departure, and move into the past only in relation to
it; secondly, once within the past, one needs to find the epistemological breaks that concern
the current study and the features of the epistemes thus created; thirdly, one has to discover
within this discontinuous mesh a tropological device, and also compare and contrast it with
similar formations in other epistemes; and finally, one has to give the whole enterprise a
political accentuation, by making an unearthing of the relationship between hierarchies and
discourse the objective of the search. This is what I propose to do in my thesis.
IV. Foucault and Tri-Hierarchization in the History of Thought

To locate Foucault and tri-hierarchization in the history of Western thought requires a location of the epistemological break that could have caused it, not only because the Foucauldian method prescribes it but also because tripartite thought dealing with power is not the commonest thing in dominant Western philosophy. The dominant trend in Western philosophy has been binary, with a schism between what are cursorily called mind and matter running through most of it, dividing it into two sets of schools, two sets of dogmatic and non-penetrating philosophies. This dichotomy can be noticed in Platonic Realism vs. Aristotelian Nominalism in the Graeco-Roman age, Cartesian Rationalism vs. Lockean Empiricism after the Renaissance and Idealism vs. Materialism in the nineteenth century. There are two points to be noticed in such a typology: first, the duality between mind and matter leaves out a separate category of the body from its fold, thereby stopping short of the tripartition of modes of structuration into mentality, materiality and physicality; and secondly, that there are some interstices between periods of dominant dichotomy, like the medieval scholastic logic between the Graeco-Roman age and the Renaissance, Romantic philosophy between the post-Renaissance episteme and the nineteenth century, and of course what comes after the nineteenth century. It can be expected that, since these interstices do not fall into the dominant binary schema of most of Western thought, one would notice in them the tripartition that I have been talking about. The expectation is true to a great extent, and as I show in Chapter Eleven of this dissertation, both medieval scholastic logic and Romanticism lead to the very tripartition with the inculcation of embodied imagination as a third epistemological category beyond mental ideation and material sensation. However, what is lacking in these two epistemes in spite of their tripartition of domains of structuration into mentality, materiality and physicality is the notion of power or the role of hierarchies in such a structuration, thereby distinguishing these two types of thought as merely tripartite as opposed to the tri-hierarchist thought that occurs in the third interstice within which modern literary theory and Foucault work. Thus, this current episteme being unique, one needs to locate what happened in the epistemes that precede it, which must have led to, by the end of the nineteenth century, to an epistemological break that operates in two ways—by bridging the philosophical schism and introducing a tripartition of modalities, and by investing this tripartition with a notion of power—to lead to what would be the tri-hierarchist episteme. What also has to be studied is the constitution of this episteme in terms of its features and modification of the problematics presented by the epistemological break. In short, what need to be studied to locate Foucault in the history of ideas are how Western philosophy takes certain turns throughout the last three centuries to lead to an epistemological break by the end of the nineteenth century, and how the episteme thus formed itself undergoes certain modifications to lead to the Foucauldian sort of tri-hierarchist thought. This is what I do in the next two chapters.
In Chapter Two, I take up post-Renaissance Western thought and show how from within both the Rationalist-Idealist and the Empiricist-Materialist poles there arises a movement towards bridging the schism, leading to the possibility of a third category of thought, where as opposed to the dichotomy of mind and matter, the body gains primacy, which I term 'Physicalism' and identify in the works of Spinoza, Rousseau, Condorcet, Helvetius and Comte. It is further noticed in the chapter how post-Renaissance thought gets progressively invested with the notion of power. Both the features of the epistemological break—tripartition and hierarchization—having been brought in by the middle of the nineteenth century, the chapter proceeds next to see how this rudimentary version of tri-hierarchization gets further crystallized in the works of Feuerbach and Nietzsche. Finally, I show how the epistemological break works itself out to its full into a sort of proto-tri-hierarchization in the works of Darwin, Marx and Freud, who show the workings of power, in the forms of 'struggle for existence', 'class struggle', and the struggle between the id and super-ego, in the domains of physicality, materiality and mentality, respectively.

While this epistemological break has been read as establishing something close enough to tri-hierarchization by the end of the nineteenth century itself, there are two points in this tripartition which had to be reoriented in the episteme thus formed to lead to the possibility of the sort of tri-hierarchization I am dealing with. The first point is that Marx, Darwin and Freud deal with hierarchies only in their respective domains of the tripartition, without showing much concern for the role of power in the other two domains, leading therefore to the possibility of reductionism, which is definitely not the objective of tri-hierarchization, which attempts to unmask all normative hierarchies. The second point is that these three thinkers, as well as all those who think of power before the epistemological break, conceive of power in terms of either of the two traditional antithetical notions of power—either the benign sociological model of power as the agency of social cohesion and normality, or the polemical representation of power as repression, violence and coercion. For Foucault and tri-hierarchization however, as I have already stated, power is neither mono-model and unilateral nor merely repressive and coercive; power, according to this view, is a multiplicity that works not merely through coercion but through a complex process of coercion and consensus, through production of discourses and instigation and interpellation of subjects of control. Accordingly, in Chapter Three, I show how certain twentieth-century thinkers like Lenin, Gramsci, Althusser, Sartre, Breton and Bakhtin attend these two problems by taking power beyond the base to superstructural categories on the one hand, and giving it a hegemonic, ideological, multiple, productive role beyond its perception as merely coercive centralized State power, to lay the conditions of production of the episteme under discussion, and make Foucauldian formulations and tri-hierarchization in general possible.
In this context, one should also recall two other 'influences' on Foucault, which through their innovations in historiography help frame many of the key concepts of the Foucauldian method. The first of the two is the school of historians associated with the journal *Annales*, led by Lucien Febvre and later Fernand Braudel, who promoted a synthesizing research programme involving geography, economics, demography, sociology, ethnology and psychology in the study of history. Though this interdisciplinary edifice found its working principle in the Braudelian notion of 'general history', which was intensely humanist in being conceived of as the history of Man, and therefore was something quite contrary to Foucauldian archaeology, one cannot but notice that their inclusion of several positivities within the scope of historical research is sure to have influenced Foucault, who could take the study of history into diverse fields like madness, medical sciences, penal systems and sexuality. The second, and a more sanguine influence on Foucault is the history of sciences, as especially seen in the works of Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) and Foucault’s doctoral supervisor Georges Canguilhem (1904-1996). It is Bachelard who first used the concept of epistemological break and *episteme*, and though Althusser used it in social analysis before Foucault (see Chapter Three), the influence is clear. The influence of Canguilhem is even greater, because he coins the term 'veridical discourses' for tendentious discourses with projects for formulation of ‘true’ propositions, which are 'scientific' not through their actual truth-content, but through the veridical normativity of their organization as a practice intended towards truth, and Foucault takes the two characteristics of this theorization—the propensity of a discourse towards truth, and the scientific model of a progressive teleology that it thus entails—and shows how these are true for many discourses belonging to the social and human sciences too. Besides, Foucault uses Canguilhem’s undermining of historical progressivity and advocacy for a removal of *the present* from a privileged position in his archaeology, where the present is treated not as the terminal point but as the point of departure, and his genealogy where the present gets treated in a diachronic gradient, determined by power.

It might be worthwhile to end this discussion with a reference to another tripartition that Foucault talks about, when he invokes three general forms of rationality to study the power/knowledge nexus as evident in three general orders of events. The forms of rationality through which power perpetrates itself are *programmes* which are normative, *strategies* which are improvisational, and *technologies* which use multiple capillary apparatuses. The three general orders of events are that of certain explicit, rational *discourses*, that of certain non-discursive social and institutional *practices*, and that of certain *effects* produced in the social field. The Foucauldian approach to power is all about seeing how these categories intersect and interact, controlling each other and also failing to provide a seamless unquestionable hierarchic pattern. I discuss all this in greater detail in Chapters Seven and Eight below.
V. Archaeology and the Structure of the Thesis

From what has already been stated, it is clear that this thesis deals with the role of hierarchies in the dialectics of discourse, to study which, it invokes the tropological device of tri-hierarchization, locates it in theory in and around Foucault, and proposes to study its formulation in archaeological and genealogical terms, by spotting initially the epistemological break and the constitution of the episteme within which Foucault might work. While some features of the archaeological enterprise—that it concerns a historical study, that it tries to look below the surface for formulations concealed from the eye, that it talks of a ruptured history of ideas framed by epistemological breaks, and that it evokes in the process a tropological tool—have already been attended to in this discussion, certain others—that it takes as its point of departure the present, that it tries to derive its formulations from a play of similarities and differences, and that it entails an ethical imperative of not just identifying but demolishing hierarchic patterns—have not yet been elaborated. I show how the first three of these points, which concern archaeology, are taken care of in the thesis, as I describe its structure in terms of its different sections and the pattern of chapterization.

The dissertation has four sections, with three chapters each. As the names of the sections would suggest, there is a spatial metaphor operating in the thesis, so that it starts on a journey ‘To Foucault’, enters ‘In Foucault’, starts off ‘From Foucault’ and reaches ‘Beyond Foucault’. While this spatial metaphor confirms the suggestion made in the title of the thesis that this is a study in theory ‘around’ Foucault, it also shows how Foucault is not treated here as a culmination, a destination, a locus, or even a central category, but one which serves as a privileged tool, which one must access but which one must also learn to surpass. Coming to the first section, where the thesis moves in the direction of Foucault, first of all it must be noticed that the point of departure is the present, so that it begins with questions thrown up not by some remote historical thought, but problems faced in current literary criticism. Accordingly, in the first chapter, i.e. the current chapter, I make a statement of the problem from the point of view of a late twentieth-century student of literature, and only then take off on a search demanded by that problem. Having fulfilled this feature of archaeology, and also having laid down the objective of the search, I try in the second and third chapters to fulfil a second feature of the method by identifying the epistemological break and the constitution of the episteme that could make Foucauldian thought possible. Since I have briefly discussed the content of these two chapters just a couple of pages back, I will not repeat any of it, but simply state that it is through this archaeological finding of the constitution of the conditions of production of the tropological tri-hierarchist thought, that I proceed in the thesis towards Foucault, and after having reached this episteme, not as a received a priori but as an archaeologically derived category, I study, in the next two sections, formulations by Foucault.
In the second section, when 'in Foucault', I take up his early works to see how the category of tri-hierarchization gets first hinted at. In Chapter Four, I discuss the first three texts by Foucault: *Mental Illness and Psychology* (1954), where Foucault proposes a possible nexus between power and knowledge; *Madness and Civilization* (1961), where Foucault extends the thesis further to show how dominant ideology and its systems of power control knowledge and construct its other, i.e. madness; and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), where Foucault takes his still dual thought to the realm of tripartition by showing how the body becomes implicated as an object in the interplay of power and knowledge, as evident especially in the history of medical sciences. In Chapter Five, I discuss Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966), where gives the tripartition hinted at in his earlier works a concrete form, when he shows how epistemic changes in Western thought can be studied through an analysis of changes in the three domains of words, things, and living beings, corresponding to the tripartition I have already identified. He shows how the Renaissance approach to language, the universe, and living beings, based on resemblance, gives way in the Enlightenment to a study of general grammar, analysis of wealth and the natural sciences based on representation, which in turn gives way to philology, political economy and biology based on analogies and successions in the nineteenth century. He shows how this triad gets a humanistic turn by the end of the nineteenth century, to create the three human sciences—myth and literary analysis in the place of philology, sociology in the place of economics, and psychology in the place of mere biology—which in turn get opposed by three even newer positivities—linguistics, ethnology, and psychoanalysis—comprising what Foucault calls the 'counter sciences', heralding the possible end of the modern *episteme* and the beginning of a new order of things. Having arrived at a concrete depiction of the tripartition, in Chapter Six, I turn to Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), to study the method Foucault adopts to reach this formulation. What should be noted is that while Foucault arrives at the tripartition in this early phase of his works, and also includes the notion of power in it, he does not really talk about the political nature of the very constitution of these three domains. It is only in his later works, the threshold being marked by the 1968 students' unrest in Paris, that archaeology gets supplemented by genealogy and the tripartition gets translated into tri-hierarchization. It is therefore with these texts that one can take off 'from Foucault' towards a political analysis of texts, and so it is this phase that constitutes my third section. In Chapter Seven, I discuss genealogy as well as how Foucault conceives the role of hierarchies in the significative 'mental' domain of linguistic discourse, through an analysis of different articles and interviews on the subject. In Chapter Eight, I discuss his *Discipline and Punish* (1975), to see how Foucault analyses the role of hierarchies in socio-politico-economic 'materiality' as represented by the penal system. And in Chapter Nine, I analyse his three-volume *The History of Sexuality* (1976-84) to study the same in the 'physical' domain of sexuality.
Having studied the principle of tri-hierarchization as evident in Foucault's works, having arrived at the tropological tool that this study is in search of, and having prepared to take off 'from Foucault', the thesis moves on next to its fourth section, i.e. 'beyond Foucault', first into contemporary literary theory, to come back to where it all started from, next to epistemes spatio-temporally quite unrelated to Foucault in search of similarities and differences, and finally towards an ethical 'conclusion' of the thesis. Accordingly, in Chapter Ten, I study first the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School through an analysis of works by Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Marcuse and Habermas, to see how a similar tri-hierarchist approach is arrived at. After this, I study the tripartition in radical trends in literary criticism: the critique of race and colonialism (for which I study works by Ngugi, Fanon, Said and Aijaz Ahmad), the critique of class hierarchies (I take up Lukács and Goldmann for this purpose), and the critique of gender assumptions, as represented by feminism (for which I study Anglo-American feminist critics like Millet, Ellmann, Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar, Moi, etc. and French feminists like Beauvoir, Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray) and gay-lesbian theory (for which I use a work by Eve Sedgwick). Having begun the pending archaeological task of searching similarities and differences, I move on next, in the eleventh chapter to epistemes quite unrelated to Foucault. I have already stated how the interstices in Western philosophy, medieval scholastic logic and Romanticism, present a tripartition of domains of structuration into mentality, materiality and physicality. In this chapter, I put the hypothesis to examination, and study how the tripartition is achieved in medieval philosophy, primarily through an analysis of Abélard, and how it is achieved in English Romanticism, primarily through an analysis of two very important odes by Keats. I move on next to another episteme, quite close to Foucault as one might presume, but ideologically quite distinct, namely that of structuralist analysis of narratives, where also I identify the same tripartition at work. Greimas structures Propp's functions of the canonical folktale into an actantial model that might apply to all narratives, and says that any narrative has six actants arranged in three pairs of binary opposition, each oppositional syntagma operating in one of the three paradigms of mental knowledge, socio-politico-economic power and physical desire. Barthes takes this tripartition of domains of structuration to even greater theoretical heights. Finally, I turn in the chapter to something absolutely unrelated to Foucault, Indian philosophy, where a tripartition of the three guṇa-s, the three basic puruṣārtha-s, the three upper castes, and the three principles of the trinity point to the same tripartition of the world into mentality, materiality and physicality. However, the differences in these 'similar' epistemic configurations lie in their indifference to real political situations, and so this, combined with implications from the earlier chapters takes the study to its final chapter, where I conclude by positing the category of 'dehierarchization', whereby it is imperative for the reader not just to identify but to unmask hierarchies posited in a text in all of the three domains already specified.
VI. Genealogy, the Critical Subject and Dehierarchization

I have already discussed tri-hierarchization as the ontological tool for this thesis, and archaeology-genealogy as its epistemology. However, I have barely mentioned its ethics, and this is what I do now to conclude my introduction to the thesis. I have stated that a recourse to the genealogical method entails a political interpretation, but what I intend to add now is that this indulgence in the political is not one restricted only to the level of identifying hierarchies and structuring them, but actually in attacking them, unmasking them, demolishing them, in performing what I term a 'dehierarchization'. But, if the critical subject is to be given the onerous task of dehierarchizing everything, it might be assumed that the subject becomes an omnipotent detached category, a transcendental benevolent agent who stands unsullied by all hierarchies. This is however not the case, because in Foucauldian thought, the very polarity of the subject-object dialectic is done away with, with the subject being a category constituted by the same hierarchies as the object. In his second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault provides for the category of 'subjectivization', whereby through an use of 'technologies of the self', an individual constructs himself or herself as a subject, a fictive category which gets invoked as the locus of all truth at the instigation of the productive power structures. Therefore, the ethical imperative of dehierarchization does not arise because the subject is beyond hierarchies, but because the subject is constituted by the same hierarchies and it is necessary for his or her liberation. Accordingly, for Foucault the category of the critical subject is not very important in dehierarchist practice, and he says in a 1983 interview,

> Anyway, my personal life is not at all interesting. If somebody thinks that my work cannot be understood without reference to such and such part of my life, I accept to consider the question. [Laughter] I am ready to answer if I agree. As far as my personal life is uninteresting, it is not worthwhile making a secret of it. [Laughter] By the same token, it may not be worthwhile publicizing it.  

This is why I do not discuss Foucault's biography in this study (except a few dates here and there and the fact that he was a homosexual, where it is relevant) and maintain that the dehierarchist act is anonymous much like what Foucault desires in a 1984 interview:

> ...the only law on the press, the only law on books, that I would like to see brought in, would be a prohibition to use an author's name twice, together with a right to anonymity and to pseudonyms so that each book might be read for itself. There are books for which the knowledge of the author is a key to its intelligibility. But apart from a few great authors, this knowledge, in the case of most of the others, serves absolutely no purpose. It acts only as a barrier. For someone like me—I am not a great author, but only someone who writes books—it would be better if my books were read for themselves, with whatever faults and qualities they may have.  

This point about its anonymity has to be kept in mind before discussing dehierarchization.

---


The first point that one has to remember in discussing what I term dehierarchization is that power is not a determining factor that acts upon otherwise neutral objects and mutates them into hierarchic forms. All objects are in any case embedded in a field of power, and are always already relations of hierarchies. The task of the dehierarchist critic is not just to identify this relationship and bask in the profound glory of stating the obvious, but to attack its very foundational roots. Foucault makes this very clear in a 1977 interview when he says,  

...the political is not something which determines in the last analysis (or over-determines) relations that are elementary and by nature 'neutral'. Every relation of force implies at each moment a relation of power (which is in a sense its momentary expression) and every power relation makes a reference, as its effect but also as its condition of possibility, to a political field of which it forms a part. To say that 'everything is political', is to affirm this ubiquity of relations of force and their immanence in a political field; but this is to give oneself the task, which as yet has scarcely even been out-lined, of disentangling this indefinite knot. 6  

The alternative, therefore, is of a resistant political practice, but since dehierarchization does not involve unmasking hierarchies in just one domain, but in all conceivable domains as made attainable through tri-hierarchization, this practice cannot fall back upon any one dogmatic political option. It has to be oriented towards the multiplicity of power, and Foucault says,  

Such an analysis...must not be evaded by those displacements that are glibly practised today: everything derives from the market economy, or from capitalist exploitation, or simply from the rottenness of our society... If 'politicisation' means falling back on ready-made choices and institutions, then the effort of analysis involved in uncovering the relations of force and mechanisms of power is not worthwhile. 7  

Therefore, dehierarchization as a method comprises three steps. First, a text has to be studied archaeologically and genealogically, that is in terms of its multiple and often hidden historical conditions of production. Secondly, the hierarchies that these conditions present being multiple and thus unmanageable, an invocation of the tool of tri-hierarchization would be able to conveniently typologize them and identify them. Finally, the hierarchies thus identified have to be critiqued, unmasked, destroyed. Criticism thus does not involve passing judgments on the qualities of this or that book, but as Foucault says in a 1980 interview, to raise storms:  

I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would not try to judge, but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea-foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply, not judgments, but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightning of possible storms. 8  

It is this storm that this humble thesis wishes to talk of, wishes to see brewing somewhere.

---


7 Ibid., 189-90.