

## **MICHEL FOUCAULT THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE (1969)**

### **Chapter One: "The Unities of Discourse"**

Here, Foucault contends that in order to apply the notion of discontinuity to the study "those disciplines – so unsure of their frontiers, and so vague in content – that we call the history of ideas, or of thought, or of science, or of knowledge" (21), certain assumptions must be interrogated. The goal is to "disconnect the unquestioned continuities by which we organise, in advance, the discourse we are to analyse" (25).

Four such important notions are:

- **Tradition:** gives a "special temporal status" (21) to a "group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar)" (21) which "makes it possible to think the dispersion of history in the form of the same" (21);
- **Influence:** this "refers to an apparently causal process . . . the phenomena of resemblance and repetition" (21) and which "links, at a distance and through time . . . individuals, *oeuvres*, notions, or theories" (21);
- **Development:** this "make it possible to group a succession of dispersed events, to link them to one and the same organizing principle" (21-22);
- **Spirit:** "enables us to establish between the simultaneous or successive phenomena of a given period a community of meanings, symbolic links, an interplay of resemblance and reflexion, or which allows the sovereignty of collective consciousness to emerge as the principle of unity and explanation" (22).

He questions here the most important "ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination" (22) in order to "oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another" (22). Such divisions are, Foucault asserts, "reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutional types" (22) that are facts of discourse that deserved to be examined in themselves.

Foucault suggests that it is also vital to question those familiar "divisions or groupings" (22) such as the "distinction between the major types of discourse, or that between such forms or genres as science, literature, philosophy, religion, history, fiction, etc." (22). We tend to group certain "groups of statements" (22) in these ways but often forget that these, "when first formulated, were distributed, divided, and characterised in a quite different way" (22). For example, the fields of literature or politics or philosophy are relatively recent classifications which should not be anachronistically applied to earlier generations. Such "divisions" (22) are not "intrinsic, autochthonous, and universally recognisable" (22) but, rather, "reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalised types" (22) and, as such, "facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others" (22).

The two most important 'unities of discourse' that are also in need of being questioned, Foucault argues, are the following:

- **the Book:** this is a material thing which "occupies a determined space and has an economic value" (23). However, Foucault points out, the "frontiers of a book are never clear-cut" (23): beyond its "internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (23); and
- **the Oeuvre:** this something "we recognise and delimit by attributing a certain number of texts to an author" (23), a "collection of texts that can be designated by the sign of a proper name" (23). Though many questions arise as to which texts by a particular person should be attributed to him, the term 'oeuvre' is "defined by a

certain expressive function" (24): it is the "expression of the thought, the experience, the imagination, or the unconscious of the author, or, indeed, of the historical determinations that operated upon him" (24).

Foucault wants to also question two other important related notions:

- **Origins:** the "secret origin" (25) beyond any "apparent beginning" (25), an "ever-receding point that is never itself present in any history" (25) and of which "all beginnings can never be more than recommencements" (25); in the light of this, the historical analysis of discourse proceeds as the "quest for and the repetition of an origin that eludes all historical determination" (25). In fact discourse must be referred not to the "distant presence of an origin, but treated as and when it occurs" (25);
- **Pre-Linguistic Thought:** the notion that "all manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'" (25) that is "not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said,' an incorporeal discourse . . . everything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in the semi-silence that precedes it" (25). The "manifest discourse . . . is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say" (25) which is a "hollow that undermines from within all that is said" (25).

Foucault contends that must "renounce" (25) all such "themes whose function is to ensure the infinite continuity of discourse" (25). Instead, "we must be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption . . . in the dust of books" (25).

Each of these "pre-existing forms of continuity" (25) must be questioned, exposed as the "result of a construction, the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinised" (25). We must demolish their "virtual self-evidence" (26) and "free the problems that they pose" (26). We must realise that they are not the basis on which other questions may be posed but are themselves to be questioned. Foucault intends to take as his "starting-point whatever unities are already given (such as psychopathology, medicine, or political economy)" (26) in order, however, to ask what unities they form; by what right they can claim a field that specifies them in space and a continuity that individualises them in time; according to what laws they are formed; against the background of which discursive events they stand out; and whether they are not . . . ultimately the surface effect of more firmly grounded unities. (26)

He intends to "subject them to interrogation" (26) and to "see whether they can be legitimately reformed" (26) or "whether other groupings should be made" (26).

In so doing, Foucault argues, a "vast field is set free" (26), one made up of the "totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written)" (27). Whether it be a science, a novel, a political speech or the entire oeuvre, what is left in this way is "material . . . in its raw, neutral state, a population of events in the space of discourse in general" (27). The goal is a "pure description of discursive events as the horizon for the search for the unities that form within it" (27). Viewing discourse as an event, rather than simply words on a page to be deciphered, makes discourse analysis different from the 'analysis of language' (27). A language is a "system for possible statements, a finite body of rules that authorises an infinite number of performances" (27). By contrast, the "field of discursive events" (27) is a "grouping that is always finite and limited at any moment to the linguistic sequences that have been formulated" (27). If the analysis of 'langue' poses the question of "according to what rules has a particular statement been made" (27), discourse analysis asks by contrast: "how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another" (27).

The "description of discourses" (27) is different, Foucault writes, from the kind of

questions posed by the "history of thought" (27) (what we could call the 'history of ideas' or 'intellectual history') which has traditionally sought to "rediscover beyond the statements" (27) constitutive of a particular discourse the "intention of the speaking subject, his conscious activity, what he meant, or . . . the unconscious activity that took place, despite himself, in what he said or in the almost imperceptible fracture of his actual words" (27). The goal in so doing is to "reconstitute another discourse, rediscover the silent murmuring, the inexhaustible speech that animates from within the voice that one hears" (27). From this perspective, the "analysis of thought is always *allegorical* in relation to the discourse that it employs" (27), its question being "what was being said in what was said" (28). Discourse analysis proceeds in a different direction, however, the goal being to

grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence; determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes. We do not seek below what is manifest the half silent murmur of another discourse; we must show why it could not be other than it was, in what respect it is exclusive of any other, how it assumes, in the midst of others and in relation to them, a place that no other could occupy. (28)

The erasure of the various unities of discourse enables one, firstly, to "restore to the statement the specificity of its occurrence" (28), and to "show that discontinuity is one of those great accidents that create cracks . . . in the simple fact of the statement; it emerges in its historical irruption; what we try to examine is the incision that it makes, that irreducible – and very often tiny – emergence" (28). Arguing that a "statement is always an event that neither the language (*langue*) nor the meaning can quite exhaust" (28), Foucault contends that the goal of discourse analysis is not to trace the occurrence of the "statement / event" (28) to "synthesizing operations of a purely psychological kind (the intention of the author, the form of his mind, the rigour of his thought, the themes that obsess him, . . .)" (28-29), etc. behind the statements. Rather, discourse analysis enables one, secondly, to "grasp other forms of regularity, other types of relations" (29): each statement / event is grasped in terms of the "relations between statements" (29), "relations between groups of statements" (29) and "relations between statements, groups of statements and events of quite a distinct nature (technical, economic, social, political)" (29). The goal is to discern the "interplay of relations within it and outside it" (29). Thirdly, by freeing statements of the "groupings that purport to be natural, immediate, universal unities" (29), one can seize "other unities" (29), other "discursive groups that are not arbitrary, and yet remain invisible" (29).

## **Chapter Two: "Discursive Formations"**

Foucault reminds us that his interest is in the "relations between statements" (31), that he will attempt to avoid all given unities of discourse, and to seek out discontinuities, rather than continuities. His immediate concern here is with understanding how disciplines such as medicine, biology, economics, grammar, or psychiatry are comprised by the grouping of particular statements. For example, what makes the "analysis of headaches carried out by Willis or Charcot belong to the same order of discourse" (31): "Are they merely a retrospective regrouping by which the contemporary sciences deceive themselves as to their own past? Are they forms that have become established once and for all and have gone on developing through time?" (31), he asks, "what sort of links can validly be recognised between all these statements that form . . . such an enigmatic mass?" (31).

Firstly, Foucault wonders, are the statements which comprise a discipline linked by reference to a common referent? Foucault asks whether statements "different in form, and dispersed in time, form a group if they refer to the same object" (32). Foucault argues that the object (e.g. madness) to which a discourse ostensibly refers is in fact entirely constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating, in its name, discourses that were to be taken as its own. (32)

The referent, for example madness, does not precede the discourse which aspires to name it. Moreover, different discourses may seem to discuss the same object but the object is different in each case. For example, the discourse on madness

is far from referring to a single object, formed once and for all . . . ; the object presented as their correlative by medical statements of the seventeenth or eighteenth century is not identical with the object that emerges in legal sentences or police action. (32)

Each of these discourses on madness "in turn constituted its object and worked it to the point of transforming it altogether" (32). The "typical relation" (32) that would enable one to "individualise a group of statements concerning madness" (32) would be the "simultaneous or successive emergence of the various objects that are named, described, analysed, appreciated, or judged in that relation" (32). As a result, the "unity of discourses on madness would not be based upon the existence of the object 'madness,' or the constitution of a single horizon of objectivity; it would be the interplay of the rules that make possible the appearance of objects during a give period of time" (32-3). Indeed, the unity of the various discourse on madness would consist in the "interplay of the rules that define the transformations of these different objects, their non-identity through time, the break produced in them, the internal discontinuity that suspends their permanence" (33).

Secondly, Foucault asks whether a discourse is united "not so much by its objects or concepts as by a certain *style*, a certain constant manner of statement" (33), that is, form as opposed to content. Does a "particular corpus of knowledge" (33) presuppose the "same way of looking at things, the same division of the perceptual field, . . . the same system of transcribing what one perceived in what one said (same vocabulary, same play of metaphor)?" (33), a "codified and normative system of statement" (34). Descriptions, however, "could not be abstracted from the hypotheses" (33). What constitutes the unity of a body of statements is not their "determined form" (34) but the "group of rules, which, simultaneously or in turn, have made possible purely perceptual descriptions, together with observations mediated through instruments, the procedures used in laboratory experiments, statistical calculations" (34), etc. What one must seek to grasp is

the coexistence of these dispersed and heterogeneous statements; the system that govern their division, the degree to which they depend upon one another, the way in which they interlock or exclude one another, the transformation that they undergo, and the play of their location, arrangement, and replacement. (34)

In short, what is remarkable is that even particular discourses there is a noticeable variety of ways of describing the object (e.g. madness) of the discourse in question (in this instance, psychiatry).

Thirdly, Foucault wonders whether the statements which comprise a discourse can be grouped in relation to the "system of permanent and coherent concepts involved" (34), that is, a conceptual framework of some kind, what would in effect be an unchanging synchronic affair. However, Foucault suggests that what matters is the diachrony of concepts, that is, the fact that new concepts are constantly emerging: the unity of a discourse is found not in the "coherence of concepts, but in their simultaneous or

successive emergence, in the distance that separates them and even in their incompatibility" (35). The goal is not the discovery of an "architecture of concepts sufficiently general and abstract to embrace all others" (35), but rather the "interplay of their appearances and dispersion" (35).

Fourthly, Foucault asks whether a particular set of statements can be grouped through the "identity and persistence of themes" (35), the possibility that a "certain thematic is capable of linking, and animating a group of discourses" (35). For example, biology is a science that has often seemed to revolve around what he describes as the "evolutionist theme from Buffon to Darwin" (35) but the "same thematic" (36) has been "articulated on the basis of two sets of concept, two types of analysis, two different fields of objects" (36): "what makes it possible and coherent is not all the same thing in either case" (36). "Rather than seeking the permanence of themes, images, and opinions through time, rather than retracing the dialectic of their conflicts in order to individualise groups of statements" (37), it would be better to "mark out" (37) the "dispersion of the points of choice that the discourse leaves free" (36), the "field of strategic possibilities" (37). It is necessary to describe these "dispersions themselves" (37) in order to discover not a "progressively deductive structure" (37), nor a single "enormous book that is being gradually and progressively written" (37), nor the "*oeuvre* of a collective subject" (37), but to see

whether, between these elements, one cannot discover a regularity, . . . an order in their successive appearance, correlations in their simultaneity, assignable positions in a common space, a reciprocal functioning, linked and hierarchised transformations. (37)

What paradoxically 'unites' a particular discursive formation is not coherences but "forms of division" (37) and "systems of dispersion" (37).

Foucault advances the hypothesis that one is dealing with a "discursive formation" (38) whenever one can

describe between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations). (38)

Foucault uses this term in order to avoid other clichéd terms "inadequate to the task of designating such a dispersion, such as 'science,' 'ideology,' 'theory,' or 'domain of objectivity'" (38). He terms the "conditions of existence (but also of coexistence, maintenance, modification and disappearance)" (38), that is, the "conditions to which the elements of this division (objects, mode of statement, concepts, thematic choices) are subjected" (38), "rules of formation" (38).

### **Chapter Three "The Formation of Objects"**

Foucault's interest here is in the precise way in which objects (e.g. madness) are formed by the "rules of formation" (38) which inform a particular "discursive formation" (38), in this case, the "discourse of psychopathology from the nineteenth century onwards" (40). Foucault's concern is with why, in addition to the motor disturbances, hallucinations and speech disorders that were the conventional "objects with which psychopathology . . . dealt" (40) up to that point, objects "appeared that belonged to hitherto unused registers" (40), such as minor behavioural disorders, sexual aberrations and disturbances, the phenomena of suggestion and hypnosis, and criminality. Foucault wants to know whether it is "possible to lay down the rule to which their appearance was subject" (41), "according to which non-deductive system these objects could be juxtaposed and placed in succession in

order to form the fragmented field . . . of psychopathology" (41). "What has ruled their existence as objects of discourse?" (41), Foucault asks.

Firstly, Foucault suggests that the "first *surfaces* of their *emergence*" (41) (what he terms later "planes of emergence" [42]) must be mapped, that is, "where these individual differences, which according to the degrees of rationalisation, conceptual codes, and types of theory, will be accorded the status of disease, alienation, anomaly, dementia, neurosis, or psychosis, degeneration, etc., may emerge, and then be designated and analysed" (41). These surfaces of emergence are historically variable and socially specific. In the case of nineteenth century psychopathology, these surfaces were "constituted by the family, the immediate social group, the work situation and the religious community" (41). Each of these were "normative" (41), "susceptible to deviation" (41), possessed of a "margin of tolerance and a threshold beyond which exclusion is demanded" (41) and of a "mode of designation and a mode of rejecting madness" (41), and prone to "transfer to medicine if not the responsibility for treatment and cure, at least the burden of explanation" (41). However, these 'surfaces' "were not new in the nineteenth century" (41): "new surfaces of appearance began to function" (41) such as "art" (41), "sexuality (its deviations in relation to customary prohibitions become for the first time an object of observation, description, and analysis for psychiatric discourse )" (41), and "penality (. . . criminality itself becomes . . . a form of deviance more or less related to madness)" (41). In these fields of differentiation, in the distances, the discontinuities, and the thresholds that appear within it, psychiatric discourse finds a way of limiting its domain, of defining what it is talking about, of giving it the status of an object--and therefore of making it manifest, nameable, and describable. (41)

In other words, we need to map both the dominant and emerging terrains in which madness is constituted as an object of study.

Secondly, Foucault suggests that the "authorities of delimitation" (41) must be described. In the nineteenth century, "medicine (as an institution possessing its own rules, as a group of individuals constituting the medical profession, as a body of knowledge and practice, as an authority recognised by public opinion, the law, and government)" (41-42) "became the major authority in society that delimited, designated, named, and established madness as an object" (42). It was assisted in this regard by the "law and penal law in particular (with the definitions of excuse, non-responsibility, extenuating circumstances, and with the application of such notions as the *crime passionel*, heredity, danger to society)" (42), "religious authority (in so far as it set itself up as the authority that divided the mystical from the pathological, the spiritual from the corporeal, the supernatural from the abnormal, and in so far as it practised the direction of conscience with a view to understanding individuals . . .)" (42), and "literary and art criticism (which in the nineteenth century treated the work less and less as an object of taste that had to be judged, and more and more as a language that had to be interpreted and in which the author's tricks of expression had to be recognised" (42).

Thirdly, Foucault stresses that the "grids of specification" (42) (what he terms later "forms of specification" [42] and "grids of differentiation" [42]) must be analysed, that is, the systems according to which "different kinds of madness are divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, derived from one another as objects of psychiatric discourse" (42). These grids included, in the nineteenth century, the soul, as a group of hierarchised, related, and more or less impenetrable faculties; the body, as a three-dimensional volume of organs linked together by networks of dependence and communication; the life and history of individuals, as a linear succession of phases, a tangle of traces, a group of

potential reactivations, cyclical repetitions; . . . (42)

However, Foucault argues that one must go beyond these three strategies for, firstly, they do not "provide objects, fully formed and armed" (42) that the various discourses have merely to "list, classify, name, select, and cover with a network of words and sentences" (42). It is "wrong to see discourse as a place where previously established objects are laid one after another like words on a page" (42-43). It is not, for example, the legal system which hands over criminals to psychiatry, which sees paranoia behind a particular murder, or a neurosis behind a sexual offence. Secondly, "what relations exist between" (43) these "planes of differentiation" (43)?

In the case of nineteenth century psychopathology, the emergence of the category of the delinquent is a case in point. It is not a question of the "sudden discovery by a psychiatrist of a resemblance between criminal and pathological behaviour" (43). The problem is, rather, how to "decide what made them possible, and how these 'discoveries' could lead to others that took them up, rectified them, modified, or even disproved them" (43). We should not seek to trace these new categories of delinquency to the "norms of nineteenth century bourgeois society, to a reinforced police and penal framework, to the establishment of a new code of criminal justice, to the introduction and use of extenuating circumstances, to the increase in crime" (43). None of these factors could "of themselves form objects for psychiatric discourse" (43). Rather, if

in a particular period in the history of our society, the delinquent was psychologised and pathologised, if criminal behaviour could give rise to a whole series of objects of knowledge, this was because a group of particular relations was adopted for use in psychiatric discourse. (43)

Examples of such relations include those between "planes of specification like penal categories and degrees of diminished responsibility, and planes of psychological characterisation" (43), between the "authority of medical decision and the authority of judicial decision" (44), between the "filter formed by judicial and police interrogation" (44) and the "filter formed by the medical questionnaire, clinical examinations, the search for antecedents and biographical accounts" (44), between the "family, sexual and penal norms of the behaviour of individuals, and the table of pathological symptoms and diseases of which they are the signs" (44), between "therapeutic confinement in hospitals" (44) and "punitive confinement in prison" (44). These are the "relations that, operating in psychiatric discourse, have made possible the formation of a whole group of various objects" (44).

In short, psychiatric discourse, for example, is "characterised not by privileged objects, but by the way in which it forms objects that are in fact highly dispersed" (44). Psychiatry is a discursive "formation . . . made possible by a group of relations between objects that are in fact highly dispersed. This formation is made possible by a group of relations established between authorities of emergence, delimitation, and specification" (44). A discursive formation is defined "if one can establish such a group, if one can show how any particular object of discourse finds in it its place and law of emergence; if one can show that it may give birth simultaneously or successively to mutually exclusive objects, without having to modify itself" (44).

Foucault stresses that there many "conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse" (44). He offers a number of remarks on the implications of all this. Firstly, "one cannot speak of anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, or to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground" (44-45). However, this "difficulty is not only a negative one" (45), one

attached to some obstacle whose power appears to be, exclusively, to blind,

to hinder, to prevent discovery, to conceal the purity of the evidence or the dumb obstinacy of the things themselves; the object does not await, in limbo, as it were, the order that will free it and embody it in a visible objectivity: "it does not pre-exist itself . . . It exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations. (45)

Secondly, these relations which are "established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification" (45), etc. are "not present in the object" (45). They do not "define its internal constitution, but what enables it to appear, to juxtapose itself with other objects, to situate itself in relation to them, to define its difference, its irreducibility, and even perhaps its heterogeneity" (45).

Thirdly, these "*discursive*" (45) relations by which objects are formed in particular discursive formations are to be distinguished from those "*real or primary relations*" (45) which exist, "independently of all discourse" (45), between "institutions, techniques, social forms, etc." (45) (for example, the relationship between the bourgeois family and the functioning of judicial authorities and categories in the nineteenth century) and which can be analysed in their own right. "The relations of dependence that may be assigned to this primary level are not necessarily expressed in the formations of relations that makes discursive objects possible" (45). The primary relations are distinguishable from the secondary relations formulated in discourse itself: what nineteenth century psychiatry could say about the "relations between the family and criminality does not reproduce . . . the interplay of real dependencies" (45), nor the "interplay of relations that make possible and sustain the objects of psychiatric discourse" (45). Foucault thus identifies three sets of relations: "a system of *real or primary relations*, a system of *reflexive or secondary relations*, and a system of relations that might properly be called *discursive*" (45). The problem for Foucault is to "reveal the specificity of these discursive relations, and their interplay with the other two kinds" (46). Fourthly, Foucault emphasises that discursive relations are not internal to discourse, connecting "concepts or words with one another" (46) or establishing a "deductive or rhetorical structure between propositions or sentences" (46). Neither are they external to discourse, something akin to social "relations that might limit it, or impose certain forms upon it" (46). Discursive relations exist, rather, "at the limit of discourse" (46) to which they offer "objects of which it can speak" (46), or rather, they "determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object . . . These relations characterize not the language (*langue*) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice. (46).

The unity of discourse is not found "in the objects themselves, . . . in short, in what is given to the speaking subject" (46), but in the "relations" (46) that characterize discursive practices: "what we discover is not a configuration, nor a form but a group of *rules* that are immanent in a practice, and define it in its specificity" (46). It is not the "objects that remain constant, nor the domain that they form; it is not even their point of emergence or their mode of characterisation; but the relation between the surfaces on which they appear, on which they can be delimited, on which they can be analysed and specified" (47). Discourse analysis does not try to write a "history of the referent" (47) in an effort to "find out who was mad, or in what his madness consisted, or whether his disturbances were identical with those known to us today" (47). The goal is not to neutralise discourse, to make it the sign of something else, and to pierce through its density in order to reach what remains silently anterior to it, but on the contrary to maintain it in its consistency, to make it emerge in its own complexity. (47)

The goal, in short, is to "dispense with 'things'" (47), to "depresentify" them" (47), to "conjure up their rich, heavy, immediate plenitude" (47). The goal is, rather, to substitute for the enigmatic treasure of 'things' anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse. To define these objects without reference to the ground, the foundation of things, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance. (47-8)

Foucault points out that to "suppress" (47) the "things themselves" (47) is not to "return to the linguistic analysis of meaning" (47) but to operate at a metalinguistic level. When "one describes the formations of objects of a discourse" (48), one "tries to locate the relations that characterise a discursive practice, one determines neither a lexical organisation, nor the scissions of a semantic field" (48). One does not question the meaning given at a particular period to specific words like 'melancholia' nor the "opposition of content between 'psychosis' and 'neurosis'" (48). Discourse analysis is concerned not with the "lexical contents . . . at the disposal of speaking subjects in a given period or the semantic structure that appears on the surface of a discourse that has already been spoken" (48), but with the relations that characterise a discursive practice.

In trying to discover how criminality, for example, could become the object of medical expertise or sexual deviation the object of psychiatric discourse, discourse analysis focuses on the "discursive practice as a place in which a tangled plurality . . . of objects is formed and deformed, appears and disappears" (48). In discursive analysis, "words as deliberately absent as *things* themselves" (48). Discourses are not "a mere intersection of things and words: an obscure web of things, and a manifest, visible, coloured chain of words" (48), not a "slender surface of contact . . . between a reality and a language" (48). In "analysing discourses themselves, one sees . . . the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice. These rules define not the dumb existence of a reality, nor the canonical use of a vocabulary, but the ordering of objects" (49). The goal is not to treat discourses as "groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (49). Discourses evidently utilise signs but "what they do is more than use these signs to designate things . . . It is this 'more' that renders them irreducible to language (*langue*) and to speech [*parole*]. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe" (49).