Order of Things I

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In this lecture I rely heavily on Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge UP, 1989)

Reception of OT

Before we discuss the book itself, let's mention its reception. In one of the stranger episodes of intellectual history, OT became a best-seller in France in 1966. But this is strange only if one assumes books are purely intellectual objects whose sales are dependent upon understanding, or in other words, when one neglects that books are commodities in a particular market with its own structure. OT hit France just at a time when the synergy of radio, TV, newspaper, and magazine networks was both reaching a takeoff point and intersecting the delayed prosperity of post WWII France. OT became an intellectual fad; it had to be seen on the right coffee-tables, in the right homes and in the right cafes. It also didn't hurt that Sartre and his boys attacked it: an intellectual cat fight provides great spectacle and great marketing PR. Alan Sheridan shows the systematic rather than merited nature of OT's success when he notes the contemporaneous success of Lacan's *Ecrits*, surely among the most incomprehensible of books!

Overall Aim of OT

OT's subtitle is "an archaeology of the human sciences." The human sciences for F are psychology, sociology, cultural history. These are related to, but not identical with, the empirical sciences of biology, economics, and philology. They study the same "topics": life, labor, language, but in different ways, according to how they relate to the "analytic of finitude," F's name for post-Kantian philosophy. Details next week. The important thing is the overall structure of OT: to get to the human sciences, F must work backwards. First, the 19thC episteme in which they are embedded. But to distinguish this, he must isolate it from the Classical episteme. And to isolate that, he briefly presents the Renaissance episteme. But he presents them in chronological order, with Renaissance first.

Fundamental assumptions of OT

1) Historical: knowledge obeys different rules in different historical periods. 2) Archaeological: different sciences obey the same fundamental rules, the "episteme." 3) Epistemological: knowledge is grounded in the "experience of order" of an age. 4) Semiological: understanding the experience of signs and language in an age is vital to reconstructing the episteme.

Fundamental problems with OT [w/ archaeology and/or structuralism]

1) Historical: focuses on discontinuity w/o explanantion of change [= "event"] 2) Archaeological: generalization of an "age": see the backpedalling in English foreword 3) Epistemological: isolation of discourse from institutions: need for power/knowledge 4) Semiological: language is not just discourse, but order-words

English edition foreword

We must remember this is written in 1970, during F's "political turn." He's backing away from archaeology, hence he will limit his claims about its scope. He lists 5 points.

(1) his object, the "soft sciences," had been neglected; they were error-ridden and evidence of mere "world views"; F's wager: what if they were rule-bound, even in their errors, as well as in their truths?

(2) here is a notorious backpedalling: F claims he is only doing a "regional study," yet he tosses around terms like "Classical age" or "Western episteme" quite freely. See 168 ("only one episteme for all knowledge"). he also mentions here his critique of history of ideas, which looks for "precursors": this is continuist history, of which Bachelard and Canguilhem had disabused F by insisting on a history of concepts, which distinguishes different experiences under superficially similar terminology.

(3) here F defines "archaeology" as different from history of science, which goes after scientific cness, and its negative unconscious, what eludes it. F goes after positive unconscious: underlying productive rules to "define objects, form concepts, build theories." Again, here we see Bachelard and Canguilhem. object = data produced by experiment (e.g., Galileo: same speed of different weights); concept = interpretation of that data that allows questions of how to explain it (Galileo: point mass: center of gravity); theory = attempt to explain the data (Descartes: vortices; Newton: gravity). thus concepts are "theoretically polyvalent."

(4) F asks that the book be read as an "open site", that is, as posing questions and problems rather than as setting forth a doctrine. F mentions three problems: change, cause, subject. a) change: F proposes three levels which must be respected: i) w/in individual science; ii) appearance of new fields of study; iii) overall shift in relations between sciences. b) causality: F brackets this question, claiming to have addressed it earlier in MC and BC. c) subject: F does not contest validity of study of scientific cness in intellectual biography, but doubts it's enough to account for the "immense density"of scientific discourse: he asks about the rules that determine the "situation, function, perceptive capacity, and practical possibilities" of individual scientists: what rules did they have to fulfill to be recognized at the time as scientific discourse of a particular type? Here F explicitly rejects phenomenology as theory of "transcendental consciousness" (central active point responsible for all meaning and historicity [as reactivation of sedimentation]) in favor of a "theory of discursive practice."

(5) F sharply rejects the term "structuralist", though he admits there may be "certain similarities." As we will see, ever since Classical times, the recognition of similarities is only the start of analysis that leads to knowledge; if left by itself, such recognition leads to error (this seems also part of modern episteme).

Preface

The preface to OT begins with a Foucault trademark: a bizarrely fascinating set-piece. Here he reproduces a passage from Borges, which he says demonstrates an "other" to our system of thought. [have someone read the passage aloud]. Before the laughter dies down, F asks us to specify the otherness: what is the impossibility here, since each category by itself makes sense? In fact, F shows that there is no categorial miscegnation here; what is unthinkable is that they are all in the same series, on the same level, in an impossible "common ground." What Borges destroys is the "site," the "mute ground upon which it is possible for entities to be juxtaposed."

Here F touches on a profound philosophical point. The impossibility of Borges' encyclopedia is the impossibility for a certain thought to think difference in itself, with no relation to identity: in Hegelian terms, diversity with no relation to opposition, contradiction and finally ground. Deleuze and D/G will pursue just this difference: D in DiffRep; D/G in the heterogeneity of desiring-production, the weird collisions on the plane of consistency, "where a mustache collides with a differential equation..."

Rather than describing diversity positively, F concentrates on its disturbing of identity thought: he calls it the "heteroclite" and the "heterotopia," and connects it to aphasia: loss

of what is common to place and name: Atopia. Shifting gears, F cites the place of China in W cultural imaginary: "the privileged site of space": the frozen culture, the place of tables (orders) different than ours.

F now moves to thematize the "pure experience of order." F begins with the table as a "grid of identities (Classical), similitudes (Ren), analogies (modern)": a coherence that is neither a priori and necessary, nor based on immediate perception. This coherence is that of "a system of elements": 1) definition of elements to be compared; 2) types of variation to be noticed; 3) thresholds of difference, which is needed for the simplest "order."
F now locates the "pure experience of order" (the *il y a de l'ordre*) between the 1) "empirical" realm, the things exposed to the "already 'encoded' eye" (coded by the fundamental codes of a culture): e.g., the difference between human and animal, between animal, vegetable and mineral, between living and dead; 2) philosophical reflection on order: its origins, utility, laws, etc. The pure experience of order occupies the "middle region" between these two "extremes of thought," between perception (non-reflective use of ordering codes) and logic (reflection on order itself).

It is this middle region that F will study in OT, as it changes from Ren to Class to Mod: what is the experience of order of these ages, and how does it make the sciences of life, labor, language possible? F will call this order the "historical *a priori*" or *"episteme*:" the conditions of possibility of knowledge, as investigated by archaeology. F then gives a short sketch of the book, which in contrast to the history of the "other" that is MC, he calls a "history of resemblance," of "the Same."

In the broadest philosophical terms, we could say F is doing a sort of perverted Hegelianism: he is taking the Kantian insight into categorial structuring of experience and investigating historical differences between categorial systems. OT retains the slightest bit of Hegelianism in the language of "experience of order," but it's a perverted Hegel in that it rejects a progressive historical narrative of spiritual education via these changing experiences and insists on the inexplicable "event" nature of categorial shifts.

Las Meninas
F gives a show-offy reading of the painting's spatial structure. Located outside the painting are three figures, three elements of the process of representation: 1) the object represented, the King and Queen; 2) the subject representing, the painter; 3) the subject viewing the representation, the spectator. These are all reflected in the painting: 1) the King and Queen in the mirror; 2) the painter in front of the canvas; 3) the man in the doorway.
This is NOT a "representation of representation," as is sometimes thought that F is claiming; rather, it shows the failure of such attempts: "it is not possible for the pure felicity of the image ever to present in a full light both the master who is representing and the sovereign who is being represented." The representing subject is man; he is 19th C.
Representation can be represented, put on the table, but only as dispersed functions; the unified activity of representation cannot.
This is a dramatic illustration of an essential archaeological principle: an episteme is not self-reflexive. The Classical Age, based on representation, cannot represent representation to itself. It cannot see the light by which it sees; the fish cannot know it lives in water. Only historical difference can highlight the pre-suppositions of an age.

Renaissance episteme
The four modes of resemblance are pretty straightforward: 1) convenience = spatial proximity, which relies upon and breeds resemblance; 2) emulation = resemblance at a distance; 3) analogy = resemblance of relation; man is center of world; 4) sympathy = resemblance provoking spatial and qualitative change.

Signature is the being of the Renaissance sign, a resemblance that is sign of, that indicates, points the way toward, another resemblance. Obviously here we have an infinite task of chasing resemblances around, which yields abundant, yet empty knowledge: since everything has a hidden resemblance to everything else, you can find (know) resemblances everywhere, but what do you find everywhere? Just another resemblance. The 16th C "condemned itself to never knowing anything but the same thing, and to knowing that thing only at the unattainable end of an endless journey."

Since resemblances spoke through signatures that were parts of the world and were themselves resemblances, then science, magic, and erudition (reliance on ancient authorities), which are all forms of interpreting natural signs, are on an equal footing; this is not because of credulity, but because of the episteme.

Classical Age

Don Quixote is transitional figure (as Sade will later be). In early 17th C, resemblance comes to be critiqued as a form of errorr, or more precisely, staying with resemblance instead of analyzing it, is a mistake. Bacon's critique is an indication of changing times, but Descartes is essential (overblown claims on 54: "entire Western episteme ..."). Knowledge becomes intuition (seeing clearly and distinctly) and deduction (linking intuited bits together). D isolates 2 essential types of comparison: measurement and order; the key is to reduce measurement to order, that is, to arrange elements in series on the basis of identity and difference of precise criteria (54). Instead of coming from the following of resemblances, knowledge now occurs as order is imposed on the world.
F summarizes the changes: (1) analysis--starting from and pulling apart resemblances to identify identical and different elements--subs for hierarchizing of analogies; (2) complete enumeration of knowledge subs for endless process; (3) certainty of id/diff subs for probability of resemblance; (4) discrimination subs for drawing together; (5) history and science split off from each other (in 19th C, historicity [not simply history] becomes key); (6) language becomes means of transmitting a truth seen in clear and distinct perception rather than being a part of the world needing interpretation to reveal its truth. 55-56
These changes reveal the episteme of Classical Age as ordering of identities and differences; this epistemic level is much deeper than the usual history of ideas candidates for characterizing the Classical Age: mechanism and mathematicization of nature.

F's treatment of Classical representation is dense and difficult. ("The representation of the sign") F isolates three essentials: (1) the sign retreats from the world into the mind: it represents a "contraction of a long series of judgments" (60). (2) the sign spreads out the world rather than joins it together; (3) conventional signs are privileged over natural.
The relation of sign to signified is now one of direct representation of one idea by another (63). But there is an added requirement: the sign must represent, within itself, its representation of its signified: it must show its sign-ness. Here we see that "transparent and duplicated representation" as the being of the Classical sign. The sign-ness of the sign is not a third term: the sign "has no content, no function, and no determination other than what it represents: it is entirely ordered upon and transparent to it" (64). Nevertheless, the sign is duplicated representation (65): it is both indication (pointing to another) and appearance (it is itself an appearance, a sign, map, drawing, table). In a typical mid-60s French philosophy sentence, F writes: "From the Classical age, the sign is the *representativity* of the representation in so far as it is *representable*": the sign shows forth, in its appearance, its indicative function.

Two consequences (65-67): (1) the co-extensiveness of signs and thought (representation); (2) the impossibility of a theory of signification, because to have a theory of something you must be able to objectify it, that is, limit it; but if the very form of your theorizing, the being

of your subjectivity, is signification, then you cannot objectify signification, you cannot make it the basis of a problematic. Signification is not one form of thought among others to which we can have recourse in objectifying it, but THE form of thought itself.

F's summary account of Classical knowledge comes in the final two sections of this chapter. First, there is the preliminary ordering of impressions: "the imagination of resemblance." We must start from resemblance (between impressions) and then proceed to a final, complete ordering of them in a table. To get there, we need "genetic analysis" or "genesis" as the first step of ordering impressions, in one of two ways, which ended up together in late 18th C "Ideology" or science of ideas: 1) analysis of nature, which treats resemblances between things before their reduction to order" (69); 2) analytic of imagination, which investigates how the imagination is able to order the flow of impressions.

After this preliminary step, Classical knowledge strove after the complete and certain representation of a system of elements arranged by identity and difference and displayed in a table. There are two poles of the "general science of order": 1) mathesis (in the narrow sense: F sometimes uses this term for the general science itself), the "ordering of simple natures", i.e., those susceptible of mathematicization; 2) taxinomia, "the ordering of complex natures," those complexes we encounter in experience and which can be treated qualitatively only. Taxinomia deals with the "empirical" sciences, among which are general grammar, natural history, and analysis of wealth.

The summary formula of the Classical episteme: "an articulated system of a mathesis, a taxinomia, and a genetic analysis. The sciences always carry within themselves, however remote it may be, of an exhaustive ordering of the world; they are always directed too, towards the discovery of simple elements and their progressive combination; and at their center they form a table on which knowledge is displayed in a system contemporary with itself" (74).

Let's skip the individual Classical sciences.

At the end of the "Exchanging" chapter F puts a summary and a transition. The summary takes the form of a "general table," the transition that of a reading of Sade. The key is that the four functions discovered in general grammar are also found in natural history and analysis of wealth. F claims: "for Classical thought, systems of natural history and theories of money or trade have the same conditions of possibility as language itself" (203). Two consequences: 1) order is the order of words; 2) other systems function as languages. Thus, "words ... are a constitution and evident manifestation of the order of things." There are differences, though: natural history and analysis of wealth "escape the perils inherent in spontaneous languages (205): they don't drift and accumulate error, but can be sciences that are theoretically closed.