

**“Deployment, device, apparatus”:** translations for *dispositif*

“Foucault generally uses this term to indicate the various institutional, physical and administrative mechanisms and knowledge structures, which enhance and maintain the exercise of power within the social body.”

-- <http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/index.html>

“The Confession of the Flesh” (1977), interview in *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, Ed. Colin Gordon (1980), p. 194.

Foucault: “What I’m trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.

***Scientia Sexualis***

We have a “will to knowledge” re: sex (65, 73), expressed in the development of sciences of sexuality through bringing the method of confession into scientific practices (65)

-- subtitle of French original: *La volonté de savoir* (The will to knowledge)

1. Some characteristics of confessional relationship

—*a power relationship*: “one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile” (61-62)

-- *confession is supposed to produce transformative effects on the speaker* “it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation” (62)

-- *the confession is a major method for producing truth in various social relationships*: “It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life .... One confesses in public and in private, to one’s parents, one’s educators, one’s doctor, to those one loves; one admits to oneself, in pleasure and pain, things it would be impossible to tell anyone else ....” (59)

*discussion*

-- without including the idea of guilt, is “confession” really the right term to use?

-- He might be using this term to point to how the way we think about sex, power and identity these days is grounded in religious practices in the West.

-- Does confession in the Catholic context best represent what is going on now in terms of love relationships, doctor-patient relationships, when talking to friends?

- Yes, insofar as the very language you use, the discourse you use when confessing, has already been created for you; when you confess you're still fulfilling the role that power relations set for you
- We can connect confession to honesty as a virtue, honesty about yourself to others; so confession everywhere that way

## 2. confession in scientific discourses on sex

a. methods of examination such as questionnaires, talking to the doctor/therapist, free association (psychoanalysis) work like confession (65)

b. role of the authority figure:

-- sex said to be elusive, hidden, needing to be drawn out by an interlocutor: "It had to be exacted, by force, since it involved something that tried to stay hidden" (66)

-- the authority has to interpret, decipher what is said; s/he has to constitute a discourse of truth on the basis of its decipherment" (the decipherment of what was said) (67)

c. sexuality said to be involved in causing many maladies, mental and physical (65); the confession and its effects are said to be therapeutic: "Spoken in time, to the proper party, ... the truth healed" (67)

## 3. What results from scientific discourses on sex: "sexuality"

-- *scientia sexualis* and its true discourses on sex "enables something called 'sexuality' to embody the truth of sex and its pleasures" (68)

-- what "sexuality" is said to be is defined through such scientific discourses & practices (bottom of p. 68)

-- various kinds of sexualities (47; perversions 43)

-- "Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct . . . ." (105; optional chapter).

*What is sexuality?*

Developed when we moved from sovereign power to bio-power—that's when we get notions such as the homosexual as a "species" (43)

People used to engage in actions, have thoughts, desires, dreams, feelings, pleasures; these get put together and reified in a single entity called "sexuality."

Sexuality as a concept starts with being concerned about what is abnormal. The "truth" of sexuality is the norm that is generated by dominant groups and made to seem objective as a scientific truth.

## 4. sexuality as the source of truth about ourselves, about who we are (similar to a point made on pp. 43-44)

- “In the space of a few centuries, a certain inclination has led us to direct the question of what we are, to sex” (78).
- “... in the nineteenth century sexuality was sought out in the smallest details of individual existences; it was tracked down in behavior, pursued in dreams; it was suspected of underlying the least follies, it was tracked back into the earliest years of childhood; it became the stamp of individuality ...” (146)
- “we have arrived at the point where we expect our intelligibility to come from what was for many centuries thought of as madness; the plenitude of our body from what was long considered its stigma and likened to a wound; our identity from what was perceived as an obscure and nameless urge” (156)
- “Power and Sex” interview (on the course website for this week; optional): “Since Christianity, the Western world has never ceased saying: ‘To know who you are, know what your sexuality is.’” (111)

*In what ways might one say this is or is not true here and now?*

## 5. Scientia sexualis vs. ars erotica

### a. ars erotica:

- the point is to evaluate pleasure to make it better: pleasures is evaluated “in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul” (57)
- pleasure is not considered in terms of the permitted or forbidden, useful or not, but just in itself, what it feels like
- knowledge considered “secret” passed down from master to disciple (57)

### b. the confession in scientia sexualis (62)

- knowledge emerges from the ‘bottom up,’ as it were, from the one constrained to speak by an authority figure
- effects of the discourse occur for the one who speaks, not the one spoken to

### c. but we may still have a kind of ars erotica: we get pleasure from producing and reading about true, scientific discourses on pleasure (71)

**A question he’s going to start to address later in the text** (but which he says he’s mostly going to answer in a later series of studies for which this book is just an introduction)

Why do we have this will to knowledge, this will to produce true discourses on sex? What sort of “magic ring” do we possess such that we keep making sex speak? (77-79)

“We must write the history of this will to truth, this petition to know that for so many centuries has kept us enthralled by sex” (79).

## Part IV: “Objective”

### Does power operate mainly negatively, in a form related to law?

1. Foucault claims this is a common view of power, on a “juridical model” (85) as if it operates like law

- a binary system: “licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden” (83)
- focused on obedience and submission, punishment if there is transgression (85)
- operates negatively: as a block or limit to what is forbidden; involves rejection, refusal, concealment, prohibition, censorship, etc. (83-85)

2. this idea of power working like law is “by no means adequate to describe the manner in which power was and is exercised, but it is the code according to which power presents itself and prescribes what we conceive of it” (88).

-- it also doesn't fit the “new mechanisms of power” developed since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, whose operation “is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus” (89).

-- disciplinary power is one of these new mechanisms; so is “bio-power” (discussed in the last chapter of HS1)

## Part IV: “Method”

### Foucault's statements about power, pp. 92-96

(A number of these are similar to the points on the handout with quotes about power relations)

- a “multiplicity of force relations”—multiple kinds of relationships throughout the social body (92)
  - power is everywhere because “it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another” (93)
  - not something acquired, seized, or held, but exercised in relationships (94)
- a process of struggle and confrontation that “transforms, strengthens, or reverses” power relations (92)
- involves strategies: general patterns of goals and purposes that develop through local power relations
  - but these are “nonsubjective”: “there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject” (95)
  - there may be conscious aims for local tactics of power, but these become connected to each other and form “comprehensive systems” in which “the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them” (95)
- “power comes from below”: it's not that there are political or other general relations of power that extend their form downwards to various social relationships

-- the other way around instead: “the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole” (94)

- “Where there is power, there is resistance” (95)

-- the existence of power relationships “depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations” (95)

-- *from handout with quotes on power:*

“Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized” (Interview, “The Subject and Power”, 221)

“[I]f it is true that at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight.... It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape.” (Ibid., 225)

- power and domination (not in HS1)

“I do not think that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others. The problem, then, is ... to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the *ethos*, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible” (“Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom” (1984), *Foucault Live*, 446).

*From sheet with quotes on power, under #6*

-- domination: “The analysis of power relations is an extremely complex area: one sometimes encounters what may be called situations or states of domination in which the power relations, instead of being mobile, allowing the various participants to adopt strategies modifying them, remain blocked, frozen. When an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of power relations, immobilizing them and preventing any reversibility of movement by economic, political or military means, one is faced with what may be called a state of domination. In such a state, it is certain that practices of freedom do not exist or exist only unilaterally or are extremely constrained and limited” (Ibid., 434).

- “reverse discourse” (e.g., with homosexuality, HS1 p. 101): likely to be effective?

-- “Power and Sex” interview (optional reading): speaking about power as bad and what it is exercised upon as good: “Such a dualism can be provisionally useful, to change the perspective from time to time and move from *pro* to *contra*. ... [But] what should follow is the moment of new mobility and new displacement, for these reversals of *pro* and *contra* are quickly blocked, being unable to do anything except repeat themselves. ... As soon as we repeat indefinitely the

same refrain of the anti-repressive anthem, things remain in place. ... This reversal of values and truths ... has been important to the extent that it does not stop with simple cheers (long live insanity, delinquency, sex) but allows for new strategies” (120).

-- “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity” interview in *Foucault Live* (Semiotext(e), 1996: liberation movements around homosexuality in the 70s were important, but we shouldn’t stop there; we need to create “new forms of life, relationships, friendships in society, art, culture and so on, through our sexual, ethical and political choices” (383)

-- sexuality should be something we create rather than something we discover as true in a scientific discourse; “Sex is not a fatality; it’s a possibility for creative life” (382)

-- “if identity is only a game, if it is only a procedures to have relations, social and sexual— pleasure relationships that create new friendships, it is useful. But if identity becomes the problem of sexual existence, and if people think that they have to ‘uncover’ their ‘own identity,’ and that their own identity has to become the law, the principle, the code of their existence; if the perennial question they as is ‘Does this thing conform to my identity?’ then, I think, they will turn back to a kind of ethics very close to the old heterosexual virility. ... [T]he relationships we have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation” (385).