

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**MASTERS OF ARTS-ENGLISH**

**SEMESTER -IV**

**LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM**

**ELECTIVE 405**

**BLOCK-1**

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## UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

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## **FOREWORD**

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

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# LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

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# **BLOCK-1 LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM**

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## **INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK - 1**

**UNIT 1:** Early and Later Life of Paul-Michel Foucault.

**UNIT 2:** Thoughts and Influence and Reception of Paul-Michel Foucault.

**UNIT 3:** Intellectual Background and The Major Works Of Paul-Michel Foucault.

**UNIT 4:** “What is an Author?” by Foucault and its contexts, its counter history and about the Author and the Text.

**UNIT 5:** The life and career of Edward Wadie Said.

**UNIT 6:** Cultural Background, Thesis Of Representation, Influence, Criticism and and Main Ideas Of Orientalism.

**UNIT 7:** Definition Of Orientalism, Summary Of Chapters 1, 2, 3 And Afterword Of “Introduction to Orientalism” and Characteristics Of Orientalism.

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# UNIT-1 FOUCAULT- 'WHAT IS AN AUTHOR? - 1

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## STRUCTURE

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Early Life
- 1.3 Later Life
- 1.4 Let us sum up
- 1.5 Keywords
- 1.6 Questions for Review
- 1.7 Suggested Reading and References
- 1.8 Answers to Check your Progress

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn about early life of Paul-Michel Foucault;
- and, you would also learn about later life of Paul-Michel Foucault.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Paul-Michel Foucault generally known as Michel Foucault, was a French philosopher, historian of ideas, social theorist and literary critic.

Foucault's theories primarily address the relationship between power and knowledge, and how they are used as a form of social control through societal institutions. Though often cited as a post-structuralist and postmodernist, Foucault rejected these labels. His thought has influenced academics, especially those working in communication studies,

anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, literary theory, feminism, and critical theory.

Born in Poitiers, France, into an upper-middle-class family, Foucault was educated at the Lycée Henri-IV, at the École Normale Supérieure, where he developed an interest in philosophy and came under the influence of his tutors Jean Hyppolite and Louis Althusser, and at the University of Paris (Sorbonne), where he earned degrees in philosophy and psychology. After several years as a cultural diplomat abroad, he returned to France and published his first major book, *The History of Madness* (1961). After obtaining work between 1960 and 1966 at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, he produced *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) and *The Order of Things* (1966), publications which displayed his increasing involvement with structuralism, from which he later distanced himself. These first three histories exemplified a historiographical technique Foucault was developing called "archaeology".

From 1966 to 1968, Foucault lectured at the University of Tunis before returning to France, where he became head of the philosophy department at the new experimental university of Paris VIII. Foucault subsequently published *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). In 1970, Foucault was admitted to the Collège de France, a membership he retained until his death. He also became active in a number of left-wing groups involved in campaigns against racism and human rights abuses and for penal reform. Foucault later published *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976), in which he developed archaeological and genealogical methods which emphasized the role that power plays in society.

Foucault died in Paris of HIV/AIDS; he became the first public figure in France to die from the disease. His partner Daniel Defert founded the AIDES charity in his memory.

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## 1.2 EARLY LIFE

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### **Youth: 1926–1946**

Paul-Michel Foucault was born on 15 October 1926 in the city of Poitiers, west-central France, as the second of three children in a

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prosperous and socially conservative upper-middle-class family. Family tradition prescribed naming him after his father, Paul Foucault, but his mother insisted on the addition of "Michel"; referred to as "Paul" at school, he expressed a preference for "Michel" throughout his life.

His father (1893–1959), a successful local surgeon born in Fontainebleau, moved to Poitiers, where he set up his own practice and married Anne Malapert. She was the daughter of prosperous surgeon Dr. Prosper Malapert, who owned a private practice and taught anatomy at the University of Poitiers' School of Medicine. Paul Foucault eventually took over his father-in-law's medical practice, while his wife took charge of their large mid-19th-century house, Le Piroir, in the village of Vendeuve-du-Poitou. Together the couple had three children – a girl named Francine and two boys, Paul-Michel and Denys – who all shared the same fair hair and bright blue eyes. The children were raised to be nominal Roman Catholics, attending mass at the Church of Saint-Porchair, and while Michel briefly became an altar boy, none of the family was devout.

“I wasn't always smart, I was actually very stupid in school ... here was a boy who was very attractive who was even stupider than I was. And in order to ingratiate myself with this boy who was very beautiful, I began to do his homework for him—and that's how I became smart, I had to do all this work to just keep ahead of him a little bit, in order to help him. In a sense, all the rest of my life I've been trying to do intellectual things that would attract beautiful boys.”

— Michel Foucault, 1983

In later life, Foucault would reveal very little about his childhood. Describing himself as a "juvenile delinquent", he claimed his father was a "bully" who would sternly punish him. In 1930 Foucault began his schooling, two years early, at the local Lycée Henry-IV. Here he undertook two years of elementary education before entering the main lycée, where he stayed until 1936. He then undertook his first four years of secondary education at the same establishment, excelling in French, Greek, Latin and history but doing poorly at arithmetic and mathematics. In 1939 the Second World War broke out and in 1940 Nazi Germany



occupied France; Foucault's parents opposed the occupation and the Vichy regime, but did not join the Resistance. In 1940 Foucault's mother enrolled him in the Collège Saint-Stanislas, a strict Roman Catholic institution run by the Jesuits. Lonely, he described his years there as an "ordeal", but he excelled academically, particularly in philosophy, history and literature. In 1942 he entered his final year, the terminale, where he focused on the study of philosophy, earning his baccalauréat in 1943.

Returning to the local Lycée Henry-IV, he studied history and philosophy for a year, aided by a personal tutor, the philosopher Louis Girard . Rejecting his father's wishes that he become a surgeon, in 1945 Foucault went to Paris, where he enrolled in one of the country's most prestigious secondary schools, which was also known as the Lycée Henri-IV. Here he studied under the philosopher Jean Hyppolite, an existentialist and expert on the work of 19th-century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hyppolite had devoted himself to uniting existentialist theories with the dialectical theories of Hegel and Karl Marx. These ideas influenced Foucault, who adopted Hyppolite's conviction that philosophy must develop through a study of history.

### **École Normale Supérieure and University of Paris: 1946–1951**

Attaining excellent results, in autumn 1946 Foucault was admitted to the élite École Normale Supérieure (ENS); to gain entry, he undertook exams and an oral interrogation by Georges Canguilhem and Pierre-Maxime Schuhl. Of the hundred students entering the ENS, Foucault ranked fourth based on his entry results, and encountered the highly competitive nature of the institution. Like most of his classmates, he lived in the school's communal dormitories on the Parisian Rue d'Ulm. He remained largely unpopular, spending much time alone, reading voraciously. His fellow students noted his love of violence and the macabre; he decorated his bedroom with images of torture and war drawn during the Napoleonic Wars by Spanish artist Francisco Goya, and on one occasion chased a classmate with a dagger. Prone to self-harm, in 1948 Foucault allegedly attempted suicide; his father sent him to see the psychiatrist Jean Delay at the Sainte-Anne Hospital Center.

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Obsessed with the idea of self-mutilation and suicide, Foucault attempted the latter several times in ensuing years, praising suicide in later writings. The ENS's doctor examined Foucault's state of mind, suggesting that his suicidal tendencies emerged from the distress surrounding his homosexuality, because same-sex sexual activity was socially taboo in France. At the time, Foucault engaged in homosexual activity with men whom he encountered in the underground Parisian gay scene, also indulging in drug use; according to biographer James Miller, he enjoyed the thrill and sense of danger that these activities offered him.

Although studying various subjects, Foucault soon gravitated towards philosophy, reading not only Hegel and Marx but also Immanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl and most significantly, Martin Heidegger. He began reading the publications of philosopher Gaston Bachelard, taking a particular interest in his work exploring the history of science. He graduated from the ENS with a DES (diplôme d'études supérieures, roughly equivalent to an MA) in Philosophy in 1949. His DES thesis under the direction of Hyppolite was titled *La Constitution d'un transcendantal dans La Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (The Constitution of a Historical Transcendental in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit).

In 1948, the philosopher Louis Althusser became a tutor at the ENS. A Marxist, he influenced both Foucault and a number of other students, encouraging them to join the French Communist Party (Parti communiste français, PCF). Foucault did so in 1950, but never became particularly active in its activities, and never adopted an orthodox Marxist viewpoint, refuting core Marxist tenets such as class struggle. He soon became dissatisfied with the bigotry that he experienced within the party's ranks; he personally faced homophobia and was appalled by the anti-semitism exhibited during the 1952-1953 "Doctors' plot" in the Soviet Union. He left the Communist Party in 1953, but remained Althusser's friend and defender for the rest of his life. Although failing at the first attempt in 1950, he passed his agrégation in philosophy on the second try, in 1951. Excused from national service on medical grounds, he decided to start a doctorate at the Fondation Thiers in 1951, focusing on the philosophy of psychology, but he relinquished it after only one year in 1952.

Foucault was also interested in psychology and he attended Daniel Lagache's lectures at the University of Paris, where he obtained a BA (licence) in Psychology in 1949 and a Diploma in Psychopathology (Diplôme de psychopathologie) from the University's Institute of Psychology (now Institut de psychologie de l'université Paris Descartes ) in June 1952.

**Early career: 1951–1955**

In the early 1950s, Foucault came under the influence of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who remained a core influence on his work throughout his life.

Over the following few years, Foucault embarked on a variety of research and teaching jobs. From 1951 to 1955, he worked as a psychology instructor at the ENS at Althusser's invitation. In Paris, he shared a flat with his brother, who was training to become a surgeon, but for three days in the week commuted to the northern town of Lille, teaching psychology at the Université de Lille from 1953 to 1954. Many of his students liked his lecturing style. Meanwhile, he continued working on his thesis, visiting the Bibliothèque Nationale every day to read the work of psychologists like Ivan Pavlov, Jean Piaget and Karl Jaspers. Undertaking research at the psychiatric institute of the Sainte-Anne Hospital, he became an unofficial intern, studying the relationship between doctor and patient and aiding experiments in the electroencephalographic laboratory. Foucault adopted many of the theories of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, undertaking psychoanalytical interpretation of his dreams and making friends undergo Rorschach tests.

Embracing the Parisian avant-garde, Foucault entered into a romantic relationship with the serialist composer Jean Barraqué. Together, they tried to produce their greatest work, heavily used recreational drugs and engaged in sado-masochistic sexual activity. In August 1953, Foucault and Barraqué holidayed in Italy, where the philosopher immersed himself in *Untimely Meditations* (1873–76), a set of four essays by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Later describing Nietzsche's work as "a revelation", he felt that reading the book deeply affected him, being a

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watershed moment in his life. Foucault subsequently experienced another groundbreaking self-revelation when watching a Parisian performance of Samuel Beckett's new play, *Waiting for Godot*, in 1953.

Interested in literature, Foucault was an avid reader of the philosopher Maurice Blanchot's book reviews published in *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Enamoured of Blanchot's literary style and critical theories, in later works he adopted Blanchot's technique of "interviewing" himself. Foucault also came across Hermann Broch's 1945 novel *The Death of Virgil*, a work that obsessed both him and Barraqué. While the latter attempted to convert the work into an epic opera, Foucault admired Broch's text for its portrayal of death as an affirmation of life. The couple took a mutual interest in the work of such authors as the Marquis de Sade, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Franz Kafka and Jean Genet, all of whose works explored the themes of sex and violence.

"I belong to that generation who, as students, had before their eyes, and were limited by, a horizon consisting of Marxism, phenomenology and existentialism. For me the break was first Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a breathtaking performance."

— Michel Foucault, 1983

Interested in the work of Swiss psychologist Ludwig Binswanger, Foucault aided family friend Jacqueline Verdeaux in translating his works into French. Foucault was particularly interested in Binswanger's studies of Ellen West who, like himself, had a deep obsession with suicide, eventually killing herself. In 1954, Foucault authored an introduction to Binswanger's paper "Dream and Existence", in which he argued that dreams constituted "the birth of the world" or "the heart laid bare", expressing the mind's deepest desires. That same year, Foucault published his first book, *Mental Illness and Personality* (*Maladie mentale et personnalité*), in which he exhibited his influence from both Marxist and Heideggerian thought, covering a wide range of subject matter from the reflex psychology of Pavlov to the classic psychoanalysis of Freud. Referencing the work of sociologists and anthropologists such as Émile Durkheim and Margaret Mead, he presented his theory that illness was culturally relative. Biographer James Miller noted that while the book

exhibited "erudition and evident intelligence", it lacked the "kind of fire and flair" which Foucault exhibited in subsequent works. It was largely critically ignored, receiving only one review at the time. Foucault grew to despise it, unsuccessfully attempting to prevent its republication and translation into English.

### **Sweden, Poland, and West Germany: 1955–1960**

Foucault spent the next five years abroad, first in Sweden, working as cultural diplomat at the University of Uppsala, a job obtained through his acquaintance with historian of religion Georges Dumézil. At Uppsala he was appointed a Reader in French language and literature, while simultaneously working as director of the Maison de France, thus opening the possibility of a cultural-diplomatic career. Although finding it difficult to adjust to the "Nordic gloom" and long winters, he developed close friendships with two Frenchmen, biochemist Jean-François Miquel and physicist Jacques Papet-Lépine, and entered into romantic and sexual relationships with various men. In Uppsala, he became known for his heavy alcohol consumption and reckless driving in his new Jaguar car. In spring 1956, Barraqué broke from his relationship with Foucault, announcing that he wanted to leave the "vertigo of madness". In Uppsala, Foucault spent much of his spare time in the university's Carolina Rediviva library, making use of their Bibliotheca Walleriana collection of texts on the history of medicine for his ongoing research. Finishing his doctoral thesis, Foucault hoped it would be accepted by Uppsala University, but Sten Lindroth, a positivistic historian of science there, was unimpressed, asserting that it was full of speculative generalisations and was a poor work of history; he refused to allow Foucault to be awarded a doctorate at Uppsala. In part because of this rejection, Foucault left Sweden. Later, Foucault admitted that the work was a first draft with certain lack of quality.

Again at Dumézil's recognition, in October 1958 Foucault arrived in the capital of Polish People's Republic, Warsaw and was placed in charge of the University of Warsaw's Centre Français. Foucault found life in Poland difficult due to the lack of material goods and services following the destruction of the Second World War. Witnessing the aftermath of

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the Polish October in which students had protested against the governing communist Polish United Workers' Party, he felt that most Poles despised their government as a puppet regime of the Soviet Union, and thought that the system ran "badly". Considering the university a liberal enclave, he traveled the country giving lectures; proving popular, he adopted the position of de facto cultural attaché. As in France and Sweden, homosexual activity was legal but socially frowned upon in Poland, and he undertook relationships with a number of men; one was a Polish security agent who hoped to trap Foucault in an embarrassing situation, which would therefore reflect badly on the French embassy. Wracked in diplomatic scandal, he was ordered to leave Poland for a new destination. Various positions were available in West Germany, and so Foucault relocated to the Institut français Hamburg (where he was director in 1958–60), teaching the same courses he had given in Uppsala and Warsaw. Spending much time in the Reeperbahn red light district, he entered into a relationship with a transvestite.

### **Growing career**

#### **Madness and Civilization: 1960**

“Histoire de la folie is not an easy text to read, and it defies attempts to summarise its contents. Foucault refers to a bewildering variety of sources, ranging from well-known authors such as Erasmus and Molière to archival documents and forgotten figures in the history of medicine and psychiatry. His erudition derives from years pondering, to cite Poe, 'over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore', and his learning is not always worn lightly. ”

— Foucault biographer David Macey, 1993

In West Germany, Foucault completed in 1960 his primary thesis (thèse principale) for his State doctorate, entitled *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Madness and Insanity: History of Madness in the Classical Age), a philosophical work based upon his studies into the history of medicine. The book discussed how West European society had dealt with madness, arguing that it was a social construct distinct from mental illness. Foucault traces the evolution of the concept of madness

through three phases: the Renaissance, the later 17th and 18th centuries, and the modern experience. The work alludes to the work of French poet and playwright Antonin Artaud, who exerted a strong influence over Foucault's thought at the time.

*Histoire de la folie* was an expansive work, consisting of 943 pages of text, followed by appendices and a bibliography. Foucault submitted it at the University of Paris, although the university's regulations for awarding a State doctorate required the submission of both his main thesis and a shorter complementary thesis. Obtaining a doctorate in France at the period was a multi-step process. The first step was to obtain a rapporteur, or "sponsor" for the work: Foucault chose Georges Canguilhem. The second was to find a publisher, and as a result *Folie et déraison* would be published in French in May 1961 by the company Plon, whom Foucault chose over Presses Universitaires de France after being rejected by Gallimard. In 1964, a heavily abridged version was published as a mass market paperback, then translated into English for publication the following year as *Madness and Civilization*.

*Folie et déraison* received a mixed reception in France and in foreign journals focusing on French affairs. Although it was critically acclaimed by Maurice Blanchot, Michel Serres, Roland Barthes, Gaston Bachelard, and Fernand Braudel, it was largely ignored by the leftist press, much to Foucault's disappointment. It was notably criticised for advocating metaphysics by young philosopher Jacques Derrida in a March 1963 lecture at the University of Paris. Responding with a vicious retort, Foucault criticised Derrida's interpretation of René Descartes. The two remained bitter rivals until reconciling in 1981. In the English-speaking world, the work became a significant influence on the anti-psychiatry movement during the 1960s; Foucault took a mixed approach to this, associating with a number of anti-psychiatrists but arguing that most of them misunderstood his work.

Foucault's secondary thesis (his *thèse complémentaire* written in Hamburg between 1959 and 1960) was a translation and commentary on German philosopher Immanuel Kant's 1798 work *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (the title of his thesis was "Introduction à

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*l'Anthropologie*", "Introduction to Kant's Anthropology"). Largely consisting of Foucault's discussion of textual dating—an "archaeology of the Kantian text"—he rounded off the thesis with an evocation of Nietzsche, his biggest philosophical influence. This work's rapporteur was his old tutor and then director of the ENS, Hyppolite, who was well acquainted with German philosophy. After both these were championed and reviewed, he underwent his public defense, the *soutenance de thèse*, on 20 May 1961. The academics responsible for reviewing his work were concerned about the unconventional nature of his major thesis; reviewer Henri Gouhier noted that it was not a conventional work of history, making sweeping generalisations without sufficient particular argument, and that Foucault clearly "thinks in allegories". They all agreed however that the overall project was of merit, awarding Foucault his doctorate "despite reservations".

### **University of Clermont-Ferrand, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things*: 1960–66**

In October 1960, Foucault took a tenured post in philosophy at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, commuting to the city every week from Paris, where he lived in a high-rise block on the rue du Dr Finlay. Responsible for teaching psychology, which was subsumed within the philosophy department, he was considered a "fascinating" but "rather traditional" teacher at Clermont. The department was run by Jules Vuillemin, who soon developed a friendship with Foucault. Foucault then took Vuillemin's job when the latter was elected to the Collège de France in 1962. In this position, Foucault took a dislike to another staff member whom he considered stupid: Roger Garaudy, a senior figure in the Communist Party. Foucault made life at the university difficult for Garaudy, leading the latter to transfer to Poitiers. Foucault also caused controversy by securing a university job for his lover, the philosopher Daniel Defert, with whom he retained a non-monogamous relationship for the rest of his life.

Foucault adored the work of Raymond Roussel and authored a literary study of it.



Foucault maintained a keen interest in literature, publishing reviews in amongst others the literary journals *Tel Quel* and *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and sitting on the editorial board of *Critique*. In May 1963, he published a book devoted to poet, novelist, and playwright Raymond Roussel. It was written in under two months, published by Gallimard, and would be described by biographer David Macey as "a very personal book" that resulted from a "love affair" with Roussel's work. It would be published in English in 1983 as *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*. Receiving few reviews, it was largely ignored. That same year he published a sequel to *Folie et déraison*, entitled *Naissance de la Clinique*, subsequently translated as *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Shorter than its predecessor, it focused on the changes that the medical establishment underwent in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Like his preceding work, *Naissance de la Clinique* was largely critically ignored, but later gained a cult following. It was of interest within the field of medical ethics, as it considered the ways in which the history of medicine and hospitals, and the training that those working within them receive, bring about a particular way of looking at the body: the 'medical gaze'. Foucault was also selected to be among the "Eighteen Man Commission" that assembled between November 1963 and March 1964 to discuss university reforms that were to be implemented by Christian Fouchet, the Gaullist Minister of National Education. Implemented in 1967, they brought staff strikes and student protests.

In April 1966, Gallimard published Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* ("Words and Things"), later translated as *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Exploring how man came to be an object of knowledge, it argued that all periods of history have possessed certain underlying conditions of truth that constituted what was acceptable as scientific discourse. Foucault argues that these conditions of discourse have changed over time, from one period's episteme to another. Although designed for a specialist audience, the work gained media attention, becoming a surprise bestseller in France. Appearing at the height of interest in structuralism, Foucault was quickly grouped with scholars such as Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Roland

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Barthes, as the latest wave of thinkers set to topple the existentialism popularized by Jean-Paul Sartre. Although initially accepting this description, Foucault soon vehemently rejected it. Foucault and Sartre regularly criticised one another in the press. Both Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir attacked Foucault's ideas as "bourgeois", while Foucault retaliated against their Marxist beliefs by proclaiming that "Marxism exists in nineteenth-century thought as a fish exists in water; that is, it ceases to breathe anywhere else."

### **University of Tunis and Vincennes: 1966–1970**

"I lived for two and a half years. It made a real impression. I was present for large, violent student riots that preceded by several weeks what happened in May in France. This was March 1968. The unrest lasted a whole year: strikes, courses suspended, arrests. And in March, a general strike by the students. The police came into the university, beat up the students, wounded several of them seriously, and started making arrests ... I have to say that I was tremendously impressed by those young men and women who took terrible risks by writing or distributing tracts or calling for strikes, the ones who really risked losing their freedom! It was a political experience for me. "

— Michel Foucault, 1983

In September 1966, Foucault took a position teaching psychology at the University of Tunis in Tunisia. His decision to do so was largely because his lover, Defert, had been posted to the country as part of his national service. Foucault moved a few kilometres from Tunis, to the village of Sidi Bou Saïd, where fellow academic Gérard Deledalle lived with his wife. Soon after his arrival, Foucault announced that Tunisia was "blessed by history", a nation which "deserves to live forever because it was where Hannibal and St. Augustine lived." His lectures at the university proved very popular, and were well attended. Although many young students were enthusiastic about his teaching, they were critical of what they believed to be his right-wing political views, viewing him as a "representative of Gaullist technocracy", even though he considered himself a leftist.

Foucault was in Tunis during the anti-government and pro-Palestinian riots that rocked the city in June 1967, and which continued for a year. Although highly critical of the violent, ultra-nationalistic and anti-semitic nature of many protesters, he used his status to try to prevent some of his militant leftist students from being arrested and tortured for their role in the agitation. He hid their printing press in his garden, and tried to testify on their behalf at their trials, but was prevented when the trials became closed-door events. While in Tunis, Foucault continued to write. Inspired by a correspondence with the surrealist artist René Magritte, Foucault started to write a book about the impressionist artist Édouard Manet, but never completed it.

In 1968, Foucault returned to Paris, moving into an apartment on the Rue de Vaugirard. After the May 1968 student protests, Minister of Education Edgar Faure responded by founding new universities with greater autonomy. Most prominent of these was the Centre Expérimental de Vincennes in Vincennes on the outskirts of Paris. A group of prominent academics were asked to select teachers to run the Centre's departments, and Canguilhem recommended Foucault as head of the Philosophy Department. Becoming a tenured professor of Vincennes, Foucault's desire was to obtain "the best in French philosophy today" for his department, employing Michel Serres, Judith Miller, Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière, François Regnault, Henri Weber, Étienne Balibar, and François Châtelet; most of them were Marxists or ultra-left activists.

Lectures began at the university in January 1969, and straight away its students and staff, including Foucault, were involved in occupations and clashes with police, resulting in arrests. In February, Foucault gave a speech denouncing police provocation to protesters at the Latin Quarter of the Mutualité. Such actions marked Foucault's embrace of the ultra-left, undoubtedly influenced by Defert, who had gained a job at Vincennes' sociology department and who had become a Maoist. Most of the courses at Foucault's philosophy department were Marxist-Leninist oriented, although Foucault himself gave courses on Nietzsche, "The end of Metaphysics", and "The Discourse of Sexuality", which were highly popular and over-subscribed. While the right-wing press was heavily critical of this new institution, new Minister of Education Olivier

Guichard was angered by its ideological bent and the lack of exams, with students being awarded degrees in a haphazard manner. He refused national accreditation of the department's degrees, resulting in a public rebuttal from Foucault.

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### 1.3 LATER LIFE

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#### Later life

##### **Collège de France and Discipline and Punish: 1970–75**

Foucault desired to leave Vincennes and become a fellow of the prestigious Collège de France. He requested to join, taking up a chair in what he called the "history of systems of thought," and his request was championed by members Dumézil, Hyppolite, and Vuillemin. In November 1969, when an opening became available, Foucault was elected to the Collège, though with opposition by a large minority. He gave his inaugural lecture in December 1970, which was subsequently published as *L'Ordre du discours* (The Discourse of Language). He was obliged to give 12 weekly lectures a year—and did so for the rest of his life—covering the topics that he was researching at the time; these became "one of the events of Parisian intellectual life" and were repeatedly packed out events. On Mondays, he also gave seminars to a group of students; many of them became a "Foucauldian tribe" who worked with him on his research. He enjoyed this teamwork and collective research, and together they would publish a number of short books. Working at the Collège allowed him to travel widely, giving lectures in Brazil, Japan, Canada, and the United States over the next 14 years. In 1970 and 1972, Foucault served as a professor in the French Department of the University at Buffalo in Buffalo, New York.

In May 1971, Foucault co-founded the Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP) along with historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet and journalist Jean-Marie Domenach. The GIP aimed to investigate and expose poor conditions in prisons and give prisoners and ex-prisoners a voice in French society. It was highly critical of the penal system, believing that it converted petty criminals into hardened delinquents. The GIP gave press conferences and staged protests surrounding the events of the Toul prison

riot in December 1971, alongside other prison riots that it sparked off; in doing so it faced a police crackdown and repeated arrests. The group became active across France, with 2,000 to 3,000, members, but disbanded before 1974. Also campaigning against the death penalty, Foucault co-authored a short book on the case of the convicted murderer Pierre Rivière. After his research into the penal system, Foucault published *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Discipline and Punish) in 1975, offering a history of the system in western Europe. In it, Foucault examines the penal evolution away from corporal and capital punishment to the penitentiary system that began in Europe and the United States around the end of the 18th century. Biographer Didier Eribon described it as "perhaps the finest" of Foucault's works, and it was well received.

Foucault was also active in anti-racist campaigns; in November 1971, he was a leading figure in protests following the perceived racist killing of Arab migrant Dejellali Ben Ali. In this he worked alongside his old rival Sartre, the journalist Claude Mauriac, and one of his literary heroes, Jean Genet. This campaign was formalised as the Committee for the Defence of the Rights of Immigrants, but there was tension at their meetings as Foucault opposed the anti-Israeli sentiment of many Arab workers and Maoist activists. At a December 1972 protest against the police killing of Algerian worker Mohammad Diab, both Foucault and Genet were arrested, resulting in widespread publicity. Foucault was also involved in founding the Agence de Press-Libération (APL), a group of leftist journalists who intended to cover news stories neglected by the mainstream press. In 1973, they established the daily newspaper *Libération*, and Foucault suggested that they establish committees across France to collect news and distribute the paper, and advocated a column known as the "Chronicle of the Workers' Memory" to allow workers to express their opinions. Foucault wanted an active journalistic role in the paper, but this proved untenable, and he soon became disillusioned with *Libération*, believing that it distorted the facts; he would not publish in it until 1980. In 1975 he had a LSD experience with Simeon Wade in Death Valley, California and later wrote "it was the greatest experience of his life, and that it profoundly changed his life and his work".

### **The History of Sexuality and Iranian Revolution: 1976–79**

In 1976, Gallimard published Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité: la volonté de savoir* (The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge), a short book exploring what Foucault called the "repressive hypothesis". It revolved largely around the concept of power, rejecting both Marxist and Freudian theory. Foucault intended it as the first in a seven-volume exploration of the subject. *Histoire de la sexualité* was a best-seller in France and gained positive press, but lukewarm intellectual interest, something that upset Foucault, who felt that many misunderstood his hypothesis. He soon became dissatisfied with Gallimard after being offended by senior staff member Pierre Nora. Along with Paul Veyne and François Wahl, Foucault launched a new series of academic books, known as *Des travaux* (Some Works), through the company Seuil, which he hoped would improve the state of academic research in France. He also produced introductions for the memoirs of Herculine Barbin and *My Secret Life*.

“There exists an international citizenry that has its rights, and has its duties, and that is committed to rise up against every abuse of power, no matter who the author, no matter who the victims. After all, we are all ruled, and as such, we are in solidarity. ”

— Michel Foucault, 1981

Foucault remained a political activist, focusing on protesting government abuses of human rights around the world. He was a key player in the 1975 protests against the Spanish government to execute 11 militants sentenced to death without fair trial. It was his idea to travel to Madrid with 6 others to give their press conference there; they were subsequently arrested and deported back to Paris. In 1977, he protested the extradition of Klaus Croissant to West Germany, and his rib was fractured during clashes with riot police. In July that year, he organised an assembly of Eastern Bloc dissidents to mark the visit of Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev to Paris. In 1979, he campaigned for Vietnamese political dissidents to be granted asylum in France.

In 1977, Italian newspaper *Corriere della sera* asked Foucault to write a column for them. In doing so, in 1978 he travelled to Tehran in Iran, days after the Black Friday massacre. Documenting the developing Iranian Revolution, he met with opposition leaders such as Mohammad Kazem Shariatmadari and Mehdi Bazargan, and discovered the popular support for Islamism. Returning to France, he was one of the journalists who visited the Ayatollah Khomeini, before visiting Tehran. His articles expressed awe of Khomeini's Islamist movement, for which he was widely criticised in the French press, including by Iranian expatriates. Foucault's response was that Islamism was to become a major political force in the region, and that the West must treat it with respect rather than hostility. In April 1978, Foucault traveled to Japan, where he studied Zen Buddhism under Omori Sogen at the Seionji temple in Uenohara.

#### **Final years: 1980–84**

Although remaining critical of power relations, Foucault expressed cautious support for the Socialist Party government of François Mitterrand following its electoral victory in 1981. But his support soon deteriorated when that party refused to condemn the Polish government's crackdown on the 1982 demonstrations in Poland orchestrated by the Solidarity trade union. He and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu authored a document condemning Mitterrand's inaction that was published in *Libération*, and they also took part in large public protests on the issue. Foucault continued to support Solidarity, and with his friend Simone Signoret traveled to Poland as part of a Médecins du Monde expedition, taking time out to visit the Auschwitz concentration camp. He continued his academic research, and in June 1984 Gallimard published the second and third volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité*. Volume two, *L'Usage des plaisirs*, dealt with the "techniques of self" prescribed by ancient Greek pagan morality in relation to sexual ethics, while volume three, *Le Souci de soi*, explored the same theme in the Greek and Latin texts of the first two centuries CE. A fourth volume, *Les Aveux de la chair*, was to examine sexuality in early Christianity, but it was not finished.

## Notes

In October 1980, Foucault became a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley, giving the Howison Lectures on "Truth and Subjectivity", while in November he lectured at the Humanities Institute at New York University. His growing popularity in American intellectual circles was noted by Time magazine, while Foucault went on to lecture at UCLA in 1981, the University of Vermont in 1982, and Berkeley again in 1983, where his lectures drew huge crowds. Foucault spent many evenings in the San Francisco gay scene, frequenting sado-masochistic bathhouses, engaging in unprotected sex. He would praise sado-masochistic activity in interviews with the gay press, describing it as "the real creation of new possibilities of pleasure, which people had no idea about previously." Foucault contracted HIV and eventually developed AIDS. Little was known of the virus at the time; the first cases had only been identified in 1980. In summer 1983, he developed a persistent dry cough, which concerned friends in Paris, but Foucault insisted it was just a pulmonary infection. Only when hospitalized was Foucault correctly diagnosed; treated with antibiotics, he delivered a final set of lectures at the Collège de France. Foucault entered Paris' Hôpital de la Salpêtrière—the same institution that he had studied in *Madness and Civilisation*—on 10 June 1984, with neurological symptoms complicated by sepsis. He died in the hospital on 25 June.

On 26 June, *Libération* announced his death, mentioning the rumour that it had been brought on by AIDS. The following day, *Le Monde* issued a medical bulletin cleared by his family which made no reference to HIV/AIDS. On 29 June, Foucault's *la levée du corps* ceremony was held, in which the coffin was carried from the hospital morgue. Hundreds attended, including activists and academic friends, while Gilles Deleuze gave a speech using excerpts from *The History of Sexuality*. His body was then buried at Vendevre-du-Poitou in a small ceremony. Soon after his death, Foucault's partner Daniel Defert founded the first national HIV/AIDS organisation in France, AIDES; a pun on the French language word for "help" (*aide*) and the English language acronym for the disease. On the second anniversary of Foucault's death, Defert publicly revealed that Foucault's death was AIDS-related in *The Advocate*.

## Personal life



Foucault's first biographer, Didier Eribon, described the philosopher as "a complex, many-sided character", and that "under one mask there is always another". He also noted that he exhibited an "enormous capacity for work". At the ENS, Foucault's classmates unanimously summed him up as a figure who was both "disconcerting and strange" and "a passionate worker". As he aged, his personality changed: Eribon noted that while he was a "tortured adolescent", post-1960, he had become "a radiant man, relaxed and cheerful", even being described by those who worked with him as a dandy. He noted that in 1969, Foucault embodied the idea of "the militant intellectual".

Foucault was an atheist. He was also a fan of classical music, particularly enjoying the work of Johann Sebastian Bach and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and became known for wearing turtleneck sweaters. After his death, Foucault's friend Georges Dumézil described him as having possessed "a profound kindness and goodness", also exhibiting an "intelligence literally knew no bounds." His life-partner Daniel Defert inherited his estate.

**Check your Progress-1**

1. Where was Paul-Michel Foucault born?

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2. When was Paul-Michel Foucault born ?

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3. Who founded the AIDES charity ?

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4. In which year did Paul-Michel Foucault get his BA (license) in Psychology?

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## 1.4 LET US SUM UP

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Michel Foucault, in full Paul-Michel Foucault, (born October 15, 1926, Poitiers, France—died June 25, 1984, Paris), French philosopher and historian, one of the most influential and controversial scholars of the post-World War II period.

### **Education And Career**

The son and grandson of a physician, Michel Foucault was born to a solidly bourgeois family. He resisted what he regarded as the provincialism of his upbringing and his native country, and his career was marked by frequent sojourns abroad. A distinguished but sometimes erratic student, Foucault gained entry at the age of 20 to the *École Normale Supérieure* (ENS) in Paris in 1946. There he studied psychology and philosophy, embraced and then abandoned communism, and established a reputation as a sedulous, brilliant, and eccentric student.

After graduating in 1952, Foucault began a career marked by constant movement, both professional and intellectual. He first taught at the University of Lille, then spent five years (1955–60) as a cultural attaché in Uppsala, Sweden; Warsaw, Poland; and Hamburg, West Germany (now Germany). Foucault defended his doctoral dissertation at the ENS in 1961. Circulated under the title *Folie et déraison: histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (“Madness and Unreason: A History of Madness in the Classical Age”), it won critical praise but a limited audience. (An abridged version was translated into English and published in 1965 as *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*.) His other early monographs, written while he taught at the University of Clermont-Ferrand in France (1960–66), had much the same fate. Not until the appearance of *Les Mots et les choses* (“Words and Things”; Eng. trans. *The Order of Things*) in 1966 did Foucault begin to attract wide notice as one of the most original and controversial thinkers of his day. He chose to watch his reputation grow from a distance—at the University of Tunis in Tunisia (1966–68)—and was still in Tunis when student riots erupted in Paris in the spring of 1968. In 1969 he published

L'Archéologie du savoir (The Archaeology of Knowledge). In 1970, after a brief tenure as director of the philosophy department at the University of Paris, Vincennes, he was awarded a chair in the history of systems of thought at the Collège de France, France's most prestigious postsecondary institution. The appointment gave Foucault the opportunity to conduct intensive research.

Between 1971 and 1984 Foucault wrote several works, including *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (1975; *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*), a monograph on the emergence of the modern prison; three volumes of a history of Western sexuality; and numerous essays. Foucault continued to travel widely, and as his reputation grew he spent extended periods in Brazil, Japan, Italy, Canada, and the United States. He became particularly attached to Berkeley, California, and the San Francisco Bay area and was a visiting lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley for several years. Foucault died of a septicemia typical of AIDS in 1984, the fourth volume of his history of sexuality still incomplete.

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## 1.5 KEYWORDS

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- **Neurological:** relating to the anatomy, functions, and organic disorders of nerves and the nervous system.
- **Sociologist:** an expert in or student of the development, structure, and functioning of human society.
- **Islamism:** Islamic militancy or fundamentalism.
- **Extradition:** the action of extraditing a person accused or convicted of a crime.
- **Marxist:** a supporter of the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

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## 1.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- Write a note on early life of Paul-Michel Foucault.
- Write a note on later life of Paul-Michel Foucault.

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## 1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- Alan D. Schrift (2006), *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy: Key Themes And Thinkers*, Blackwell Publishing, p. 126.
- Jacques Derrida points out Foucault's debt to Artaud in his essay "La parole soufflée," in Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1978), p. 326 n. 26.
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- Crossley, N. "The Politics of the Gaze: Between Foucault and Merleau-Ponty". *Human Studies*. 16(4):399–419, 1993.
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- Gibson Burrell (17 February 1998). "2 Modernism, Postmodernism, and Organizational Analysis: The Contribution of Michel Foucault". In Alan McKinlay & Ken Starkey (eds.). *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory: From Panopticon to Technologies of Self*. 1 Foucault and Organization Theory. SAGE Publications. p. 14. ISBN 9780803975477.

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## 1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- Paul-Michel Foucault was born in Poitiers. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q1)**
- Paul-Michel Foucault was born on 15 October 1926. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q2)**
- Paul-Michel Foucault's partner Daniel Defert founded the AIDES charity in his memory. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q3)**
- Paul-Michel Foucault got his BA (license) in Psychology in 1949. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q4)**

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## **UNIT-2: FOUCAULT- ‘WHAT IS AN AUTHOR? - 2**

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### **STRUCTURE**

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Thought

2.3 Influence and Reception

2.4 Let us sum up

2.5 Keywords

2.6 Questions for Review

2.7 Suggested Reading and References

2.8 Answers to Check your Progress

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### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn about the thoughts of Paul-Michel Foucault;
- and, you would also learn about the influence and reception of Paul- Michel Foucault.

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Foucault has been widely read and discussed in his own right. He has galvanized an army of detractors, the less attentive of whom have misread his critique of “man” as radically antihumanist, his critique of power-knowledge as radically relativist, and his ethics as radically aestheticist. They have not, however, prevented him from inspiring increasingly important alternatives to established practices of cultural and intellectual history. In France and the Americas, Foucault’s unraveling of Marxist universalism has continued both to vex and to inspire activists of the left. The antipsychiatry movement of the 1970s

## Notes

and '80s owed much to Foucault, though he did not consider himself one of its members. His critique of the human sciences provoked much soul-searching within anthropology and its allied fields, even as it helped a new generation of scholars to embark upon a cross-cultural dialogue on the themes and variations of domination and subjectivation. Foucault's elucidation of the dense and minute dimensions of discipline and biopolitics likewise has had a noticeable impact on recent studies of colonialism, law, technology, gender, and race. The first volume of *The History of Sexuality* has become canonical for both gay and lesbian studies and "queer" theory, a multidisciplinary study aimed at critical examinations of traditional conceptions of sexual and gender identity. The terms discourse, genealogy, and power-knowledge have become deeply entrenched in the lexicon of virtually all contemporary social and cultural research.

Foucault has attracted several biographers, some of whom have been happy to flout his opposition to the practice of seeking the key to an oeuvre in the psychology or personality of its author. Yet, in their favour, it must be admitted that Foucault's personal life is a worthy subject of attention. He regularly made the issues that most troubled him personally—emotional suffering, exclusion, sexuality—the topics of his research. His critiques were often both theoretical and practical; he did not merely write about prisons, for example, but also organized protests against them. In 1975, while in Spain to protest the impending executions of two members of ETA, the Basque separatist movement, by the government of Francisco Franco, Foucault confronted police officers who had come to seize the protest leaflets he had prepared. He also publicly attacked Jean-Paul Sartre at a time when Sartre was still the demigod of Parisian intellectuals.

Although he despised the label "homosexual," he was openly gay and occasionally praised the pleasures of sadomasochism and the bathhouse. He was something of a dandy, preferring to shave his head and dress in black and white. He declared that he had experimented with drugs. Even more scandalously (at least to the French), he declared that his favourite meal was "a good club sandwich with a Coke." Foucault cultivated his celebrity as "an all-purpose subversive," but neither his thought nor his

life contain the substantive principles of an activist program. Foucault was skeptical of conventional wisdom and conventional moralism—but not without exception. He was an ironist—but not without restraint. He could be subversive and could admire subversion—but he was not a revolutionary. He dismissed even the possibility of providing an answer to Vladimir Ilich Lenin’s great, abstract question “What is to be done?” Rather, he insisted upon asking, more concretely and more locally, “What, in a given situation, might be done to increase human capacities without simultaneously increasing oppression?” He was not confident that an answer would always be forthcoming. But whether the situation at hand was common or simply his own, he sought in all his endeavours to remove himself to a vista distant enough that the question might at least be intelligently posed.

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## 2.2 THOUGHT

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Foucault's colleague Pierre Bourdieu summarized the philosopher's thought as "a long exploration of transgression, of going beyond social limits, always inseparably linked to knowledge and power."

“ The theme that underlies all Foucault's work is the relationship between power and knowledge, and how the former is used to control and define the latter. What authorities claim as 'scientific knowledge' are really just means of social control. Foucault shows how, for instance, in the eighteenth century 'madness' was used to categorize and stigmatize not just the mentally ill but the poor, the sick, the homeless and, indeed, anyone whose expressions of individuality were unwelcome. ”

— Philip Stokes, *Philosophy: 100 Essential Thinkers* (2004)

Philosopher Philip Stokes of the University of Reading noted that overall, Foucault's work was "dark and pessimistic", but that it did leave some room for optimism, in that it illustrates how the discipline of philosophy can be used to highlight areas of domination. In doing so, Stokes claimed, we are able to understand how we are being dominated and strive to build social structures that minimize this risk of domination.

## Notes

In all of this development there had to be close attention to detail; it is the detail which eventually individualizes people.

Later in his life, Foucault explained that his work was less about analyzing power as a phenomenon than about trying to characterize the different ways in which contemporary society has expressed the use of power to "objectivise subjects." These have taken three broad forms: one involving scientific authority to classify and 'order' knowledge about human populations. A second, and related form, has been to categorize and 'normalise' human subjects (by identifying madness, illness, physical features, and so on). The third relates to the manner in which the impulse to fashion sexual identities and train one's own body to engage in routines and practices ends up reproducing certain patterns within a given society.

### **Political**

Politically, Foucault was a leftist through much of his life, but his particular stance within the left often changed. In the early 1950s he had been a member of the French Communist Party, although he never adopted an orthodox Marxist viewpoint and left the party after three years, disgusted by the prejudice against Jews and homosexuals within its ranks. After spending some time working in Poland, then governed as a socialist state by the Polish United Workers' Party, he became further disillusioned with communist ideology. As a result, in the early 1960s he was considered to be "violently anticommunist" by some of his detractors, even though he was involved in leftist campaigns along with most of his students and colleagues.

Foucault claimed that perhaps children could consent to sex, defended or promoted the practice of sex with minors, and signed a 1977 petition to the French parliament calling for the decriminalization of all "consensual" sexual relations between adults and minors below the age of fifteen, the age of consent in France.

### **Literature**

In addition to his philosophical work, Foucault also wrote on literature. *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel* was published



in 1963, and translated into English in 1986. It is Foucault's only book-length work on literature. Foucault described it as "by far the book I wrote most easily, with the greatest pleasure, and most rapidly." Foucault explores theory, criticism, and psychology with reference to the texts of Raymond Roussel, one of the first notable experimental writers. Foucault also gave a lecture responding to Roland Barthes' famous essay "The Death of the Author" entitled "What Is An Author?" in 1969, later published in full. According to literary theoretician Kornelije Kvas, for Foucault, "denying the existence of a historical author on account of his/her irrelevance for interpretation is absurd, for the author is a function of the text that organizes its sense."

### **Power**

Foucault's analysis of power comes in two forms: empirical and theoretical. The empirical analyses concern themselves with historical (and modern) forms of power and how these emerged from previous forms of power. Foucault describes three types of power in his empirical analyses:

- Sovereign power
- Disciplinary power
- Biopower

### **Foucault's theory of power**

Foucault is generally critical to "theories" that try to give absolute answers to "everything". Therefore he considered his own "theory" of power to be closer to a method than a typical "theory". According to Foucault, most people misunderstand power, and he therefore makes clear that power cannot be completely described by any of the following definitions:

A group of institutions and/or mechanisms whose aim it is for a citizen to obey and yield to the state (a typical liberal definition of power).

Yielding to rules (a typical psychoanalytical definition of power).

## Notes

A general and oppressing system where one societal class or group oppresses another (a typical feminist or Orthodox Marxist definition of power).

Foucault is not critical of considering these phenomena as "power", but rather so that these theories of power cannot completely describe all forms of power. Foucault also claims that liberal definition of power has effectively hidden other forms of power to the extent that people have uncritically accepted them.

Foucault's own theory of power begins on micro-level, with singular "force relations". Richard A. Lynch defines Foucault's concept of "force relation" as "whatever in one's social interactions that pushes, urges or compels one to do something". According to Foucault, force relations are an effect of difference, inequality or unbalance that exists in other forms of relationships (such as sexual or economic). Force, and power, is however not something that a person or group "holds" (such as in the sovereign definition of power), but rather so is power a complex group of forces that comes from "everything" and therefore exists everywhere. That relations of power always result from inequality, difference or unbalance also means that power always has a goal or purpose. Power comes in two forms: tactics and strategies. Tactics is power on the micro-level, which can for example be how a person chooses to express themselves through their clothes. Strategies on the other hand, is power on macro-level, which can be the state of fashion at any moment. Strategies consist of a combination of tactics. At the same time, power is non-subjective according to Foucault. This posits a paradox, according to Lynch, since "someone" has to exert power, while at the same time there can be no "someone" exerting this power. According to Lynch this paradox can be solved with two observations:

By looking at power as something which reaches further than the influence of single people or groups. Even if individuals and groups try to influence fashion, for example, their actions will often get unexpected consequences.

Even if individuals and groups have a free choice, they are also affected and limited by their context/situation.

According to Foucault, force relations are constantly changing, constantly interacting with other force relations which may weaken, strengthen or change one another. Foucault writes that power always includes resistance, which means there is always a possibility that power and force relations will change in some way. According to Richard A. Lynch, the purpose of Foucault's theory of power is to increase peoples' awareness of how power has shaped their way of being, thinking and acting, and by increasing this awareness making it possible for them to change their way of being, thinking and acting.

### **Sovereign power**

With "sovereign power" Foucault alludes to a power structure that is similar to a pyramid, where one person or a group of people (at the top of the pyramid) holds the power, while the "normal" (and oppressed) people are at the bottom of the pyramid. In the middle parts of the pyramid are the people who enforce the sovereigns orders. A typical example of sovereign power is absolute monarchy.

In historical absolute monarchies, crimes has been considered as a personal offense against the sovereign and his/her power. The punishment was often public and spectacular, partly to deter others from committing crimes, but also to reinstate the sovereigns power. This was however both expensive and ineffective - it led far too often to people sympathizing with the criminal. In modern times, when disciplinary power is dominant, criminals are instead subjected to various disciplinary techniques in order to "remold" the criminal into a "law abiding citizen".

According to Chloë Taylor, a characteristic for sovereign power is that the sovereign has the right to take life, wealth, services, labor and products. The sovereign has a right to subtract - to take life, to enslave life, etc. - but not the right to control life in the way that later happens in disciplinary systems of power. According to Taylor, the form of power that the philosopher Thomas Hobbes is concerned about, is sovereign

power. According to Hobbes, people are "free" so long they are not literally placed in chains.

### **Disciplinary power**

What Foucault calls "disciplinary power" aims to use bodies skills as effectively as possible. The more useful the body becomes, the more obedient it also has to become. The purpose of this is not only to use the bodies' skills, but also prevent these skills from being used to revolt against the power.

Disciplinary power has "individuals" as its object, target and instrument. According to Foucault, "individual" is however a construct created by disciplinary power. ref name="Hoffman2011"/> The disciplinary power's techniques creates a "rational self-control", which in practice means that the disciplinary power is internalized and therefore doesn't continuously need external force. Foucault says that disciplinary power is primarily not an oppressing form of power, but rather so a productive form of power. Disciplinary power doesn't oppress interests or desires, but rather so subjects bodies to reconstructed patterns of behavior in order to reconstruct their thoughts, desires and interests. According to Foucault this happens in factories, schools, hospitals and prisons. Disciplinary power creates a certain type of individual by producing new movements, habits and skills. It focuses on details, single movements, their timing and speed. It organizes bodies in time and space, and controls every movement for maximal effect. It uses rules, surveillance, exams and controls. The activities follows certain plans, whose purpose it is to lead the bodies to certain pre-determined goals. The bodies are also combined with each other, in order to reach a productivity that is greater than the sum of all bodies activities.

Disciplinary power has according to Foucault been especially successful due to it's usage of three technologies: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and exams. By hierarchical observation, the bodies become constantly visible to the power. The observation is hierarchical since there is not a single observer, but rather so a "hierarchy" of observers. An example of this is mental asylums during the 19th century, when the psychiatrist was not the only observer, but

also nurses and auxiliary staff. From these observations and scientific discourses, a norm is established and used to judge the observed bodies. For the disciplinary power to continue to exist, this judgement has to be normalized. Foucault mentions several characteristics of this judgement: (1) all deviations, even small ones, from correct behavior is punished, (2) repeated rule violations are punished extra, (3) exercises are used as a behavior correcting technique and punishment, (4) rewards are used together with punishment to establish a hierarchy of good and bad behavior/people, (5) rank/grades/etc. are used as punishment and reward. Examinations combine the hierarchical observation with judgement. Exams objectivity and individualize the observed bodies by creating extensive documentation about every observed body. The purpose of the exams is therefore to gather further information about each individual, track their development and compare their results to the norm.

According to Foucault, the "formula" for disciplinary power can be seen in philosopher Jeremy Bentham's plan for the "optimal prison" - the panopticon. Such a prison consists of a circle-formed building where every cell is inhabited by only one prisoner. In every cell there are two windows - one to let in light from outside and one pointing to the middle of the circle-formed building. In this middle there is a tower where a guard can be placed to observe the prisoners. Since the prisoners will never be able to know whether they are being watched or not at a given moment, they will internalize the disciplinary power and regulate their own behavior (as if they were constantly being watched). Foucault says this construction (1) creates an individuality by separating prisoners from each other in the physical room, (2) since the prisoners cannot know if they are being watched at any given moment, they internalize the disciplinary power and regulate their own behavior as if they were always watched, (3) the surveillance makes it possible to create extensive documentation about each prisoner and their behavior. According to Foucault the panopticon has been used as a model also for other disciplinary institutions, such as mental asylums in the 19th century.

An example of disciplinary power in practice: F. W. Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management*

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Marcelo Hoffman posits that an example of disciplinary power can be seen in Frederick Winslow Taylor's book *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Taylor's purpose was to increase the efficacy of workers by having their behavior controlled by the company's management. He mentions as an example an attempt to increase the amount of pig iron carried by each worker during a day from 12,5 tonnes to 47 tonnes, without causing the workers to strike. Here, Hoffman says, is a clear example of how the disciplinary power tries to make the body more obedient the more useful it becomes. Taylor describes that he started out with observing his 75 workers to pick out the most skilled workers. He had studied the workers' history, character, habits and ambitions. Here is an example of how the disciplinary power creates an individuality. One of the selected workers, "Schmidt", was according to Taylor a man with high ambitions that valued a high salary. Schmidt accepted the terms given: he would earn 61% more if he agreed to obey without protest the orders given to him by an appointed instructor. Schmidt was thereafter observed and controlled in every detail of his working day - he was told when and how to work, when to rest, etc. According to Taylor, Schmidt never failed to obey during the three years during which he was subjected to this detailed control and higher workload.

Another example mentioned by Taylor is taken from a different industry, where Taylor had calculated the "optimal" workload for each worker. There Taylor had developed a system where every worker was not only continuously observed, but also punished if they had failed to reach up to the daily quota the previous workday. Every day the workers would get a yellow or white note at the end of each shift, where yellow notes were given to those who had not reached the daily quota. Those who were given yellow notes were then threatened with redeployment to a "working role better fit for their productive capacities", which according to Taylor effectively led the workers to work harder. According to Taylor, the workers who were given yellow notes were not immediately redeployed. Instead, Taylor writes that a "skilled teacher" were sent to teach the workers how to do the work properly. The teachers job was however not only to "teach" the workers how to work more effectively, but also to observe them and their working capacity. Besides this teacher,

Taylor also describes that the workers were observed by others, such as administrators, managers, etc.

### **Biopower**

With "biopower" Foucault refers to power over bios (life) - power over populations. Biopower primarily rests on norms which are internalized by people, rather than external force. It encourages, strengthens, controls, observes, optimizes and organize the forces below it. Foucault has sometimes described biopower as separate from disciplinary power, but at other times he has described disciplinary power as an expression of biopower. Biopower can use disciplinary techniques, but in contrast to disciplinary power its target is populations rather than individuals.

Biopower studies populations regarding (for example) number of births, life expectancy, public health, housing, migration, crime, which social groups are over-represented in deviations from the norm (regarding health, crime, etc.) and try to adjust, control or eliminate these norm-deviations. One example is the age distribution in a population. Biopower is interested in age distribution in order to compensate for future (or current) lacks of labor power, retirement homes, etc. Another example is the french-Canadian province Québec, which has had a high interest in sustaining the french language in the region. To accomplish this, economic incentives has been created for french-speaking people to move to Québec, and non-french-speaking children have had french taught as a compulsory subject in school. Yet another example is sex - because sex is connected to population-growth, sex and sexuality has been of great interest to biopower. On a disciplinary level, people who engaged in non-reproductive sexual acts have been treated for psychiatric diagnoses such as "perversion", "frigidity" and "sexual dysfunction". On a biopower-level, the usage of contraceptives has been studied, some social groups have (by various means) been encouraged to have children, while others (such as poor, sick, unmarried women, criminals or people with disability) have been discouraged or prevented from having children.

In the era of biopower, death has become a scandal and a catastrophe, but despite this biopower has according to Foucault killed more people than

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any other form of power has ever done before it. Under sovereign power, the sovereign king could kill people to exert his power or start wars simply to extend his kingdom, but during the era of biopower wars have instead been motivated by an ambition to "protect life itself". Similar motivations has also been used for genocide. For example, Nazi Germany motivated its attempt to eradicate Jews, the mentally ill and disabled with the motivation that Jews were "a threat to the German health", and that the money spent on healthcare for mentally ill and disabled would be better spent on "viable Germans". Chloë Taylor also mentions the Iraq War was motivated by similar tenets. The motivation was at first that Iraq was thought to have weapons of mass destruction and connections to Al-Qaeda. However, when the Bush- and Blair-administrations didn't find any evidence to support either of these theories, the motivation for the war was changed. In the new motivation, the cause of the war was said to be that Saddam Hussein had committed crimes against his own population. Taylor means that in modern times, war has to be "concealed" under a rhetoric of humanitarian aid, despite the fact that these wars often cause humanitarian crises.

During the 19th-century, slums were increasing in number and size across the western world. Criminality, illness, alcoholism and prostitution was common in these areas, and the middle class considered the people who lived in these slums as "unmoral" and "lazy". The middle class also feared that this underclass would sooner or later "take over", since the population growth was greater in these slums than it was in the middle class. This fear gave rise to the scientific study of eugenics, whose founder Francis Galton had been inspired by Charles Darwin and his theory of natural selection. According to Galton, society was preventing natural selection by helping "the weak", thus causing a spread of the "negative qualities" into the rest of the population.

### **The body and sexuality**

According to Foucault the body is not something objective that stands outside of history and culture. Instead, Foucault argues, the body has been and is continuously shaped by society and history - by work, diet, body ideals, exercise, medical interventions, etc. Foucault presents no



"theory" of the body, but does write about it in *Discipline and Punish* as well as in *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault was critical of all purely biological explanations of phenomena such as sexuality, madness and criminality. Further, Foucault argues, that the body is not sufficient as a basis for self-understanding and understanding of others.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault shows how power and the body are tied together, for example by the disciplinary power primarily focusing on individual bodies and their behavior. Foucault argues that power, by manipulating bodies/behavior, also manipulates peoples minds. Foucault turns the common saying "the body is the prison of the soul" and instead posits that "the soul is the prison of the body".

According to Foucault, sexology has tried to exert itself as a "science" by referring to the material (the body). In contrast to this, Foucault argues that sexology is a pseudoscience, and that "sex" is a pseudo-scientific idea. For Foucault the idea of a natural, biologically grounded and fundamental sexuality is a normative historical construct that has also been used as an instrument of power. By describing sex as the biological and fundamental cause to peoples' gender identity, sexual identity and sexual behavior, power has effectively been able to normalize sexual and gendered behavior. This has made it possible to evaluate, pathologize and "correct" peoples' sexual and gendered behavior, by comparing bodies behaviors to the constructed "normal" behavior. For Foucault, a "normal sexuality" is as much of a construct as a "natural sexuality". Therefore Foucault was also critical of the popular discourse that dominated the debate over sexuality during the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, the popular discourse argued for a "liberation" of sexuality from a cultural, moral and capitalistic oppression. Foucault, however, argues that peoples' opinions about and experiences of sexuality are always a result of cultural and power mechanisms. To "liberate" sexuality from one group of norms only means that another group of norms takes it place. This, however, does not mean that Foucault considers resistance to be futile. What Foucault argues for is rather that it is impossible to become completely free from power, and that there is simply no "natural" sexuality. Power always involves a dimension of resistance, and therefore also a possibility for change. Although Foucault

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considers it impossible to step outside of power-networks, it is always possible to change these networks or navigate them differently.

According to Foucault, the body is not only a "obedient and passive object" that is dominated by discourses and power. The body is also the "seed" to resistance against dominant discourses and power techniques. The body is never fully compliant, and experiences can never fully be reduced to linguistic descriptions. There is always a possibility to experience something that is not possible to describe with words, and in this discrepancy there is also a possibility for resistance against dominant discourses.

Foucault's view of the historical construction of the body has influenced many feminist and queer-theorists. According to Johanna Oksala, Foucault's influence on queer theory has been so great that he can be considered one of the founders of queer theory. The fundamental idea behind queer theory is that there is no natural fundament that lies behind identities such as gay, lesbian, heterosexual, etc. Instead these identities are considered cultural constructions that have been constructed through normative discourses and relations of power. Feminists have with the help of Foucault's ideas studied different ways that women form their bodies - through plastic surgery, diet, eating disorders, etc. Foucault's historization of sex has also affected feminist theorists such as Judith Butler, who used Foucault's theories about the relation between subject, power and sex to question gendered subjects. Butler follows Foucault by saying that there is no "true" gender behind gender identity that would constitute its biological and objective fundament. However, Butler is also critical of Foucault. She argues Foucault "naively" presents bodies and pleasures as a ground for resistance against power, without extending his historization of sexuality to gendered subjects/bodies. Foucault has also received criticism from other feminists, such as Susan Bordo and Kate Soper.

Johanna Oksala argues that Foucault, by saying that sex/sexuality are constructs, doesn't deny the existence of sexuality. Oksala also argues that the goal of critical theories such as Foucault is not to liberate the body and sexuality from oppression, but rather to question and deny the

identities that are posited as "natural" and "essential" by showing how these identities are historical and cultural constructions.

### **Subjectivity**

Foucault considered his primary project to be the investigation of how people through history has been made into "subjects". Subjectivity is for Foucault not a state of being, but a practice - an active "being". According to Foucault, "the subject" has by western philosophers usually been considered as something given, natural and objective. In contrast to this, Foucault considers subjectivity to be a construction created by power. Foucault talks of "assujettissement", which is a french term that for Foucault refers to a process where power creates subjects while also oppressing them using social norms. For Foucault "social norms" are standards that people are encouraged to follow, that are also used to compare and define people. As an example of "assujettissement", Foucault mentions "homosexual", a historically contingent type of subjectivity that was created by sexology. Foucault writes that sodomy was previously considered a serious sexual deviation, but a temporary one. Homosexuality, however, became a "species", a past, a childhood and a type of life. "Homosexuals" has by the same power that created this subjectivity been discriminated against, due to homosexuality being considered as a deviation from the "normal" sexuality. However, Foucault argues, the creation of a subjectivity such as "homosexuality" does not only have negative consequences for the people who are subjectivised - the subjectivity of homosexuality has also led to the creation of gay bars and the pride parade.

According to Foucault, scientific discourses have played an important roll in the disciplinary power system, by classifying and categorizing people, observing their behavior and "treating" them when their behavior has been considered "abnormal". Sciences such as psychiatry, biology, medicine, economy, psychoanalysis, psychology, sociology, ethnology, pedagogy and criminology have all categorized behaviors as rational, irrational, normal, abnormal, human, inhuman, etc. By doing so, they have all created various types of subjectivity and norms, which are then internalized by people as "truths". People have then adapted their

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behavior in order to get closer to what these sciences has labeled as "normal". For example, Foucault claims that psychological observation/surveillance and psychological discourses has created a type of psychology-centered subjectivity, which has led to people considering unhappiness a fault in their psychology rather than in society. This has also, according to Foucault, been a way for society to resist criticism - criticism against society has been turned against the individual and their psychological health.

### **Obesity as a form of subjectivity**

Cressida J. Heyes argues that a modern example of subjectivity is obesity. Subjects are created in two levels - by biopower and by disciplinary power. Biopower has during the 21th-century considered obesity as a "corruption in the body politics" and a "public health catastrophe". Heyes argues that during the 21th century there has been an anti-obesity discourse that has been enabled by population statistics and public health campaigns. These expressions of bio power, however, relies on disciplinary power, for example by health care institutions gathering information about individuals weight, length, age, etc. that is then used by biopower. The biopower tries to reduce the populations' deviance from the weight-norm, and disciplinary power tries to reduce the individuals' deviance from the weight-norm. Biopower and disciplinary power thus creates various forms of subjectivity - obesity, underweight, normal weight, and so on. To be obese is not simply a question of where the individual lies in relation to the weight-norm, but it is also considered a marker for the individuals incapacity to regulate their own weight and behavior. This becomes the case not only through the disciplinary institutions (such as health care institutions) exertion of power, but also by a "confession discourse" where people are encouraged and expected to "confess" their consumption habits, weight, fat percentage, exercising habits, etc. Heyes argues that a modern day example of this can be seen in online forums centered around weight and weight-loss. These forums contain, according to Heyes, profiles where every individual describes their starting weight, current weight and goal weight. Another example of this that Heyes mentions is video-blogs where people create a "biography" centered around their "weight-loss-

journey". In these ways people also constitute their own subjectivity. However, as with other forms of subjectivity, Heyes argues that these people also experience benefits from constituting themselves as "obese people". According to Heyes, these people can feel better, learn new things (about nutrition, for example) and acquire new skills. At the same time, Heyes argues, by accepting this subjectivity people are dragged deeper into a disciplinary power system.

### **Subjectivity constituted by individuals in relation to themselves**

According to Foucault, subjectivity is not necessarily something that is forced upon people externally - it is also something that is established in a person's relation to themselves. This can, for example, happen when a person is trying to "find themselves" or "be themselves", something Edward McGushin describes as a typical modern activity. In this quest for the "true self", the self is established in two levels: as a passive object (the "true self" that is searched for) and as an active "searcher". The ancient Cynics and the 19th-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche posited that the "true self" can only be found by going through great hardship and/or danger. The ancient Stoics and 17th-century philosopher René Descartes, however, argued that the "self" can be found by quiet and solitary introspection. Yet another example is Socrates, who argued that self-awareness can only be found by having debates with others, where the debaters question each others foundational views and opinions. Foucault, however, argued that "subjectivity" is a process, rather than a state of being. As such, Foucault argued that there is no "true self" to be found. Rather so, the "self" is constituted/created in activities such as the ones employed to "find" the "self". In other words, exposing oneself to hardships and danger does not "reveal" the "true self", according to Foucault, but rather creates a particular type of self and subjectivity. However, according to Foucault the "form" for the subject is in great part already constituted by power, before these self-constituting practices are employed. Schools, workplaces, households, government institutions, entertainment media and the healthcare sector all, through disciplinary power, contribute to forming people into being particular types of subjects.

### **Freedom**

Todd May defines Foucault's concept of freedom as: that which we can do of ourselves within our specific historical context. A condition for this, according to Foucault, is that we are aware of our situation and how it has been created/affected (and is still being affected) by power. According to May, two of the aspects of how power has shaped peoples' way of being, thinking and acting is described in the books where Foucault describes disciplinary power and the history of sexuality. However, May argues, there will always be aspects of peoples' formation that will be unknown to them, hence the constant necessity for the type of analyses that Foucault did.

Foucault argues that the forces that have affected people can be changed - people always have the capacity to change the factors that limits their freedom. Freedom is thus not a state of being, but a practice - a way of being in relation to oneself, to others and to the world. According to Todd May Foucault's concept of freedom also includes constructing histories like the ones Foucault did about the history of disciplinary power and sexuality - histories that investigate and describe the forces that has influenced people into becoming who they are. From the knowledge that is reached from such investigations, people can thereafter decide which forces they believe are acceptable and which they consider to be intolerable and has to be changed. Freedom is for Foucault a type of "experimentation" with different "transformations". Since these experiments cannot be controlled completely, May argues they may lead to the reconstruction of intolerable power relations or the creation of new ones. Thus, May argues, it is always necessary to continue with such experimentation and Foucauldian analyses

### **Critique**

Foucault's "alternative" to the modern subjectivity is by Cressida Heyes described as "critique". For Foucault there are no "good" and "bad" forms of subjectivity, since they are all a result of power relations. In the same way, Foucault argues there are no "good" and "bad" norms. All norms and institutions are at the same time enabling as they are oppressing. Therefore, Foucault argues, it is always crucial to continue

with the practice of "critique". Critique is for Foucault a practice that searches for the processes and events that led to our way of being - a questioning of who we "are" and how this "we" came to be. Such a "critical ontology of the present" shows that peoples' current "being" is in fact a historically contingent, unstable and changeable construction. Foucault emphasizes that since the current way of being is not a necessity, it is also possible to change it. Critique also includes investigating how and when people are being enabled and when they are being oppressed by the current norms and institutions, finding ways to reduce limitations on freedom, resist normalization and develop new and different way of relating to oneself and others. Foucault argues that it is impossible to go beyond power relations, but that it is always possible to navigate power relations in a different way.

Epimeleia heautou, "care for the self"

As an alternative to the modern "search" for the "true self", and as a part of "the work of freedom", Foucault discusses the antique Greek term "epimeleia heautou" - "care for the self". According to Foucault, among the ancient Greek philosophers, self-awareness was not a goal in itself, but rather something that was sought after in order to "care for oneself". Care for the self consists of what Foucault calls "the art of living" or "technologies of the self". The goal of these techniques was, according to Foucault, to transform oneself into a more ethical person. As an example of this, Foucault mentions meditation, the stoic activity of contemplating past and future actions and evaluating if these actions are in line with one's values and goals, and "contemplation of nature". Contemplation of nature is another stoic activity, that consists of reflecting on how "small" one's existence is when compared to the greater cosmos.

### **Knowledge**

Foucault is described by Mary Beth Mader as an epistemological constructivist and historicist. Foucault is critical of the idea that humans can reach "absolute" knowledge about the world. A fundamental goal in many of Foucault's works is to show how that which has traditionally been considered as absolute, universal and true in fact are historically

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contingent. To Foucault, even the idea of absolute knowledge is a historically contingent idea. This does however not lead to epistemological nihilism; rather, Foucault argues that we "always begin anew" when it comes to knowledge. At the same time Foucault is critical of modern western philosophy for lacking "spirituality". With "spirituality" Foucault refers to a certain type of ethical being, and the processes that lead to this state of being. Foucault argues that such a spirituality was a natural part of the ancient Greek philosophy, where knowledge was considered as something that was only accessible to those that had an ethical character. According to Foucault this changed in the "cartesian moment", the moment when René Descartes reached the "insight" that self-awareness was something given (Cogito ergo sum, "I think, therefore I am"), and from this "insight" Descartes drew conclusions about God, the world, and knowledge. According to Foucault, since Descartes knowledge has been something separate from ethics. In modern times, Foucault argues, anyone can reach "knowledge", as long as they are rational beings, educated, willing to participate in the scientific community and use a scientific method. Foucault is critical of this "modern" view of knowledge.

Foucault describes two types of "knowledge": "savoir" and "connaissance", two french terms that both can be translated as "knowledge" but with separate meanings for Foucault. By "savoir" Foucault is referring to a process where subjects are created, while at the same time these subjects also become objects for knowledge. An example of this can be seen in criminology and psychiatry. In these sciences, subjects such as "the rational person", "the mentally ill person", "the law abiding person", "the criminal", etc. are created, and these sciences center their attention and knowledge on these subjects. The knowledge about these subjects is "connaissance", while the process in which subjects and knowledge is created is "savoir". A similar term in Foucaults corpus is "pouvoir/savoir" (power/knowledge). With this term Foucault is referring to a type of knowledge that is considered "common sense", but that is created and withheld in that position (as "common sense") by power. The term power/knowledge comes from Jeremy Bentham's idea that panopticons wouldn't only be prisons, but would also



be used for experiments where the criminals' behaviour would be studied. Power/knowledge thus refers to forms of power where the power compares individuals, measures differences, establishes a norm and then forces this norm onto the subjects. This is especially successful when the established norm is internalized and institutionalized (by "institutionalized" Foucault refers to when the norm is omnipresent). Because then, when the norm is internalized and institutionalized, it has effectively become a part of peoples' "common sense" - the "obvious", the "given", the "natural". When this has happened, this "common sense" also affects the explicit knowledge (scientific knowledge), Foucault argues. Ellen K. Feder mean that the premise "the world consists of women and men" is an example of this. This premise, Feder argues, has been considered "common sense", and has led to the creation of the psychiatric diagnosis gender identity disorder (GID). For example, during the 1970s, children with behavior that was not considered appropriate for their gender was diagnosed with GID. The treatment then consisted of trying to make the child adapt to the prevailing gender norms. Feder argues that this is an example of power/knowledge since psychiatry, from the "common sense" premise "the world consists of women and men" (a premise which is upheld in this status by power), created a new diagnosis, a new type of subject and a whole body of knowledge surrounding this new subject.

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## **2.3 INFLUENCE AND RECEPTION**

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Foucault's works have exercised a powerful influence over numerous humanistic and social scientific disciplines as one of the most influential and controversial scholars of the post-World War II period. According to a London School of Economics' analysis in 2016, his works *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* were among the 25 most cited books in the social sciences of all time, at just over 100,000 citations. In 2007, Foucault was listed as the single most cited scholar in the humanities by the ISI Web of Science among a large quantity of French philosophers, the compilation's author commenting that "What this says of modern scholarship is for the reader to decide—and it is imagined that

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judgments will vary from admiration to despair, depending on one's view".

According to Gary Gutting, Foucault's "detailed historical remarks on the emergence of disciplinary and regulatory biopower have been widely influential." Leo Bersani wrote of Foucault that he "is our most brilliant philosopher of power. More originally than any other contemporary thinker, he has attempted to define the historical constraints under which we live, at the same time that he has been anxious to account for -- if possible, even to locate -- the points at which we might resist those constraints and counter some of the moves of power. In the present climate of cynical disgust with the exercise of political power, Foucault's importance can hardly be exaggerated." His work on "biopower" has been widely influential within the disciplines of philosophy and political theory, particularly for authors such as Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Antonio Negri, and Michael Hardt. His discussions on power and discourse have inspired many critical theorists, who believe that Foucault's analysis of power structures could aid the struggle against inequality. They claim that through discourse analysis, hierarchies may be uncovered and questioned by way of analyzing the corresponding fields of knowledge through which they are legitimated. This is one of the ways that Foucault's work is linked to critical theory. His work 'Discipline and Punish' influenced his friend and contemporary Gilles Deleuze, who published the paper 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', praising Foucault's work but arguing that contemporary western society has in fact developed from a 'disciplinary society' into a 'society of control'. Deleuze went on to publish a book dedicated to Foucault's thought in 1988 under the title Foucault.

Foucault's discussions of the relationship between power and knowledge has influenced postcolonial critiques in explaining the discursive formation of colonialism, particularly in Edward Said's work *Orientalism*. Foucault's work has been compared to that of Erving Goffman by the sociologist Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Soren Kristiansen, who list Goffman as an influence on Foucault. Foucault's writings, particularly *The History of Sexuality*, have also been very influential in feminist philosophy and queer theory, particularly the work

of the major Feminist scholar Judith Butler due to his theories regarding the genealogy of maleness and femaleness, power, sexuality, and bodies.

### **Critiques and engagements**

#### **Crypto-normativity**

A prominent critique of Foucault's thought concerns his refusal to propose positive solutions to the social and political issues that he critiques. Since no human relation is devoid of power, freedom becomes elusive—even as an ideal. This stance which critiques normativity as socially constructed and contingent, but which relies on an implicit norm in order to mount the critique led philosopher Jürgen Habermas to describe Foucault's thinking as "crypto-normativist", covertly reliant on the very Enlightenment principles he attempts to argue against. A similar critique has been advanced by Diana Taylor, and by Nancy Fraser who argues that "Foucault's critique encompasses traditional moral systems, he denies himself recourse to concepts such as 'freedom' and 'justice', and therefore lacks the ability to generate positive alternatives." Likewise, scholar Nancy Pearcey points out Foucault's paradoxical stance: "states that it is impossible to attain objectivity, is that an objective statement? The theory undercuts its own claims."

#### **Genealogy as historical method**

The philosopher Richard Rorty has argued that Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge" is fundamentally negative, and thus fails to adequately establish any "new" theory of knowledge per se. Rather, Foucault simply provides a few valuable maxims regarding the reading of history. Rorty writes:

As far as I can see, all he has to offer are brilliant redescriptions of the past, supplemented by helpful hints on how to avoid being trapped by old historiographical assumptions. These hints consist largely of saying: "do not look for progress or meaning in history; do not see the history of a given activity, of any segment of culture, as the development of rationality or of freedom; do not use any philosophical vocabulary to characterize the essence of such activity or the goal it serves; do not assume that the way this activity is presently conducted gives any clue to the goals it served in the past".

### **Feminist critique**

Though American feminists have built on Foucault's critiques of the historical construction of gender roles and sexuality, some feminists note the limitations of the masculinist subjectivity and ethical orientation that he describes.

### **Sexuality**

The philosopher Roger Scruton argues in *Sexual Desire* (1986) that Foucault was incorrect to claim, in *The History of Sexuality*, that sexual morality is culturally relative. He criticizes Foucault for assuming that there could be societies in which a "problematization" of the sexual did not occur, concluding that, "No history of thought could show the 'problematization' of sexual experience to be peculiar to certain specific social formations: it is characteristic of personal experience generally, and therefore of every genuine social order."

Foucault's approach to sexuality, which he sees as socially constructed, has become influential in queer theory. Foucault's resistance to identity politics, and his rejection of the psychoanalytic concept of "object choice", stands at odds with some theories of queer identity.

### **Social constructionism and human nature**

Foucault is sometimes criticized for his prominent formulation of principles of social constructionism, which some see as an affront to the concept of truth. In Foucault's 1971 televised debate with Noam Chomsky, Foucault argued against the possibility of any fixed human nature, as posited by Chomsky's concept of innate human faculties. Chomsky argued that concepts of justice were rooted in human reason, whereas Foucault rejected the universal basis for a concept of justice. Following the debate, Chomsky was stricken with Foucault's total rejection of the possibility of a universal morality, stating "He struck me as completely amoral, I'd never met anyone who was so totally amoral I mean, I liked him personally, it's just that I couldn't make sense of him. It's as if he was from a different species, or something."

### **Education and authority**

Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa, while acknowledging that Foucault contributed to give a right of citizenship in cultural life to certain marginal and eccentric experiences (of sexuality, of cultural repression, of madness), asserts that his radical critique of authority was detrimental to education.

### Check your Progress-1

1. What did Foucault's colleague Pierre Bourdieu summarized the philosopher's thought as?

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2. When was “The World of Raymond Rousset” published?

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3. When was “The World of Raymond Rousset” translated in English?

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4. Foucault’s theory begins with what?

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## 2.4 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we learned about the thoughts, influence and reception of Paul-Michel Foucault.

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## 2.5 KEYWORDS

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- **Anti-humanist:** Someone who opposes or rejects the beliefs, principles, or assumptions of humanism
- **Relativist:** A relativist is someone with relativist views
- **Subjectivation:** The process by which one becomes a subject

- **Sadomasochism:** Psychological tendency or sexual practice characterized by both sadism and masochism.
- **Moralism:** The practice of moralizing, especially the tendency to make judgements about others' morality.

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## 2.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- Write a brief note on thoughts of Paul-Michel Foucault.
- Write a short note on influence and reception of Paul-Michel Foucault.

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## 2.7 SUGGESTED READING AND REFERENCES

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## 2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- Foucault's colleague Pierre Bourdieu summarized the philosopher's thought as "a long exploration of transgression, of going beyond social limits, always inseparably linked to knowledge and power." **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q1)**
- The World of Raymond Roussel was published in 1963. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q2)**
- The World of Raymond Roussel was translated into English in 1986. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q3)**
- Foucault's own theory of power begins on micro-level. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q4)**

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## **UNIT-3: FOUCAULT- ‘WHAT IS AN AUTHOR? - 3**

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### **STRUCTURE**

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Intellectual Background

3.3 Major Works

3.3.1 Histories of Madness and Medicine

3.3.2 The Order of Things

3.3.3 From Archaeology to Genealogy

3.3.4 History of the Prison

3.3.5 History of Modern Sexuality

3.3.6 Sex in the Ancient World

3.4 Let us sum up

3.5 Keywords

3.6 Questions for Review

3.7 Suggested Reading and References

3.8 Answers to Check your Progress

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### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

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Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn about the intellectual background Paul-Michel Foucault;
- and, you would also learn about the major works of Paul-Michel Foucault.

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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Foucault was born in Poitiers, France, on October 15, 1926. As a student he was brilliant but psychologically tormented. He became academically



established during the 1960s, holding a series of positions at French universities, before his election in 1969 to the ultra-prestigious Collège de France, where he was Professor of the History of Systems of Thought until his death. From the 1970s on, Foucault was very active politically. He was a founder of the Groupe d'information sur les prisons and often protested on behalf of marginalized groups. He frequently lectured outside France, particularly in the United States, and in 1983 had agreed to teach annually at the University of California at Berkeley. An early victim of AIDS, Foucault died in Paris on June 25, 1984. In addition to works published during his lifetime, his lectures at the Collège de France, published posthumously, contain important elucidations and extensions of his ideas.

One might question whether Foucault is in fact a philosopher. His academic formation was in psychology and its history as well as in philosophy, his books were mostly histories of medical and social sciences, his passions were literary and political. Nonetheless, almost all of Foucault's works can be fruitfully read as philosophical in either or both of two ways: as carrying out philosophy's traditional critical project in a new (historical) manner; and as a critical engagement with the thought of traditional philosophers. This article will present him as a philosopher in these two dimensions.

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## 3.2 INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

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We begin, however, with a sketch of the philosophical environment in which Foucault was educated. He entered the École Normale Supérieure (the standard launching pad for major French philosophers) in 1946, during the heyday of existential phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty, whose lectures he attended, and Heidegger were particularly important. Hegel and Marx were also major interests, Hegel through the interpretation of his work offered by Jean Hyppolite and Marx through the structuralist reading of Louis Althusser—both teachers who had a strong impact on Foucault at the École Normale. It is not surprising that Foucault's earliest works (his long "Introduction" to Jacqueline Verdeaux' French translation of *Traum und Existenz* by Ludwig Binswanger, a

## Notes

Heideggerian psychiatrist, and *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, a short book on mental illness) were written in the grip of, respectively, existentialism and Marxism. But he soon turned away from both.

Jean-Paul Sartre, working outside the University system, had no personal influence on Foucault. But, as the French master-thinker of the previous generation he is always in the background. Like Sartre, Foucault began from a relentless hatred of bourgeois society and culture and with a spontaneous sympathy for marginal groups such as the mad, homosexuals, and prisoners. They both also had strong interests in literature and psychology as well as philosophy, and both, after an early relative lack of political interest, became committed activists. But in the end, Foucault seemed to insist on defining himself in contradiction to Sartre. Philosophically, he rejected what he saw as Sartre's privileging of the subject (which he mocked as "transcendental narcissism"). Personally and politically, he rejected Sartre's role as what Foucault called a "universal intellectual", judging society by appeals to universal moral principles, such as the inviolability of individual freedom. There is, however, more than a hint of protesting too much in Foucault's rejection of Sartre, and the question of the relation of their work remains a fertile one.

Three other factors were of much more positive significance for the young Foucault. First, there was the French tradition of history and philosophy of science, particularly as represented by Georges Canguilhem, a powerful figure in the French University establishment, whose work in the history and philosophy of biology provided a model for much of Foucault's work in the history of the human sciences. Canguilhem sponsored Foucault's doctoral thesis on the history of madness and, throughout Foucault's career, remained one of his most important and effective supporters. Canguilhem's approach to the history of science (an approach developed from the work of Gaston Bachelard), provided Foucault with a strong sense of the discontinuities in scientific history, along with a "rationalist" understanding of the historical role of concepts that made them independent of the phenomenologists' transcendental consciousness. Foucault found this understanding

reinforced in the structuralist linguistics and psychology developed, respectively, by Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Lacan, as well as in Georges Dumézil's proto-structuralist work on comparative religion. These anti-subjective standpoints provide the context for Foucault's marginalization of the subject in his "structuralist histories", *The Birth of the Clinic* (on the origins of modern medicine) and *The Order of Things* (on the origins of the modern human sciences).

In a quite different vein, Foucault was enthralled by French avant-garde literature, especially the writings of Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot, where he found the experiential concreteness of existential phenomenology without what he came to see as dubious philosophical assumptions about subjectivity. Of particular interest was this literature's evocation of "limit-experiences", which push us to extremes where conventional categories of intelligibility begin to break down.

This philosophical milieu provided materials for the critique of subjectivity and the corresponding "archaeological" and "genealogical" methods of writing history that inform Foucault's projects of historical critique, to which we now turn.

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### 3.3 MAJOR WORKS

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Since its beginnings with Socrates, philosophy has typically involved the project of questioning the accepted knowledge of the day. Later, Locke, Hume, and especially, Kant developed a distinctively modern idea of philosophy as the critique of knowledge. Kant's great epistemological innovation was to maintain that the same critique that revealed the limits of our knowing powers could also reveal necessary conditions for their exercise. What might have seemed just contingent features of human cognition (for example, the spatial and temporal character of its perceptual objects) turn out to be necessary truths. Foucault, however, suggests the need to invert this Kantian move. Rather than asking what, in the apparently contingent, is actually necessary, he suggests asking what, in the apparently necessary, might be contingent. The focus of his questioning is the modern human sciences (biological, psychological,

social). These purport to offer universal scientific truths about human nature that are, in fact, often mere expressions of ethical and political commitments of a particular society. Foucault's "critical philosophy" undermines such claims by exhibiting how they are the outcome of contingent historical forces, not scientifically grounded truths. Each of his major books is a critique of historical reason.

### **3.3.1 Histories of Madness and Medicine**

Foucault's *History of Madness in the Classical Age* (1961) originated in his academic study of psychology (a licence de psychologie in 1949 and a diplôme de psycho-pathologie in 1952), his work in a Parisian mental hospital, and his own personal psychological problems. It was mainly written during his post-graduate *Wanderjahren* (1955–59) through a succession of diplomatic/educational posts in Sweden, Germany, and Poland. A study of the emergence of the modern concept of "mental illness" in Europe, *History of Madness* is formed from both Foucault's extensive archival work and his intense anger at what he saw as the moral hypocrisy of modern psychiatry. Standard histories saw the nineteenth-century medical treatment of madness (developed from the reforms of Pinel in France and the Tuke brothers in England) as an enlightened liberation of the mad from the ignorance and brutality of preceding ages. But, according to Foucault, the new idea that the mad were merely sick ("mentally" ill) and in need of medical treatment was not at all a clear improvement on earlier conceptions (e.g., the Renaissance idea that the mad were in contact with the mysterious forces of cosmic tragedy or the seventeenth-eighteenth-century view of madness as a renouncing of reason). Moreover, he argued that the alleged scientific neutrality of modern medical treatments of insanity are in fact covers for controlling challenges to conventional bourgeois morality. In short, Foucault argued that what was presented as an objective, incontrovertible scientific discovery (that madness is mental illness) was in fact the product of eminently questionable social and ethical commitments.

Foucault's next history, *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) also presents a critique of modern clinical medicine. But the socio-ethical critique is muted (except for a few vehement passages), presumably because there is a substantial core of objective truth in medicine (as opposed to psychiatry) and so less basis for criticism. As a result *The Birth of the Clinic* is much closer to a standard history of science, in the tradition of Canguilhem's history of concepts.

### **3.3.2 The Order of Things**

The book that made Foucault famous, *Les mots et les choses* (translated into English under the title *The Order of Things*), is in many ways an odd interpolation into the development of his thought. Its subtitle, "An Archaeology of the Human Sciences", suggests an expansion of the earlier critical histories of psychiatry and clinical medicine into other modern disciplines such as economics, biology, and philology. And indeed there is an extensive account of the various "empirical disciplines" of the Renaissance and the Classical Age that precede these modern human sciences. But there is little or nothing of the implicit social critique found in the *History of Madness* or even *The Birth of the Clinic*. Instead, Foucault offers an analysis of what knowledge meant—and how this meaning changed—in Western thought from the Renaissance to the present. At the heart of his account is the notion of representation. Here we focus on his treatment of representation in philosophical thought, where we find Foucault's most direct engagement with traditional philosophical questions.

#### **Classical Representation**

Foucault argues that from Descartes up to Kant (during what he calls the Classical Age) representation was simply assimilated to thought: to think just was to employ ideas to represent the object of thought. But, he says, we need to be clear about what it meant for an idea to represent an object. This was not, first of all, any sort of relation of resemblance: there were no features (properties) of the idea that themselves constituted the representation of the object. (Saying this, however, does not require that

## Notes

the idea itself have no properties or even that these properties are not relevant to the idea's representation of the object.) By contrast, during the Renaissance, knowledge was understood as a matter of resemblance between things.

The map is a useful model of Classical representation. It consists, for example, of a set of lines of varying widths, lengths, and colors, and thereby represents the roads in and around a city. This is not because the roads have the properties of the map (the widths, lengths, and colors of the lines) but because the abstract structure given in the map (the relations among the lines) duplicates the abstract structure of the roads. At the heart of Classical thought is the principle that we know in virtue of having ideas that, in this sense, represent what we know. Of course, in contrast to the map, we do not need to know what the actual features of our ideas are in virtue of which they are able to represent. (In Descartes' scholastic terminology, we do not need to know their "formal reality".) We need to know only the abstract structure that they share with the things they represent (the structure of what Descartes calls their "objective reality"). We do, however, have direct (introspective) access to the abstract structures of our ideas: we can "see" what representational structure they have. Further, we can alter an idea's structure to make it a better representation of an object, as we can alter a map to improve it.

How, on the Classical view, do we know that an idea is a representation of an object—and an adequate representation? Not, Foucault argues, by comparing the idea with the object as it is apart from its representation. This is impossible, since it would require knowing the object without a representation (when, for Classical thought, to know is to represent). The only possibility is that the idea itself must make it apparent that it is a representation. The idea represents the very fact that it is a representation. As to the question of whether an idea is a representation, this "self-referential" feature is all there is to it. As to adequacy, it must be that some subset of ideas likewise bear witness to their own adequacy—as, for example, Descartes' "clear and distinct perceptions" or Hume's simple impressions. In this sense, early modern philosophy is based on "intuition" (intellectual or sensory). Note, however, that an

“intuition” of an idea’s adequacy does not, of itself, establish the independent existence of the object represented by the idea. As far as the early modern view is concerned, there may be no such objects; or, if there are, this needs to be established by some other means (e.g., an argument or some other sort of intuition).

We see, then, that for Foucault the key to Classical knowing is the idea, that is, mental representation. Classical thinkers might disagree about the actual ontological status of ideas (their formal reality); but they all agreed that as representations (epistemically, if not ontologically) they were “non-physical” and “non-historical”; that is, precisely as representing their objects, they could not be conceived as having any role in the causal networks of the natural or the human worlds. From this it further followed that language—precisely as a physical and/or historical reality—could have no fundamental role in knowledge. Language could be nothing more than a higher-order instrument of thought: a physical representation of ideas, having no meaning except in relation to them.

### **Kant’s Critique of Classical Representation**

Foucault maintains that the great “turn” in modern philosophy occurs with Kant (though presumably he is merely an example of something much broader and deeper). Kant raises the question of whether ideas do in fact represent their objects and, if so, how (in virtue of what) they do so. In other words, ideas are no longer taken as the unproblematic vehicles of knowledge; it is now possible to think that knowledge might be (or have roots in) something other than representation. This did not mean that representation had nothing at all to do with knowledge. Perhaps some (or even all) knowledge still essentially involved ideas’ representing objects. But, Foucault insists, the thought that was only now (with Kant) possible was that representation itself (and the ideas that represented) could have an origin in something other than representation.

This thought, according to Foucault, led to some important and distinctively modern possibilities. The first was developed by Kant himself, who thought that representations (thoughts or ideas) were themselves the product of (“constituted” by) the mind. Not, however,

produced by the mind as a natural or historical reality, but as belonging to a special epistemic realm: transcendental subjectivity. Kant thus maintained the Classical view that knowledge cannot be understood as a physical or historical reality, but he located the grounds of knowledge in a domain (the transcendental) more fundamental than the ideas it subtended. We must add, of course, that Kant also did not think of this domain as possessing a reality beyond the historical and the physical; it was not metaphysical. But this metaphysical alternative was explored by the idealistic metaphysics that followed Kant. Another—and in some ways more typically modern—view was that ideas were themselves historical realities. This could be most plausibly developed, as Herder did, by tying ideas essentially to language, now regarded as the primary (and historicized) vehicle of knowledge. But such an approach was not viable in its pure form, since to make knowledge entirely historical would deprive it of any normative character and so destroy its character as knowledge. In other words, even when modern thought made knowledge essentially historical, it had to retain some functional equivalent of Kant's transcendental realm to guarantee the normative validity of knowledge.

### **Language and "Man"**

At this point, *The Order of Things* introduces the two central features of thought after Kant: the return of language and the "birth of man". Our discussion above readily explains why Foucault talks of a return of language: it now has an independent and essential role that it did not have in the Classical view. But the return is not a monolithic phenomenon. Language is related to knowledge in diverse ways, each of which corresponds a distinctive sort of "return". So, for example, the history of natural languages has introduced confusions and distortions that we can try to eliminate through techniques of formalization. On the other hand, this same history may have deposited fundamental truths in our languages that we can unearth only by the methods of hermeneutic interpretation. (So these two apparently opposed approaches—underlying the division of analytic and continental philosophy—are in fact, according to Foucault, complementary projects of modern thought.)



But there is yet another possibility: freed from its subordination to ideas, language can function (as in the Renaissance) as an autonomous reality—indeed as even more deeply autonomous than Renaissance language, since there is no system of resemblances binding it to the world. Even more, Foucault suggests, language is a truth unto itself, speaking nothing other than its own meaning. This is the realm of “pure literature”, evoked by Mallarmé when he answered Nietzsche’s (genealogical) question, “Who is speaking?” with, “Language itself”. In contrast to the Renaissance, however, there is no divine Word underlying and giving unique truth to the words of language. Literature is literally nothing but language—or rather many languages, speaking for and of themselves.

Even more important than language is the figure of man. The most important point about “man” is that it is an epistemological concept. Man, Foucault says, did not exist during the Classical age (or before). This is not because there was no idea of human beings as a species or of human nature as a psychological, moral, or political reality. Rather, “there was no epistemological consciousness of man as such” (*The Order of Things*, ). But even “epistemological” needs construal. There is no doubt that even in the Classical age human beings were conceived as the locus of knowledge (since humans possess the ideas that represent the world). The notion of man, on the other hand, is epistemological in the Kantian sense of a transcendental subject that is also an empirical object. For the Classical age, human beings are the locus of representations but not, as for Kant, their source. There is, in Classical thought, no room for the modern notion of “constitution”.

Foucault illustrates his point through a striking discussion of Descartes’ cogito, showing why it is an indubitable certitude within the classical episteme, but not within the modern episteme. There are two ways of questioning the force of the cogito. One is to suggest that the subject (the thinking self, the I) that Descartes concludes necessarily exists in the act of thinking is something more than just the act of representing objects; so we can’t go from representation to a thinker. But for the Classical Age this makes no sense, since thinking is representation. A second criticism

would be that the self as representer may not be “really real” but merely the “product of” (constituted by) a mind that is real in a fuller sense. But this objection has weight only if we can think of this “more real” mind as having the self as an object in some sense other than representing it. (Otherwise, there is no basis for saying that the self as representer is “less real”.) But, once again, this is precisely what cannot be thought in Classical terms.

### **The Analytic of Finitude**

At the very heart of man is his finitude: the fact that, as described by the modern empirical sciences, he is limited by the various historical forces (organic, economic, linguistic) operating on him. This finitude is a philosophical problem because man as a historically limited empirical being must somehow also be the source of the representations whereby we know the empirical world, including ourselves as empirical beings. I (my consciousness) must, as Kant put it, be both an empirical object of representation and the transcendental source of representations. How is this possible? Foucault’s view is that, in the end, it isn’t—and that the impossibility (historically realized) means the collapse of the modern episteme. What Foucault calls the “analytic of finitude” sketches the historical case for this conclusion, examining the major efforts (together making up the heart of modern philosophy) to understand man as “empirico-transcendental”.

The question—and the basic strategy for answering it—go back, of course, to Kant, who put forward the following crucial idea: that the very factors that make us finite (our subjection to space, time, causality, etc.) are also conditions necessary for the possibility of empirical knowledge. Our finitude is, therefore, simultaneously founded and founding (positive and fundamental, as Foucault puts it). The project of modern (Kantian and post-Kantian) philosophy—the analytic of finitude—is to show how this is possible.

Some modern philosophy tries to resolve the problem of man by, in effect, reducing the transcendental to the empirical. For example, naturalism attempts to explain knowledge in terms of natural science

(physics, biology), while Marxism appeals to historical social sciences. (The difference is that the first grounds knowledge in the past—e.g., an evolutionary history—whereas the second grounds it in a revolutionary future that will transcend the limitations of ideology.) Either approach simply ignores the terms of the problem: that man must be regarded as irreducibly both empirical and transcendental.

It might seem that Husserl's phenomenology has carried out the Kantian project of synthesizing man as object and man as subject by radicalizing the Cartesian project; that is, by grounding our knowledge of empirical truths in the transcendental subject. The problem, however, is that, as Foucault sees it, the modern notion of man excludes Descartes' idea of the cogito as a "sovereign transparency" of pure consciousness. Thought is no longer pure representation and therefore cannot be separated from an "unthought" (i.e., the given empirical and historical truths about who we are). I can no longer go from "I think" to "I am" because the content of my reality (what I am) is always more than the content of any merely thinking self (I am, e.g., living, working, and speaking—and all these take me beyond the realm of mere thought). Or, conversely, if we use "I" to denote me simply as a conscious being, then I "am not" much of what I (as a self in the world) am. As a result, to the extent that Husserl has grounded everything in the transcendental subject, this is not the subject (cogito) of Descartes but the modern cogito, which includes the (empirical) unthought. Phenomenology, like all modern thought, must accept the unthought as the ineliminable "other" of man. Nor are the existential phenomenologists (Sartre and Merleau-Ponty) able to solve the problem. Unlike Husserl, they avoid positing a transcendental ego and instead focus on the concrete reality of man-in-the world. But this, Foucault claims, is just a more subtle way of reducing the transcendental to the empirical.

Finally, some philosophers (Hegel and Marx in one way, Nietzsche and Heidegger in another) have tried to resolve the problem of man's dual status by treating him as a historical reality. But this move encounters the difficulty that man has to be both a product of historical processes and the origin of history. If we treat man as a product, we find ourselves

reducing his reality to something non-human (this is what Foucault calls the “retreat” from man’s origin). But if we insist on a “return” to man as his own proper origin, then we can no longer make sense of his place in the empirical world. This paradox may explain the endless modern obsession with origins, but there is never any way out of the contradiction between man as originator and man as originated. Nonetheless, Foucault thinks that the modern pursuit of the question of origins has provided us with a deeper sense of the ontological significance of time, particularly in the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger, who reject Hegel’s and Marx’s view of the return to our origin as a redemptive fullness of being, and instead see it as a confrontation with the nothingness of our existence.

### **3.3.3 From Archaeology to Genealogy**

Foucault explicitly presents *The Order of Things* as an “archaeological” approach to the history of thought. Three years later, in 1969, he published *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, a methodological treatise that explicitly formulates what he took to be the archaeological method that he used not only in *The Order of Things* but also (at least implicitly) in *History of Madness* and *The Birth of the Clinic*. The key idea of the archaeological method is that systems of thought and knowledge (epistemes or discursive formations, in Foucault’s terminology) are governed by rules, beyond those of grammar and logic, that operate beneath the consciousness of individual subjects and define a system of conceptual possibilities that determines the boundaries of thought in a given domain and period. So, for example, *History of Madness* should, Foucault maintained, be read as an intellectual excavation of the radically different discursive formations that governed talk and thought about madness from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries.

Archaeology was an essential method for Foucault because it supported a historiography that did not rest on the primacy of the consciousness of individual subjects; it allowed the historian of thought to operate at an unconscious level that displaced the primacy of the subject found in both phenomenology and in traditional historiography. However,

archaeology's critical force was restricted to the comparison of the discursive formations of different periods. Such comparisons could suggest the contingency of a given way of thinking by showing that the people living in previous ages had thought very differently (and, apparently, just as effectively). But mere archaeological analysis could say nothing about the causes of the transition from one way of thinking to another and so had to ignore perhaps the most forceful case for the contingency of entrenched contemporary positions. Genealogy, the new method first deployed in *Discipline and Punish*, was intended to remedy this deficiency.

Foucault intended the term "genealogy" to evoke Nietzsche's genealogy of morals, particularly with its suggestion of complex, mundane, inglorious origins—in no way part of any grand scheme of progressive history. The point of a genealogical analysis is to show that a given system of thought (itself uncovered in its essential structures by archaeology, which therefore remains part of Foucault's historiography) was the result of contingent turns of history, not the outcome of rationally inevitable trends.

### **3.3.4 History of the Prison**

*Discipline and Punish*, published in 1975, is a genealogical study of the development of the "gentler" modern way of imprisoning criminals rather than torturing or killing them. While recognizing the element of genuinely enlightened reform, Foucault particularly emphasizes how such reform also becomes a vehicle of more effective control: "to punish less, perhaps; but certainly to punish better". He further argues that the new mode of punishment becomes the model for control of an entire society, with factories, hospitals, and schools modeled on the modern prison. We should not, however, think that the deployment of this model was due to the explicit decisions of some central controlling agency. Foucault's analysis shows how techniques and institutions, developed for different and often quite innocuous purposes, converged to create the modern system of disciplinary power.

## Notes

At the core of Foucault's picture of modern disciplinary society are three primary techniques of control: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the examination. To a great extent, control over people (power) can be achieved merely by observing them. So, for example, the tiered rows of seats in a stadium not only makes it easy for spectators to see but also for guards or security cameras to scan the audience. A perfect system of observation would allow one "guard" to see everything (a situation approximated, as we shall see, in Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon). But since this is not usually possible, there is a need for "relays" of observers, hierarchically ordered, through whom observed data passes from lower to higher levels.

A distinctive feature of modern power (disciplinary control) is its concern with what people have not done (nonobservance), with, that is, a person's failure to reach required standards. This concern illustrates the primary function of modern disciplinary systems: to correct deviant behavior. The main goal is not revenge (as in the case of the tortures of premodern punishment) but reform, where reform means primarily coming to live by society's standards or norms. Discipline through imposing precise and detailed norms ("normalization") is quite different from the older system of judicial punishment, which merely judges each action as allowed by the law or not allowed by the law and does not say that those judged are "normal" or "abnormal". This idea of normalization is pervasive in our society: e.g., national standards for educational programs, for medical practice, for industrial processes and products.

The examination (for example, of students in schools, of patients in hospitals) is a method of control that combines hierarchical observation with normalizing judgment. It is a prime example of what Foucault calls power/knowledge, since it combines into a unified whole "the deployment of force and the establishment of truth" (1975). It both elicits the truth about those who undergo the examination (tells what they know or what is the state of their health) and controls their behavior (by forcing them to study or directing them to a course of treatment).

On Foucault's account, the relation of power and knowledge is far closer than in the familiar Baconian engineering model, for which "knowledge is power" means that knowledge is an instrument of power, although the two exist quite independently. Foucault's point is rather that, at least for the study of human beings, the goals of power and the goals of knowledge cannot be separated: in knowing we control and in controlling we know.

The examination also situates individuals in a "field of documentation". The results of exams are recorded in documents that provide detailed information about the individuals examined and allow power systems to control them (e.g., absentee records for schools, patients' charts in hospitals). On the basis of these records, those in control can formulate categories, averages, and norms that are in turn a basis for knowledge. The examination turns the individual into a "case"—in both senses of the term: a scientific example and an object of care. Caring is always also an opportunity for control.

Bentham's Panopticon is, for Foucault, a paradigmatic architectural model of modern disciplinary power. It is a design for a prison, built so that each inmate is separated from and invisible to all the others (in separate "cells") and each inmate is always visible to a monitor situated in a central tower. Monitors do not in fact always see each inmate; the point is that they could at any time. Since inmates never know whether they are being observed, they must behave as if they are always seen and observed. As a result, control is achieved more by the possibility of internal monitoring of those controlled than by actual supervision or heavy physical constraints.

The principle of the Panopticon can be applied not only to prisons but also to any system of disciplinary power (a factory, a hospital, a school). And, in fact, although Bentham himself was never able to build it, its principle has come to pervade aspects of modern society. It is the instrument through which modern discipline has been able to replace pre-modern sovereignty (kings, judges) as the fundamental power relation.

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Foucault's genealogy follows Nietzsche as well as existential phenomenology in that it aims to bring the body into the focus of history. Rather than histories of mentalities or ideas, genealogies are "histories of the body". They examine the historical practices through which the body becomes an object of techniques and deployments of power. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault shows how disciplinary techniques produce "docile bodies": bodies of prisoners, soldiers, workers and schoolchildren were subjected to disciplinary power in order to make them more useful and at the same time easier to control. The human body became a machine the functioning of which could be optimized, calculated, and improved. Its functions, movements and capabilities were broken down into narrow segments, analyzed in detail and recomposed in a maximally effective way.

By historicizing the body, Foucault's genealogies also have distinctive philosophical implications. They question the naturalistic explanatory framework that understands human nature—uncovered by science—as the basis for such complex areas of behavior as sexuality, insanity or criminality. A key idea in Foucault's historical analysis of the modern penal institutions is that they operate with markedly different rationality than those that are aimed solely at retribution through pain. He effectively reveals the double role of the present system: it aims at both punishing and correcting, and therefore it mixes juridical and scientific practices. Foucault argued that the intervention of criminal psychiatry in the field of law that occurred at the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, was part of the gradual shift in penal practice from a focus on the crime to a focus on the criminal, from the action to agency and personality. The new idea of the "dangerous individual" referred to the danger potentially inherent in the criminal person. The new rationality could not function in an effective way in the existing system without the emergence of new forms of scientific knowledge such as criminal psychiatry that enabled the characterization of criminals in themselves, beneath their acts. Foucault suggests that this shift resulted in the emergence of new, insidious forms of domination and violence. The critical impact of *Discipline and Punish* thus lies in its ability to reveal the processes of subject formation that operate in modern penal



institutions. The modern prison does not just punish by depriving its inmates of liberty, it categorizes them as delinquent subjects, types of people with a dangerous, criminal nature.

### **3.3.5 History of Modern Sexuality**

Foucault's history of sexuality was originally projected as a fairly straightforward extension of the genealogical approach of *Discipline and Punish* to the topic of sexuality. Foucault's idea is that the various modern fields of knowledge about sexuality (various "sciences of sexuality", including psychoanalysis) have an intimate association with the power structures of modern society and so are prime candidates for genealogical analysis. The first volume of this project, published in 1976, was intended as the introduction to a series of studies on particular aspects of modern sexuality (children, women, "perverts", population, etc.). It outlined the project of the overall history, explaining the basic viewpoint and the methods to be used.

On Foucault's account, modern control of sexuality parallels modern control of criminality by making sex (like crime) an object of allegedly scientific disciplines, which simultaneously offer knowledge and domination of their objects. However, it becomes apparent that there is a further dimension in the power associated with the sciences of sexuality. Not only is there control exercised via other people's knowledge of individuals such as doctors' knowledge, for example; there is also control via individuals' knowledge of themselves. Individuals internalize the norms laid down by the sciences of sexuality and monitor themselves in an effort to conform to these norms. Thus, they are controlled not only as objects of disciplines but also as self-scrutinizing and self-forming subjects.

Foucault shows how sexuality becomes an essential construct in determining not only moral worth, but also health, desire, and identity. Subjects are further obligated to tell the truth about themselves by confessing the details of their sexuality. Foucault argued that modern sexuality was characterized by the secularization of religious techniques

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of confession: one no longer confesses the details of one's sexual desire to a priest; one goes to a doctor, a therapist, a psychologist, or a psychiatrist.

The book begins with a repudiation of the “repressive hypothesis”, the idea that sexuality in the Victorian era was repressed and discourse on it silenced. Foucault claims that it was not repression that characterized the primary attitude of modern society towards sex; rather, sexuality became the object of new kinds of discourse—medical, juridical and psychological – and that discourse on it actually increased. Sexuality was inextricably linked to truth: these new discourses were able to tell us the scientific truth about ourselves through our sexuality.

Although the book is a historical study of the emergence of modern sexuality in the nineteenth century, Foucault's targets were also contemporary ideas and practices. The prevalent views on sexuality in the 1960s and 1970s held that there was a natural and healthy sexuality that all human beings shared simply in virtue of being human, and this sexuality was presently repressed by cultural prohibitions and conventions such as bourgeois morality and capitalist socio-economic structures. Repressed sexuality was the cause of various neuroses and it was important to have an active and free sexuality. The popular discourse on sexuality thus fervently argued for sexual liberation: we had to liberate our true sexuality from the repressive mechanisms of power.

Foucault challenged this view by showing how our conceptions and experiences of sexuality are in fact always the result of specific cultural conventions and mechanisms of power and could not exist independently of them. The mission to liberate our repressed sexuality was thus fundamentally misguided because there was no authentic or natural sexuality to liberate. To free oneself from one set of norms only meant adopting different norms in their stead, and that could turn out to be just as controlling and normalizing. He wrote mockingly that the irony of our endless preoccupation with sexuality was that we believed that it had something to do with our liberation.

In order to challenge the dominant view of the relationship between sexuality and repressive power, Foucault had to re-conceive the nature of power. His major claim is that power is not essentially repressive but productive. It does not operate by repressing and prohibiting the true and authentic expressions of a natural sexuality. Instead it produces, through cultural normative practices and scientific discourses, the ways in which we experience and conceive of our sexuality. Power relations are “the internal conditions” of our sexual identities.

Foucault outlined what became one of the most influential contemporary understandings of power in a series of short propositions over three pages of *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1. He elucidated and developed this understanding of power in a number of essays, lectures and interviews throughout the rest of his life, but the basic idea was already present in these pages. We should not try to look for the center of power, or for the individuals, institutions or classes that rule, but should rather construct a “microphysics of power” that focuses on the multitude of loci of power spread throughout a society: families, workplaces, everyday practices, and marginal institutions. One has to analyze power relations from the bottom up and not from the top down, and to study the myriad ways in which the subjects themselves are constituted in these diverse but intersecting networks.

Although dispersed among various interlacing networks throughout society, power nevertheless has a rationality, a series of aims and objectives, and the means of attaining them. This does not imply that any individual has consciously formulated them. As the example of the Panopticon shows, power often functions according to a clear rationality irrespective of the intentions and motives of the individual who guards the prison from the tower. Despite the centrality of the Panopticon as a model for power, Foucault does not hold that power forms a deterministic system of overbearing constraints. Power should rather be understood and analyzed as an unstable network of practices implying that where there is power, there is always resistance too. Just as there is no center of power, there is no center of resistance somewhere outside of it. Resistance is rather inherent in power relations and their dynamics, it

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is “the odd term in the relations of power” (1976 ). While power relations permeate the whole body of society, they may be denser in some regions and less dense in others.

Foucault’s short but influential discussion of biopower also first appears at the end of *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1. Foucault contrasts it to what he calls sovereign power: a form of power that was historically founded on violence—the right to kill. It was exercised mainly by “deduction” (taking something away): it consisted of the right to appropriate a portion of the nation’s wealth, for example by imposing a tax on products, goods and services, or by demanding a portion of the subjects’ time, strength, and ultimately life itself. The obligation to wage war on behalf of the sovereign and the imposition of death penalty for going against his will were the clearest forms of such power. But Foucault claims that the West has undergone a profound transformation in its mechanisms of power since the seventeenth century. Deductive and violent sovereign power has been gradually complemented and partly replaced by biopower, a form of power that exerts a positive influence on life, “that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (1976 ). This era of biopower is marked by the explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the control of populations: techniques that, for example, coordinate medical care, normalize behavior, rationalize mechanisms of insurance, and rethink urban planning. The aim is the effective administration of bodies and the calculated management of life through means that are scientific and continuous. Mechanisms of power and knowledge have assumed responsibility for the life process in order to optimize, control, and modify it. The exercise of power over living beings no longer carries the threat of death, but instead takes charge of their lives.

The rationality of biopower is markedly different from that of sovereign power in terms not just of its objectives, but also of its instruments. A major consequence of its development is the growing importance of norms at the expense of the juridical system of the law. Foucault claims that the dominance of biopower as the paradigmatic form of power

means that we live in a society in which the power of the law has subsided in favor of regulative and corrective mechanisms based on scientific knowledge. Biopower penetrates traditional forms of political power, but it is essentially the power of experts and administrators.

The genealogical attempt to historicize the body is prominent also in *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, but now Foucault's target is the naturalist explanations of sex and sexuality. At the end of the book Foucault takes up the question of whether we can find a scientific truth about sex. He makes clear that his genealogical investigation of sexuality implies a challenge to a certain kind of explanatory framework of sexuality and gender: the idea of sex as a natural foundation or an unobserved cause, which supports the visible effects of gender and sexuality. He critically appraises the idea of a natural, scientifically defined true sex by revealing the historical development of this form of thought. He does not claim that sex, understood as the categories of maleness and femaleness, was invented in a particular historical period. He rather analyses the ways in which these categories were founded and explained in discourses claiming the status of scientific truth, and how this allegedly "pure" explanation in fact constituted these categories so that they were understood as "natural". This idea has had enormous influence on feminist philosophers and queer theorists. Judith Butler has appropriated this idea in her influential book *Gender Trouble* to argue that allegedly scientific ideas of sex as a natural and necessary ground for sexual and gendered identities in fact have a normative function: they constitute our conceptions of "normal" men and women and their "natural" sexual desire for each other.

### **3.3.6 Sex in the Ancient World**

Foucault's final engagement with traditional philosophy arises from the turn toward the ancient world he took in the last few years of his life. *The History of Sexuality* had been planned as a multi-volume work on various themes in a study of modern sexuality. The first volume, discussed above, was a general introduction. Foucault wrote a second volume (*Les aveux de la chair*) that dealt with the origins of the modern

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notion of the subject in the practices of Christian confession, but he never published it. (It was published posthumously in 2018.) His concern was that a proper understanding of the Christian development required a comparison with ancient conceptions of the ethical self, something he undertook in his last two books (1984) on Greek and Roman sexuality: *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*.

These treatments of ancient sexuality moved Foucault into ethical issues that had been implicit but seldom explicitly thematized in his earlier writings. What emerges out of his historical studies of ancient sexuality is a particular conception of ethics that he traces to antiquity. In the ancient conception, ethics referred to the practice through which one forms oneself as an ethical subject following the prescriptive elements of morality. It concerns the way in which moral rules can be adopted and problematized by the subjects themselves.

The importance of a study of ethics becomes apparent when we try to make visible the difference between the morality of antiquity and that of Christianity. Foucault's specific goal was to compare ancient pagan and Christian ethics through the test-case of sexuality and to trace the development of Christian ideas about sex from the very different ideas of the ancients. He argues that, contrary to what is often believed, on the level of moral codes of behavior, there are in fact striking similarities between antiquity and Christianity. Both shared, for example, a concern that sexual expenditure could harm an individual's health, and they both valued conjugal fidelity and sexual abstinence. But there was a strong contrast in the ways these two cultures understood and practiced these ideals and demands.

In the Christian view sexual acts were, on the whole, evil in themselves and most forms of sexual activity were simply forbidden. A main emphasis in Christian morality is therefore on the moral code, its systematicity, its richness, and its capacity to adjust to every possible case and to embrace every area of behavior. The rules in Christian monasteries, for example, were not only very severe, but also extremely detailed. The morality of antiquity, on the other hand, is one in which the

code and rules of behavior are rudimentary. The ancient Greeks' view was that sexual acts were natural and necessary, but subject to abuse. They emphasized the proper use (chresis) of pleasures, where this involved engaging in a range of sexual activities (heterosexual, homosexual, in marriage, out of marriage), but with proper moderation. Their texts discussing morality therefore lay down very few explicit rules or guidelines on the kinds of sexual acts that one should engage in. More important than the moral rules was the relationship that one had with oneself, the choice of the "style of existence" made by the individual. Sexual austerity, for example, was not practiced as a result of prohibitions, but because of a personal choice to live a beautiful life and to leave to others memories of a beautiful existence. Sex for the Greeks was a major part of what Foucault called an "aesthetics of existence": the self's creation of a beautiful and enjoyable existence.

Foucault's last two books are an attempt to make a contribution to the task of rethinking ethics, but they are also a continuation of his attempt to rethink the subject. Now the focus is on the forms of understanding that subjects create about themselves and the practices by which they transform their mode of being. In his study of ancient Greek ethics, Foucault continued to pursue his idea that there was no true self that could be deciphered and emancipated, but that the self was something that had been—and must be—created. There is, however, a whole new axis of analysis present in his late studies of the subject. While his earlier genealogical studies investigated the ways in which power/knowledge networks constituted the subject, his late work emphasizes the subject's own role in this process. It therefore offers a more complex understanding of the subject. Subjects are not simply constructed by power; they themselves partake in that construction and modify themselves through practices of the self. They are not just docile bodies, but actively refuse, adopt and alter forms of being a subject. One way of contesting normalizing power is by shaping oneself and one's lifestyle creatively: by exploring opportunities for new ways of being, new fields of experience, pleasures, relationships, modes of living and thinking.

**Check your Progress-1**

## Notes

1. What is the focus of Foucault's work?

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2. Which book is considered to have made Foucault famous?

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3. In which university did Foucault agree to teach annually?

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### 3.4 LET US SUM UP

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In this chapter, we learned about Intellectual Background and Major Works of Foucault.

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### 3.5 KEYWORDS

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- **Rudimentary:** involving or limited to basic principles.
- **Genealogical:** relating to the study or tracing of lines of family descent.
- **Feminist:** a person who supports feminism.
- **Deterministic:** relating to the philosophical doctrine that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes regarded as external to the will.
- **Historiography:** the study of the writing of history and of written histories.

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### 3.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- Examine the intellectual background of Foucault.
- Discuss in detail any 2 important works of Foucault.

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### 3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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### 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- The focus of his questioning is the modern human sciences (biological, psychological, social). **(answer to check your progress - 1 Q.1)**
- Les mots et les choses (translated into English under the title The Order of Things) made Foucault famous. **(answer to check your progress - 1 Q.2)**
- Foucault had agreed to teach annually at the University of California at Berkeley. **(answer to check your progress - 1 Q.3)**

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# UNIT-4: FOUCAULT- ‘WHAT IS AN AUTHOR? - 4

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## STRUCTURE

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 ‘What is an Author?’ and its Contexts
- 4.3 Counter History
- 4.4 The Author and the Text
- 4.5 Let us sum up
- 4.6 Keywords
- 4.7 Questions for Review
- 4.8 Suggested Reading and References
- 4.9 Answers to Check your Progress

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## 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit, we will study about:

- “What is an Author?” by Foucault and its contexts,
- we would also learn about its counter history;
- and, we would also learn about the Author and the Text.

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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It might be said that the author-figure, whose death was announced in the late 1960s, came back to life in the 1990s, when there emerged a renewed debate in literary theory over the problem of authorship; and this prompted a reappraisal of those now classic essays in which Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault originally proclaimed—or seemed to proclaim—the author’s demise. The present paper continues this

reassessment by examining Foucault's chief contribution to the author-figure's funerary rites: his lecture of February 1969 entitled 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?'. That lecture, translated into English in 1977 as 'What is an Author?', entered the canon of discussions of authorship and has been selectively reprinted in English at least three times. Yet throughout the 1980s it never received the close critical attention which it deserved, and which its classic status should surely have entailed. Instead, commentators on all sides variously endorsed and criticized what were taken to be Foucault's claims, without actually scrutinizing his argument. This curious conceptual silence was broken in 1992, with the publication of Sean Burke's elegant and wide-ranging *The Death and Return of the Author*—a compelling reappraisal of the anti-authorial works of Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida. By focusing on the rhetoric of these theoretical writings, Burke has revealed a remarkable range of both strengths and troubles in their arguments. Not the least of Burke's achievements has been to rephrase the question of Foucault's 'What is an Author?' itself, asking instead: 'What (and who) is an author?' As we shall see in due course, this reformulation proves to be apt indeed; and I hope to show that a strategy akin to Burke's yields still further fruits when applied anew to 'What is an Author?'

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## 4.2 'WHAT IS AN AUTHOR?' AND ITS CONTEXTS

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The chief context of Foucault's 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' was Barthes's essay 'La mort de l'auteur', written in 1967 and published in 1968—a typically pithy piece which announced, in the words of its title, 'the death of the author'. Here after quoting a sentence from Balzac's *Sarrasine*, Barthes began by asking: Who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story . . .? Is it the individual Balzac . . .? Is it Balzac the author . . .? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every origin. Writing is that neutral, that composite, that oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where every identity is lost, starting with the identity of the very body which writes. As this striking introduction made clear, the point of Barthes's argument was to replace

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the figure of the author (or rather, 'the Author', capitalized) with the figure of *écriture*. To evoke the possibility and the necessity of this transformation, Barthes developed a little history of writing and authorship, a history which fell into three phases: primordial grace, subsequent fall, future redemption. In the original state of grace—preserved to this day in 'ethnographic societies'—writing had known itself for what it was; subsequently, writing was corrupted by the gradual birth of modern society, which installed the tyrannical figure of the Author; finally, there was now supervening a moment of redemptive return, i.e. the 'destruction of the author' or 'death of the author', which would at long last restore writing to itself. But how could writing redeem itself from its authorial deformation? In the course of the modern age, Barthes explained, certain writers—first and foremost Mallarmé, then after him Valéry, Proust, and the Surrealists—had struggled to bring about this very emancipation; yet their valiant efforts had proved to be no more than a series of heroic failures. These attempts, then, amounted in the end to an unwitting collective testimony to 'the sway of the Author'. Yet help was now at hand from linguistics, which was making it possible, for the first time, to strip away the illusions of authorship. For linguistics had recently revealed the truth of language itself, namely: that the whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors. Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as it is nothing other than the instance saying I: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, success to make language 'hold together', success, that is to say, to exhaust it. To assimilate the lesson supplied by linguistics was to dethrone the Author. No longer would writing emanate, or be taken to emanate, from some parent a figure anterior to itself, i.e. from the Author or from the Author's 'hypostases'—society, history, psyche, liberty; instead, writing could no what last be repositioned back where it belonged, that is to say, inside language. This apocalyptic redemption of writing would entail killing not only the Author but also the Critic; the collusive pair Author–Critic would now be replaced by the new couplet of 'the modern scriptor' and

the sovereign reader. The ‘modern sriptor’ would be a writer who is not an Author, whose being does not precede writing but on the contrary is constituted and delimited by writing itself. Correspondingly, although Barthes did not foreground this point, the Author’s product was a ‘book’, whereas the ‘modern sriptor’ was associated not with a book but with a ‘text’. But the fundamentally redemptive figure was to be the reader, who was already the true and only source of the otherwise mythical unity of the text, and whose constitutive role in the making of *écriture* would now be revealed and accepted. ‘The birth of the reader’, Barthes concluded, ‘must be at the cost of the death of the Author.’ Such were the main lines of Barthes’s ‘La mort de l’auteur’. Without doubt that essay was one of the stimuli for Foucault’s lecture ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un au-teur?’, delivered early in the following year (1969); yet Foucault delicately avoided mentioning Barthes by name. Instead he framed his discussion as a response to certain criticisms which had been levelled at his own *Les Mots et les choses*—criticisms which, he admitted, were partly justified. In that book, published in 1966, he had bypassed ‘the question of the author’; concerned as he was with ‘discursive layers’ rather than with ‘the familiar categories of a book, a work, or an author’, he had carelessly ‘employed the names of authors in a naive and often crude fashion’ (pp. 113, 115). This, he explained, had opened the way to various misunderstandings of his enterprise. The nature of that enterprise would shortly be clarified by *L’Archéologie du savoir*, which was at that moment in press. ‘Nevertheless,’ he went on, ‘as ‘a privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, and literature, or in the history of philosophy and science, the question of the author demands a more direct response’ (p. 115). And ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?’ comprised that response. Foucault proposed to examine the author ‘as a function of discourse’, re-placing the conventional figure of ‘the author’ with what he called ‘the author-function’—a concept which sought to capture the discursive role played by that figure. One might paraphrase his argument by saying that it is precisely the author-function which authorizes the very idea of ‘an author’. Foucault developed this novel conception chiefly with reference to the seemingly simple case of ‘a book or a series of texts that bear a definite signature’ (pp. 131, 136).

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Even at this 'level' the phenomenon of authorship acquired in Foucault's hands an unexpected complexity; but he went on to show that still further considerations applied in the cases of Marx and Freud, who were not just authors of works but 'initiators of discursive practices'. Indeed, it emerged that the concept of the 'author-function' would require some further elaboration to embrace such "fundamental" authors', for Foucault explained that 'the enigmatic link between an author and his works'—the premiss of the author-function—took a distinctive form with respect to psychoanalysis and Marxism. Nevertheless, he indicated that the 'author-function' concept applied not only to the author of 'an ordinary text' but also to 'initiators of discursive practices' such as Marx and Freud. Ultimately, therefore, the authority of even Marx and Freud was derived from the author-function—so Foucault was suggesting, even though he abstained from demonstrating this concretely. Thus, in harmony with the arguments of Les Mots et les choses and of the forthcoming *L'Archéologie du savoir*, the apparent sovereignty of authors concealed the real source of authority, namely discourse itself. Correspondingly Foucault too, albeit in a different way from Barthes, was seeking to herald a new, post-authorial culture. To this end he opened and closed his discussion with a quotation from Beckett: 'What matter who's speaking?' No longer should we bend our ear to the supposedly personal voice of the named, individual author; instead, we should attend to the anonymous murmuring of the collective discourse (pp. 115–16, 138). Hence the transmutation performed by Foucault's very title. The figure of the author was turned from a 'who' into a 'what'—though strangely enough, the rhetorical question which presaged a future of glorious anonymity came from a named author, Beckett. On the face of it, the argument of Foucault's 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' seems closely akin to that of Barthes's 'La mort de l'auteur'.

Certainly the two pieces shared several paradoxical gestures: the fact that the author's death was itself an authored event, requiring the authorial signatures of Barthes and of Foucault; the selective privileging of certain chosen authors such as Mallarmé and Beckett, who were apparently exempted from the death sentence; the seeming ambiguity as to whether Barthes and Foucault were signing a death warrant, carrying out an

assassination, or preaching at a funeral. Yet these resemblance are misleading, for as we shall soon begin to see, Foucault took considerable pains to distance himself from Barthes—not least by criticizing both the traditional concept of the literary ‘work’ (which Barthes had effectively left intact), and the new concept of *écriture* (which Barthes had installed in place of ‘the Author’). And in fact Foucault’s essay had a significance of its own, in at least three respects.

In the first place, whereas Barthes had sought to criticize and to supersede the author-figure, Foucault worked instead to problematize that figure, i.e. to make ‘the author’ the site of an enquiry. And there is reason to believe that he thus exerted a significant influence upon literary and philosophical theories of authorship, at least in the Anglophone world. Already, in the early 1960s, Wayne Booth had introduced the concept of the ‘implied author’, but the latter figure was conceived as an authorial construction. In contrast Foucault posited the author-figure as a construct of the reader; and the interpretative space which he thereby opened has since been peopled by a series of constructivist conceptions of the author—first Alexander Nehamas’s concept of the ‘postulated author’, then Gregory Currie’s theory of the ‘fictional author’, and latterly Jorge Gracia’s figure of the ‘interpretative author’. These conceptions of authorship, which have attained a new level of sophistication in Gracia’s formulation, only became thinkable thanks to Foucault’s essay. Secondly, Foucault was extending the problem from imaginative literature to the domain of non-fictional writing—as he implied in his opening remarks, where (as we have seen) he de-fined ‘the question of the author’ as ‘a privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, and literature, or in the history of philosophy and science’. This move was rather less explicit than the first: indeed, for the most part Foucault oddly elided the distinction between such domains, gliding effortlessly from the arts to the sciences, between Homer and Galileo. Nevertheless, his extension of the author question was also potentially fecund—although commentators on the sciences have only recently begun to take up the opportunity which Foucault thus created. Thirdly, ‘What is an Author?’ played a significant part in constituting the new figure of ‘the text’ which was already emerging at

the time, and which was to gain ascendancy in the 1970s and 1980s. Not only did Foucault deploy that figure throughout his lecture; more particularly, his critique of the concepts of 'the work' and of *écriture* helped to propel Barthes himself into taking up more systematically the figure of 'the text'. In 'La mort de l'auteur', as we have seen, Barthes had counterposed the 'text' against the 'book' (equivalent to the 'work'), but only in passing and without thematizing the contrast between these. But in 1971 he devoted a new polemical piece, 'De l'Yuvre au texte', to just this distinction—and in doing so took on board the very criticisms which Foucault had raised in 1969. Barthes now proposed that the category of 'the Text' should displace the traditional concept of 'the work'; and this new figure of 'the Text', dignified with the capital letter, effectively replaced the figure of *écriture* which he had deployed in his earlier essay. It appears, then, that Foucault's 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' was the oblique link between those two Barthesian classics, 'La mort de l'auteur' and 'De l'Yuvre au texte'. Indeed, Barthes had every reason for revising his claims in the light of Foucault's lecture—for in the prefatory section of that lecture, after referring as we have seen to his own *Les Mots et les choses*, Foucault had demolished the argument of Barthes's 'La mort de l'auteur'. This initial phase of Foucault's discussion merits attention not only because it opened the space for his own argument, but also as a remarkable rhetorical achievement in its own right.

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### 4.3 COUNTER HISTORY

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It will be recalled that Barthes had approached the author problem by sketching a history of authorship. Foucault, in contrast, began by making it clear that while he was well equipped to produce a history of his own, he would not here be undertaking that task:

As Foucault's prefatory discussion proceeded, it seemed as if he was indeed eschewing the historical tactic which Barthes had adopted. Yet in fact his introductory remarks were devoted precisely to rebutting the history which Barthes had put forward; and within their seemingly non-historical form Foucault subtly constructed what we may call a counter-



history, i.e. a radical rework-ing of the story Barthes had told. In Barthes's story, writers such as Mallarmé had failed to dethrone the usurp-ing figure of the Author; and accordingly it required the assistance of linguistics, and of course the courage of Barthes himself, to redeem writing from its tragic fall. But in sharp contrast, Foucault argued that literature itself had already brought about what he called the 'disappearance of the author', i.e. 'the total erasure of the individual characteristics of the writer'. Indeed, this was the point of his opening allusion to Beckett:

Developing this theme, Foucault turned to what he called 'the kinship between writing and death'—a kinship which, he explained, 'inverts the age-old conception of Greek narrative or epic, which was designed to guarantee the immortality of a hero' (pp. 116–17). This original, protective function of narrative was not confined to the Greeks, for in a similar way 'Arab stories, and *The Arabian Nights* in particular, had as their motivation this strategy for defeating death' (p. 117). In both Greek and Arab culture, then, narrative had begun as 'a protection against death'; but in 'our culture' this relationship has been inverted, for writing now annihilates its own author. To illustrate this claim, Foucault used the triad Flaubert–Proust–Kafka:

This picture has not only pressed further Foucault's counter-history, but has also outflanked Barthes's use of the figure of authorial death; for by assigning that figure to literature itself, Foucault has deprived Barthes's argument of its putative originality. The 'murderer' of the author is not Barthes but 'our culture', instanced by the writing of Flaubert–Proust–Kafka. The extinction of the author, then, far from being an event of the future which requires the aid of linguistics (as it was depicted in Barthes's little history), has already been achieved by the hand of literature itself. Correspondingly, Foucault has constructed a very different temporality from that deployed by Barthes—though in doing so, he has created some glaring gaps. On the one hand, the figure of the present has been radically redefined: the conjoined figures of Beckett, Flaubert, Proust, Kafka have together defined a single cultural moment, which Foucault calls 'our culture' (p. 117), or 'the writing of our day' (p. 116). To link Beckett with Flaubert in this way is precisely to negate

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Barthes's picture of an imperfect, incomplete progress from Mallarmé to the present; for Flaubert was Mallarmé's near-contemporary, just as Beckett is the contemporary of Barthes and of Foucault. Similarly Proust has been reassigned: Barthes had positioned him as one of those who had striven without success to achieve the 'death of the author', but Foucault includes him within the roll of authors who have actually brought about the author's 'disappearance'. Yet on the other hand, this redefined present is attended with a double uncertainty. In the first place, one individual is curiously absent from Foucault's picture, namely Mallarmé himself. Surely Foucault's counter-history will require him to reposition Mallarmé, for Mallarmé was a crucial figure in Barthes's history, serving as he had to initiate, however imperfectly, that movement which would culminate with Barthes's own argument; yet on this matter Foucault has so far been silent, for Mallarmé's name is absent from his pantheon. Secondly, his counter-history is signally incomplete, carrying a profound void at its very heart. For Foucault has opened up a massive gap between the Graeco-Arabic moment, in which writing warded off death or its implications, and 'our culture', in which writing is itself annihilation; across that gap he has posited an inversion; yet he has offered no hint as to how or when this inversion took place. In short, where Barthes had offered a narrative, Foucault has merely posited a structural contrast: his counter-history, having no principle of motion within it, has left unexplained the origin of 'the writing of our day'. Leaving these problems implicit and in suspense, Foucault now proceeded to draw the practical moral which flowed from his counter-history. Since imaginative literature had already accomplished the 'disappearance or death of the author', it followed that the 'task of criticism' was not to bring about this event—as Barthes had of course been claiming but, on the contrary, to catch up with what literature had achieved: that is, to 'explore' the 'consequences' of the author's disappearance, to 'appreciate' the 'importance of this event', to 'take full measure' of it (pp. 117, 119). However, Foucault went on, this necessary enterprise was being obstructed by certain idioms of contemporary criticism. One such idiom was the traditional category of 'the work', and more particularly the paradoxical retention of that category in recent

structuralist criticism: 'if some have found it convenient to bypass the individuality of the writer or his status as an author to concentrate on a work, they have failed to appreciate the equally problematic nature of the word "work" and the unity it designates' (p. 119).

Another unhelpful 'thesis' was the much more recent 'notion of *écriture*'; for this concept, 'as currently employed', had 'merely transposed the empirical characteristics of an author to a transcendental anonymity'. In a nicely ironic and reflexive touch, which was surely not lost on his auditors at the Collège de France in February 1969, Foucault refrained from naming the contemporary author who was pre-eminently associated both with structuralist criticism and with the 'conception of *écriture*': that is, Roland Barthes. But Foucault's master stroke came in the final paragraph of his prefatory discussion: This conception of *écriture* sustains the privileges of the author through the safeguard of the *a priori*; the play of representations that formed a particular image of the author is extended within a grey neutrality. The disappearance of the author—since Mallarmé, an event of our time—is held in check by the transcendental.

Is it not necessary to draw a line between those who believe that we can continue to situate our present discontinuities.

Thus the pivotal figure of Mallarmé, whom Foucault had been holding back until this moment, has now been played as the trump card: it was Mallarmé who had brought about the 'disappearance of the author' in the first place. And this completes and confirms Foucault's counter-history, resolving the other issue which he had left in silent suspense: for the 'inversion' of the relationship between writing and death has now been assigned a historical location and a cause, in the person of Mallarmé himself. Admittedly, this counter-history has left a potentially troubling gap between Graeco-Arabic narrative and the Mallarméan inversion, eliding as it does most of the trajectory of Western literature; but this problem has been concealed from view by its dispersal through the text. What matters is the radical re-evaluation of Mallarmé, who has been positioned within the present, within 'our time'. Conversely, Barthes himself has been consigned to the past, to 'the historical and

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transcendental tradition of the nineteenth century'; his concept of *écriture*, far from heralding a new dawn, has compounded the author problem by reinscribing it in a still more mystified form. In short, Barthes's history has been turned on its head: Mallarmé, whom Barthes sought to cast in the role of inadequate precursor, had in fact been far ahead of him in the first place. The final indignity for the unfortunate Barthes is that Foucault has preserved his apocalyptic tone, while snatching from him the banner of the future. For it is Foucault, not Barthes, who is 'making a great effort to liberate, once and for all,' from the 'conceptual framework' of 'the nineteenth century'. Having thus swept Barthes away, Foucault could now proceed to develop his own treatment of what he called 'the question of the author'. He began by problematizing the author's name, in order to set up his central thesis: that 'the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society' (p. 124). This claim served to introduce the heart of his lecture, i.e. a sketch of four characteristic 'features' of the 'author-function', defined with reference to the case of 'books or texts without authors'. Next (pp. 131–36) Foucault proceeded to a 'schematic' discussion of the more complex problems raised by 'the initiation of discursive practices' (p. 136), i.e. the distinctive form of authorship associated with the paternal figures of Marx and Freud. Finally, in a brief concluding passage (pp. 136–38), Foucault linked his argument with a series of wider themes: the analysis of discourse; the question of 'the privileges of the subject' (p. 137); and the anonymity of discourse which he envisaged for the future, an anonymity evoked by recalling his earlier quotation from Beckett: 'What matter who's speaking?' (p. 138). In examining Foucault's argument, I shall be concerned in particular with two themes which permeated his discussion, yet which he never considered directly: the figure of the text and the individual identity of the author. It will be convenient to proceed analytically rather than sequentially, since each of these topics appeared and reappeared at several different sites within Foucault's lecture. Nevertheless, the structure of his exposition will be taken into account, for as we shall see, that structure itself played a significant rhetorical role. One section of Foucault's lecture will be left

aside here, his discussion of Marx and Freud, the ‘initiators of discursive practices’. That passage has been omitted from consideration for two reasons. In the first place, it was at a tangent to Foucault’s main argument—for as has already been mentioned, Foucault did not explain how the authority and originality which characterized Marx and Freud was to be assigned to the ‘author-function’. Secondly, this part of Foucault’s essay has already been treated in exemplary fashion by Burke, who has brought out forcefully its fundamental aporia: that is, the fact that to install Marx and Freud as ‘initiators of discursive practices’ was to undermine the posited sovereignty of discourse itself. Thus this particular passage in Foucault’s ‘What is an Author?’ strikingly exemplifies Burke’s wider argument: that ‘the principle of the author most powerfully reasserts itself when it is thought absent’, that ‘the concept of the author is never more alive than when thought dead’. And indeed the discussion which follows, while complementary to Burke’s, will lead in directions which are entirely compatible with his conclusions.

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## 4.4 THE AUTHOR AND THE TEXT

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In his introductory remarks, when demarcating the limits of ‘What is an Author?’, Foucault tied ‘author’ strictly and reciprocally to ‘text’. As we have seen, his essay would be concerned with ‘the singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it’ (p. 115). And yet after some further preliminary observations (which I shall be considering in Section 5), he broke this link, implicitly redefining the meaning of ‘text’. ‘In our culture’, he observed at the end of his prefatory discussion,

By this stage of Foucault’s exposition, then, a text no longer implied an author; rather, a text amounted simply to anything written or printed. Correspondingly—and this was the point—the ‘author-function’ was associated not with the text as such, but rather with some texts. The core of the essay—now duly limited to ‘those books or texts with authors’ (p. 124)—consisted of an exposition of four specific ‘characteristics of the

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“author-function” (p. 130). After explaining these four ‘characteristics’ in turn, Foucault summarized them as follows (for convenience, I havenumbered and listed them): the ‘author-function’ is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine and articulate the realm of discourse; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in anygiven culture; it is defined not by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual in so far as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy. (pp. 130–31) Such was Foucault’s overview of the four ‘characteristics of the author-function’. I shall now examine the respective passages which these four points summarized, in order to bring out both Foucault’s explicit argument and the shifting uses to which he put the figure of the ‘text’. Of these four ‘characteristics’ the first two were not so much descriptive as circumstantial, designed to show that the author-function was historically contingent and mutable. The point of was that the author-function is connected with transgression, with punishment, and with property, and in particular with the ‘legal codification’ of authorship which took place around 1800 (pp. 124–25). ————— Under Foucault argued that the figure of the author was imposed at different historical periods upon ‘scientific texts’ on the one hand and upon ‘text of poetry or fiction’ on the other (pp. 125–27). As this latter point implied, the historical observations Foucault was making in and were not connected with the succession of epistemes which he had depicted in *Les Mots et les choses*, nor for that matter with the literary counter-history he had offered earlier in his lecture. On the contrary, as he had made explicit at the outset Foucault was not concerned to construct even so much as the sketch of a history. Rather, the two claims he was making here were (as he put it) ‘transhistorical’, and his historical allusions were serving a merely illustrative purpose. Foucault’s real concern was with the author-function in the present age: the role of his historical examples was simply to establish first the legal associations of the author-function (i.e. ) and then its contingent quality (i.e. ). Far more important, then, were and , for

these depicted the concrete and practical working of the author-function. In developing and , Foucault was still deploying the figure of the text, and using this to refer to (in the words of my own earlier gloss) anything written or printed. Yet by the time he came to offer the summary quoted above, the figure of the text had become curiously marginal, appearing only in and even there in an almost liminal role. How this had happened will become clear as we examine the way that he had elaborated points and . The key moment of Foucault's discussion was point . He began with a negative claim: 'The third point concerning this "author-function" is that it is not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual' (p. 127). It should be observed in passing that this negation—whose significance will soon emerge—was rephrased in Foucault's later summary, where (inter alia), 'discourse' was replaced with 'text'. The implied-yet-unarticulated equivalence between discourse and text raises troubles of its own, but as we shall see, this was but one of the difficulties surrounding Foucault's use of the figure of the text. Foucault continued:

It results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author. Undoubtedly, this construction is assigned a 'realistic' dimension as we speak of an individual's 'profundity' or 'creative' power, his intentions or the original inspiration manifested in writing. Nevertheless, these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as an author) are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practise. In addition, all these operations vary according to the period and the form of discourse concerned. A 'philosopher' and a 'poet' are not constructed in the same manner (p. 127) Here we have reached the heart of Foucault's argument: the figure of the author, for all that it is 'assigned a "realistic" dimension', is an interpretative construct, which arises from 'our way of handling texts'. That is to say, 'the author' of a text is categorically distinct from the historical individual who wrote that text, for all that the two bear—or seem to bear—the same name. We can now appreciate the force of Foucault's opening negation: it was designed

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to distinguish the 'creator' of a text (that is, the 'individual' to whom a discourse-or-text is attributed) from the corresponding author-figure. This distinction was of course implicit in Barthes's 'La mort de l'auteur'; but where Barthes had seen merely an obstacle to be overthrown, Foucault rightly perceived an explanatory problem. And he thereby opened the way to a new understanding of the meaning of authorship. Admittedly, the terms in which Foucault expressed this point were far from clear. It remained entirely ambiguous whether 'the' author-function was one phenomenon or several; the very concept of the 'author-function' was never defined; and Foucault's account of that concept turned out, as we shall see, to be incoherent. But in fact, the distinction he was drawing did not depend on the 'author-function' concept; indeed, it will be more easily appreciated if we set that concept aside and rephrase the point in somewhat different terms. The outlines of Foucault's distinction become clearer if we introduce the separate term 'the writer' to designate the historical individual who wrote the given text—as distinct from the author to whom we assign that text—and if we focus upon a specific example. For this purpose I shall take the case of the writer John Locke, who produced a number of works including *Two Treatises of Government* and *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, and who died in 1704. The difference between 'writer' and 'author', in this particular case, can be indicated partially.

Observe, to begin with, that the name 'Locke' designates not one author but two, each with a definite identity—an identity which arises from the use to which we put the respective texts. One of these 'Lockes' is a political philosopher, who wrote the *Two Treatises of Government*; the other is a philosopher of knowledge, who produced the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Clearly it follows from this alone that each of these 'Lockes' is distinct from the writer John Locke. Correspondingly, writer and author do not have quite the same name: the writer was named John Locke, whereas both the 'political philosopher' and the 'philosopher of knowledge' are known simply as 'Locke'. Curiously—and as we shall later see, significantly—Foucault did not make this point; but it is in fact characteristic of authors, albeit with certain exceptions, that they are known by their surnames alone. Again, John Locke wrote many



otherworks, which fall outside the respective  $\Upsilon$ uvres of both ‘Locke’-the-political-philosopher and ‘Locke’-the-philosopher-of-knowledge. Further, John Lockedied in 1704, whereas both of our two ‘Lockes’ are alive today—for we routinely assert that ‘Locke argues’, ‘Locke claims’, and the like. In short, the author is indeed distinct from the writer, just as Foucault was claiming. In fact the dif-ference between them corresponds exactly to Michael Oakeshott’s distinction between the ‘historical past’, i.e. the past that has passed, and what Oakeshott calls the ‘practical past’, i.e. the past as present in our culture.

Writers are bodily, mortal beings, who lived and died in the historical past. Authors, on the contrary, are living figures who inhabit the practical past; although they too may turn out to be mortal—for instance, it has been well observed that ‘Addison and Steele are dead’—their death is not a bodily event but a cultural occurrence, the mortality of particular canonical texts. Conversely, it is precisely the life of the canonical text (such as the *Two Treatises*) which gives life to the author (in this case, Locke-the-political-philosopher). The characteristics of that constructed figure ‘the author’ arise, then—to return to Foucault’s formulation—from ‘our way of handling texts’. But what we must also notice is that this phrasing of Foucault’s has transformed his picture of the relation between text and author; for it detaches the figure of the author from the figure of the text. In the previous stages of his argument, Foucault had depicted the author-figure as being tied in one way or another to a text. But in the passage we are considering, this link between text and author has been broken; a text in itself does not ‘point to’ an ‘author’ (Foucault’s first formulation), nor does an author’s name ‘accompany’ a text (his second designation); rather, the author-figure arises from ‘our way of handling texts’. Thus the figure of the author no longer inheres in a text; rather, it is superimposed upon it. Or to put this the other way around, ‘texts’ have now been depicted as innocent raw materials, to which we apply those interpretative procedures which construct the author-function. And this altered designation persisted as Foucault went on, in his elaboration of point , to argue that ‘the rules that govern the construction of an author’ show certain ‘transhistorical constants’ (p. 127). To illustrate this claim he invoked the example of literary

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criticism—suggesting that the concept ‘author’, as used in contemporary criticism, embodies a distinct set of ‘critical modalities’ which derive from early Christian exegetical theories such as those set out by St Jerome in *De viris illustribus*. Such principles as coherence and consistency, which served for Jerome as criteria for assigning authorship to texts, recur today (Foucault observed) in the repertoire of devices by which modern criticism ties texts to their authors: for instance, ‘the author serves to neutralize the contradictions that are found in a series of texts’ (pp. 127–29). In this formulation, the connection between text and author is purely exterior; the figure of the author has no grounding in the text itself. Thus Foucault’s exposition of point—the fulcrum of his argument—has had the curious effect of eliding the issue with which he began, namely the bond between text and author, ‘the singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it’ (p. 115). Indeed, Foucault’s point, to which he devoted the next paragraph, was concerned with precisely this problem. He began by observing and rebutting the very implication just noticed:

However, it would be false to consider the function of the author as a pure and simple reconstruction after the fact of a text given as passive material, since a text always bears a number of signs that refer to the author. Well known to grammarians, these textual signs are personal pronouns, adverbs of time and place, and the conjugation of verbs. (p. 129)

From these opening sentences of the paragraph it would seem that Foucault was now reverting to his original notion—that ‘a text apparently points’ to an authorial figure—and relatedly, that he was restoring the bond between text and author which had just been dissolved in the course of . Specifically, that bond was now apparently supplied by the textual ‘signs that refer to the author’—which Foucault designated, adapting Jakobson, as ‘shifters’. Yet as it turned out, these ‘shifters’ do not in fact (according to Foucault’s exposition) play quite this role. For Foucault at once went on to argue that in ‘texts with an author’ the ‘shifters’ are essentially multidirectional (pp. 129–30). More particularly, he claimed that ‘all discourse that supports this “author-function”’ reveals

what he called a 'plurality of egos', which play different authorial roles. (To illustrate this point he used the examples of 'a novel narrated in the first person' (p. 129), interpreted with the aid of Booth's conception, and 'a mathematical treatise' (p. 130); I shall take up a little later the concrete uses to which he put these instances.) And he suggested that it is specifically from 'the division and distance' between these different 'egos' that the author-function arises. On this interpretation, to the extent that a text 'apparently points to' an authorial figure, it does so at most obliquely. Meanwhile the same paragraph had effected a further subtle transformation. It will be recalled that in Foucault's initial formulation, 'text' was inherently tied to 'author', but that this was swiftly displaced by a second picture, in which 'the name of an author is a variable that accompanies only certain texts to the exclusion of others' (pp. 115, 124). Now, under point , Foucault was seemingly reverting to his original construction; for as we have just seen, he asserted here that 'a text always bears a number of signs that refer to the author' (emphasis added). Yet in fact the matter was more complex than this. For Foucault at once proceeded to introduce anew the distinction between 'texts with an author' and 'those without one'—but he now drew a different line between these, thereby introducing yet a third formulation of the author–text relation. The opening of the paragraph, which was quoted above, continued thus:

But it is important to note that these elements have a different bearing on texts with an author and on those without one. In the latter, these 'shifters' refer to a real speaker and to an actual deictic situation, with certain exceptions such as the case of indirect speech in the first person. When discourse is linked to an author, however, the role of 'shifters' is more complex and variable (p. 129)

Thus texts (or discourse) without-an-author are now connected with speech and with a deictic act, i.e. an act of demonstration. How are we to map onto this third formulation the examples of texts-without-an-author which were given in Foucault's second formulation—'a private letter', 'a contract', 'an anonymous poster attached to a wall'? No such mapping is possible, nor can we reconcile the assertion that 'a text always bears a number of signs that refer to the author' with either the second

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formulation or the third. Consistency is unattainable here, for Foucault has successively used the word ‘text’ in three different ways: its meaning has slipped from the authored, through the written, to the uttered. What has happened here? We have been witnessing two linked rhetorical moves. In the first place, ‘author’ and ‘text’ have been treated asymmetrically: in the very act of bringing the author into focus, Foucault has pushed the figure of the text outside the circle of his interrogation. Secondly, the sliding usage of ‘text’—taking in along the way a half-suppressed synonymy with ‘discourse’ and, as we shall shortly see, with the literary ‘work’ as well—has deprived that term of any consistent meaning. And together these moves have conferred upon ‘texts’ a state of innocence, even as ‘the author’ has been depicted as essentially fallen. The figure of the author, carefully depicted as the product of our interpretative practices, contrasts strangely with the figure of the text, which has come to acquire the character of a quasi-natural object, a simple given. Correspondingly, and equally strangely, the assigning of authorship has at no point been depicted as having any effect on the status of texts themselves: that is, texts are curiously unaffected by the act of constructing an authorial figure. In short, the figure of ‘the text’ has slipped away, passing unnoticed beyond the analytical horizon.

### Check your Progress-1

1. What is the chief context of Foucault’s ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?’

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2. What did Foucault link author in ‘What is an Author?’ to?

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## 4.5 LET US SUM UP

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The signal achievement of Foucault’s ‘What is an Author?’ was to reveal that the figure of the ‘author’ is an interpretative construct: a construct associated with canonical works, notionally identified with the writer of

such works, but nonetheless categorically distinct from that writer. On the other hand, Foucault's discovery was masked to a considerable degree by the very terms in which he articulated it—above all, by his eliminating the author-figure's personal being. Yet as I shall go on to suggest, the attendant aporias were not only of Foucault's own making, but also stemmed from difficulties inherent in the issues he was raising. Foucault's attempt to write out the author-figure's individuality, and to raise in its stead the impersonal concept of 'the author-function', arose of course from the larger concern which dominated his writings of the late 1960s: namely, to establish the putative sovereignty of discourse. In 'What is an Author?' this effort was a radical failure, at several levels. We have seen that the suppression of the author-figure's name, individuality, and personal being rested upon a series of covert rhetorical manoeuvres; that this suppression was self-defeating, since in fact it is precisely as a person that the author-figure is constructed; that the 'author-function' concept had no consistent meaning; and that Foucault himself was incapable of adhering to the stance which he was concerned to define. Further, Foucault's intended erasure of the author-figure's individuality was paradoxically at odds with his own wider purposes. For the larger question he wanted to raise was 'the privileges of the subject' (p. 137); yet he had eliminated just those attributes which the author-figure shares with the figure of the subject. But perhaps the supreme paradox pertained to the concept of 'discourse'; and here my reading joins hands with that of Burke. For what Burke's analysis reveals is that in the sovereignty which Foucault assigned to it, discourse was neither more nor less than the hypostasis of the figure of the author. That is to say, what Foucault himself wrote of Barthes's recriture—that this concept 'has merely transposed the empirical characteristics of an author to a transcendental anonymity' (pp. 109–10)—applies with equal force, and with signal irony, to Foucault's discourse itself. The key to this twofold hypostatization is the fact that both *écriture* and *discours* rested on the assimilation of writing to speech. Just as Barthes set up *écriture* by approaching a written text with the question 'Who is speaking thus?', so Foucault invoked the sovereignty of *discours* by applying to the written at large the question 'What matter who's speaking?' In the case of *écriture* this manoeuvre is

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seemingly puzzling, since as Ann Banfield has observed, not only is *écriture* 'conceived in opposition to speech' but also the division between the written and the spoken is enhanced by the particular grammar of the French language. But this apparent paradox is resolved if we attend to the rhetorical work which was being performed by Barthes's apprehension of the written as spoken. On Barthes's designation, *écriture* is 'the destruction of every voice, every origin'. The irreducible contradiction inherent in this picture is that in order to play such a role, *écriture* must itself acquire the status of voice and of origin; and this was just what was achieved by apprehending the written under the sign of the spoken. In the most literal sense, then, *écriture* was the answer to the question 'who is speaking?' The very terms of Barthes's own rhetoric reveal that the figure of *écriture* was—as Foucault accurately observed—the concealed hypostatization of the author-figure. In the case of *discours*, the rhetorical stroke of assimilating the written to the spoken was rather less paradoxical. For as Foucault's *L'Archéologie du savoir* made clear, the unit from which *discours* was to be reconstructed was the *énoncé*, the statement—and this concept itself merged writing into speech. Moreover, Foucault further explained that what he called 'remanence', that is to say, 'survival in time', is 'of the nature of the statement'. This inherent property of 'survival in time' meant that the statement or *énoncé* was defined as the written-in-presence—which of course entails that the written is apprehended as speaking. But if Foucault's mode of fusing writing and speech was more transparent than that of Barthes, the effects of this move were similar in each case: what we have seen of Barthes's *écriture* is equally true of Foucault's *discours*. The very question 'what matter who's speaking?' unwittingly announces both that someone is 'speaking' and that it is speaking which 'matters'. Thus *discours*, like *écriture*, is assigned precisely the properties—voice and origin, agency and authority, presence and power—which have been so insistently re-moved from the figure of the author. In short, Foucault's rhetoric, like that of Barthes, bears out Burke's principal thesis: 'the principle of the author most powerfully reasserts itself when it is thought absent'; 'the concept of the author is never more alive than when thought dead'. There is also a further respect in which the present exploration has

harmo-nized with Burke's argument. One of Burke's central insights is that Foucault, like Barthes, apprehended such themes as writing, authorship, language, and discourse within a larger vision of past, present, future, and their mutual articulation. That is to say, both Barthes (in his writings of c. 1970) and Foucault (in his 'archaeological' phase) deployed, each in his own way, an eschatology and, linked with this, what I have elsewhere called a historical metaphysic. And this is just what we saw at work in the Barthes–Foucault exchange over the death (Barthes) or disappearance (Foucault) of the author. The gesture with which Barthes consigned Mallarmé to the past was matched, in riposte, by Foucault's assimilation of Mallarmé to the present; in each case, what we make of Mallarmé is inextricably conjoined with what we make of ourselves. The sense of time at work in such a vision is by no means simply a matter of chronological sequence. For instance, Foucault could assign Mallarmé to 'our time' while also invoking 'our present discontinuities' and implicitly relegating Barthes to 'the historical and transcendental tradition of the nineteenth century': here, within a single gesture, the present is extended backwards in time (Mallarmé), is defined as a moment of rupture (discontinuities), and is depicted as burdened with the weight of a lingering past (Barthes). So too the culture of the nineteenth century appears both as heroic (Mallarmé) and as villainous ('the historical and transcendental tradition'). Thus in such a metaphysic, past and present are not points in a sequential array but evocative sites in an evaluative matrix. Moreover, as Burke has shown, Foucault's vision of the sovereignty of discourse was intimately bound up with this larger metaphysic. Nevertheless, as has already been mentioned, the troubles which entangled Foucault's insight into the author-figure reflect not just his own particular meta-physical commitments but also the inherently refractory nature of the issue with which he was dealing. For it remains no easy matter to articulate and to clarify the central thesis which Foucault was advancing, i.e. the constructed nature of the author-figure. The difficulty arises not only because the issue of authorship extends across a large and complex field—embracing, for instance, both fiction and non-fiction, both descriptive and normative concepts—but also, and more fundamentally, because we are here necessarily grappling with the

boundaries imposed by our own conceptual figurations. All such figurations—not just ‘author’ and ‘work’ but also, for instance, ‘text’ and ‘document’, ‘source’ and ‘evidence’, ‘past’ and ‘present’—prove extremely recalcitrant to elucidation, precisely because we normally get along by employing them unreflectively. This is well illustrated by the confusion attending the figure of the ‘text’. As we have seen, ‘text’ proves to have been a densely aporetic term in ‘What is an Author?’ But this problem is by no means confined to Foucault’s use of that figure. On the contrary, as I have shown elsewhere, the meaning of the figure of the text has remained obscure and elusive ever since it began to be applied—in a shift to which Foucault’s ‘What is an Author?’ itself contributed—to the written-at-large. Working figurations such as ‘text’ and ‘author’, then, are bound up with what Heidegger called the Vorhabe of understanding, that is, the ‘fore-having’ which assigns-in-advance to the objects of understanding a particular mode of being. And it is because they play this founding role, serving as the ground upon which interpretation proceeds, that such figurations prove so resistant to scrutiny. The most interesting promise of a rhetorical and a poietic approach is that such a strategy may help to illuminate not just theorizations such as those of Barthes and Foucault but also, and more fundamentally, the conventional figurations themselves.

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## 4.6 KEYWORDS

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- **Problematize:** make into or regard as a problem requiring a solution.
- **Ambiguity:** the quality of being open to more than one interpretation; inexactness.
- **Rhetorical:** relating to or concerned with the art of rhetoric.
- **Enigmatic:** difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious.
- **Harmony:** the combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce a pleasing effect.

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## 4.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- Describe in detail ‘What is an Author?’
- Explain the context of ‘What is an Author?’

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## 4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- Eribon 1991, p. 210.
- "If I were not a total atheist, I would be a monk...a good monk." David Macey (2004). Michel Foucault. Reaktion Books, p. 130.
- "(...) the writings of such atheistic post-modernists as Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes and Jean-François Lyotard." Michael D. Waggoner (2011). Sacred and Secular Tensions in Higher Education: Connecting Parallel Universities. Taylor & Francis, p. 88.
- "Daniel Defert : "Les archives de Foucault ont une histoire politique"". Bibliobs (in French). Retrieved 21 February 2019.
- J.D. Marshall (30 June 1996). Michel Foucault: Personal Autonomy and Education. Springer. p. 126. ISBN 978-0-7923-4016-4. Retrieved 6 December 2012.
- Foucault, Michel (1982). The Subject and Power. University of Chicago Press. ISBN 9780226163123. Retrieved 25 November 2014.
- Eribon 1991, p. 136.
- Doezema, Marie (10 March 2018). "France, Where Age of Consent Is Up for Debate". The Atlantic. Retrieved 10 January 2020. Under this interpretation of liberté, young children were empowered to find happiness in sexual relationships; their ability to consent was a foregone conclusion. Any effort to suggest otherwise would be a condescension, a disrespect to them as fully realized human beings. In a radio interview in 1978, Michel Foucault said of sex with minors that assuming “that a child is incapable of explaining what happened and was incapable of giving his consent are two abuses that are intolerable, quite unacceptable.”

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- Onishi, Norimitsu (7 January 2020). "A Victim's Account Fuels a Reckoning Over Abuse of Children in France". *New York Times*. Retrieved 10 January 2020. lax attitude toward sex with minors. It has also shone a particularly harsh light on a period during which some of France's leading literary figures and newspapers — names as big as Foucault, Sartre, *Libération* and *Le Monde* — aggressively promoted the practice as a form of human liberation, or at least defended it.
- *Sexual Morality and the Law*, Chapter 16 of *Politics, Philosophy, Culture –Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*. Edited by Lawrence D. Krizman. New York/London: 1990, Routledge, ISBN 0-415-90149-9, p.275

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## 4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- The chief context of Foucault's 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' was Barthes's essay 'La mort de l'auteur' (**answer to check your progress – 1 Q.1**)
- In 'What is an Author?' Foucault ties 'author' strictly and reciprocally to 'text'. (**answer to check your progress – 1 Q.2**)

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# **UNIT- 5 EDWARD SAID- INTRODUCTION TO ORIENTALISM -1**

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## **STRUCTURE**

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Life and Career

5.3 Let us sum up

5.4 Keywords

5.5 Questions for Review

5.6 Suggested Reading and References

5.7 Answers to Check your Progress

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## **5.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this Chapter,

- you will learn about the life of Edward Wadie Said;
- and you will also learn about career of Edward Wadie Said.

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## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Edward Wadie Said was a professor of literature at Columbia University, a public intellectual, and a founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies. A Palestinian American born in Mandatory Palestine, he was a citizen of the United States by way of his father, a U.S. Army veteran.

Educated in the Western canon, at British and American schools, Said applied his education and bi-cultural perspective to illuminating the gaps of cultural and political understanding between the Western world and the Eastern world, especially about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the Middle East; his principal influences were Antonio Gramsci, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Michel Foucault, and Theodor Adorno.

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As a cultural critic, Said is known for the book *Orientalism* (1978), a critique of the cultural representations that are the bases of Orientalism—how the Western world perceives the Orient. Said's model of textual analysis transformed the academic discourse of researchers in literary theory, literary criticism, and Middle-Eastern studies—how academics examine, describe, and define the cultures being studied. As a foundational text, *Orientalism* was controversial among scholars of Oriental Studies, philosophy, and literature.

As a public intellectual, Said was a controversial member of the Palestinian National Council, due to his public criticism of Israel and the Arab countries, especially the political and cultural policies of Muslim régimes who acted against the national interests of their peoples. Said advocated the establishment of a Palestinian state to ensure equal political and human rights for the Palestinians in Israel, including the right of return to the homeland. He defined his oppositional relation with the status quo as the remit of the public intellectual who has "to sift, to judge, to criticize, to choose, so that choice and agency return to the individual" man and woman.

In 1999, with his friend Daniel Barenboim, Said co-founded the West–Eastern Divan Orchestra, based in Seville, which comprises young Israeli, Palestinian, and Arab musicians. Besides being an academic, Said was also an accomplished pianist, and, with Barenboim, co-authored the book *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (2002), a compilation of their conversations about music.

Said died of leukemia on 24 September 2003.

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## 5.2 LIFE AND CAREER

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### Early life

Edward Wadie Said was born on 1 November 1935, to Hilda Said and Wadie Said, a businessman in Jerusalem, then part of British-governed Mandatory Palestine (1920–48). Wadie Said was a Palestinian man who soldiered in the U.S. Army component of the American Expeditionary Forces (1917–19), commanded by General John J. Pershing, in the First

World War (1914–18). Afterwards, that war-time military service earned American citizenship to Said père and his family. Edward's mother Hilda Said was born with Lebanese citizenship and raised in Nazareth, Ottoman Empire.

In 1919, in partnership with a cousin, Wadie Said established a stationery business in Cairo. Like her husband, Hilda Said was an Arab Christian, and, although the Said family practiced Protestant Christianity, Edward was agnostic. His sister Rosemarie Saïd Zahlan (1937–2006) also pursued an academic career.

### **Education**

Said lived his boyhood between the worlds of Cairo and Jerusalem; in 1947, he attended St. George's School, Jerusalem, a British school of stern Anglican Christian cast. About being there, Said said:

With an unexceptionally Arab family name like "Saïd", connected to an improbably British first name (my mother much admired Edward VIII the Prince of Wales in 1935, the year of my birth) I was an uncomfortably anomalous student all through my early years: a Palestinian going to school in Egypt, with an English first name, an American passport, and no certain identity, at all. To make matters worse, Arabic, my native language, and English, my school language, were inextricably mixed: I have never known which was my first language, and have felt fully at home in neither, although I dream in both. Every time I speak an English sentence, I find myself echoing it in Arabic, and vice versa.

— *Between Worlds, Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2002) pp. 556–57

By the late 1940s, Edward's schooling included the Egyptian branch of Victoria College, Alexandria (VC), where classmates included (King) Hussein of Jordan, and the Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian, and Saudi Arabian boys whose academic careers would progress to their becoming ministers, prime ministers, and leading businessmen in their respective countries.

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In that colonial time and place, the function of a British colonial school such as VC was to educate selections of young men from the Arab and Levantine ruling classes, to become the Anglicized post-colonial administrators who would rule their countries, upon British decolonization. About Victoria College, Said said:

The moment one became a student at Victoria College, one was given the student handbook, a series of regulations governing every aspect of school life—the kind of uniform we were to wear, what equipment was needed for sports, the dates of school holidays, bus schedules, and so on. But the school's first rule, emblazoned on the opening page of the handbook, read: "English is the language of the school; students caught speaking any other language will be punished." Yet, there were no native speakers of English among the students. Whereas the masters were all British, we were a motley crew of Arabs of various kinds, Armenians, Greeks, Italians, Jews, and Turks, each of whom had a native language that the school had explicitly outlawed. Yet all, or nearly all, of us spoke Arabic—many spoke Arabic and French—and so we were able to take refuge in a common language, in defiance of what we perceived as an unjust colonial structure.

— *Between Worlds, Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2002) pp. 556–57.

In 1951, Victoria College expelled Said, who had proved a troublesome boy, despite being a student of great intelligence and much academic achievement; he then attended Northfield Mount Hermon School, Massachusetts, a socially élite, college-prep boarding-school where he lived a difficult year of social alienation. Nonetheless, he excelled academically, and achieved the rank of either first (valedictorian) or second (salutatorian) in a class of one hundred sixty students.

In retrospect, being sent far from the Middle East (Egypt) he viewed as a parental decision much influenced by "the prospects of deracinated people, like us the Palestinians, being so uncertain that it would be best to send me as far away as possible." The realities of peripatetic life—of interwoven cultures, of feeling out of place, and of homesickness—so affected the schoolboy Edward that themes of dissonance feature in the

work and worldview of the academic Said. At school's end, he had become Edward W. Said—a polyglot intellectual (fluent in English, French, and Arabic) who had earned a Bachelor of Arts (1957) degree at Princeton University, and Master of Arts (1960) and Doctor of Philosophy (1964) degrees in English Literature from Harvard University.

### **Career**

In 1963, Said joined Columbia University as a member of the English and Comparative Literature faculties, where he taught and worked until 2003. In 1974, he was Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard; during the 1975–76 period, he was a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Science, at Stanford University. In 1977, he became the Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, and subsequently was the Old Dominion Foundation Professor in the Humanities; and in 1979 was Visiting Professor of Humanities at Johns Hopkins University.

Said also worked as a visiting professor at Yale University, and lectured at more than 200 other universities in North America, Europe, and the Middle East. In 1992, Said was promoted to "Professor", the highest-ranking academic job at Columbia University. Editorially, Prof. Edward Said served as president of the Modern Language Association, as editor of the Arab Studies Quarterly in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, on the executive board of International PEN, and was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Royal Society of Literature, the Council of Foreign Relations, and the American Philosophical Society. In 1993, Said presented the BBC's annual Reith Lectures, a six-lecture series titled Representation of the Intellectual, wherein he examined the role of the public intellectual in contemporary society, which the BBC published in 2011.

### **Literary Production**

Said's first published book, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966), was an expansion of the doctoral dissertation he presented to earn the PhD degree. Moreover, in *Edward Said: Criticism*

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and Society (2010), Abdirahman Hussein said that Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899) was "foundational to Said's entire career and project". Afterwards, Said redacted ideas gleaned from the works of the 17th-century philosopher Giambattista Vico, and other intellectuals, in the book *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1974), about the theoretical bases of literary criticism. Said's later works include *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature: Yeats and Decolonization* (1988), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (1994), *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), and *On Late Style* (2006).

### **Orientalism**

Said became an established cultural critic with the book *Orientalism* (1978) a critique (description and analyses) of Orientalism as the source of the false cultural representations with which the Western world perceives the Middle East—the narratives of how The West sees The East. The thesis of *Orientalism* proposes the existence of a "subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their culture", which originates from Western culture's long tradition of false, romanticized images of Asia, in general, and the Middle East, in particular. That such cultural representations have served, and continue to serve, as implicit justifications for the colonial and imperial ambitions of the European powers and of the U.S. Likewise, Said denounced the political and the cultural malpractices of the régimes of the ruling Arab élites who have internalized the false and romanticized representations of Arabic culture that were created by Anglo-American Orientalists.

So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world, presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.

— "Islam through Western Eyes" (1980) *The Nation*.



Orientalism proposed that much Western study of Islamic civilization was political intellectualism, meant for the self-affirmation of European identity, rather than objective academic study; thus, the academic field of Oriental studies functioned as a practical method of cultural discrimination and imperialist domination—that is to say, the Western Orientalist knows more about the Orient than do the Orientals.

That the cultural representations of the Eastern world that Orientalism purveys are intellectually suspect, and cannot be accepted as faithful, true, and accurate representations of the peoples and things of the Orient; that the history of European colonial rule and political domination of Asian civilizations, distorts the writing of even the most knowledgeable, well-meaning, and culturally sympathetic Orientalist.

I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India, or Egypt, in the later nineteenth century, took an interest in those countries, which was never far from their status, in his mind, as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact—and yet that is what I am saying in this study of Orientalism.

— Introduction, *Orientalism*, p. 11.

The idealized Oriental world of *The Reception of the Ambassadors in Damascus* (1511)

That since Antiquity, Western Art has misrepresented the Orient with stereotypes; in the tragedy *The Persians* (472 BCE), by Aeschylus, the Greek protagonist falls, because he misperceived the true nature of The Orient. That the European political domination of Asia has biased even the most outwardly objective Western texts about The Orient, to a degree unrecognized by the Western scholars who appropriated for themselves the production of cultural knowledge—the academic work of studying, exploring, and interpreting the languages, histories, and peoples of Asia; therefore, Orientalist scholarship implies that the colonial subaltern (the colonised people) were incapable of thinking, acting, or speaking for themselves, thus are incapable of writing their own national histories. In

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such imperial circumstances, the Orientalist scholars of the West wrote the history of the Orient—and so constructed the modern, cultural identities of Asia—from the perspective that the West is the cultural standard to emulate, the norm from which the "exotic and inscrutable" Orientals deviate.

The thesis of Orientalism concluded that the West's knowledge of the Orient depicts the cultures of the Eastern world as an irrational, weak, and feminized non-European Other, which is the opposite of the West's representations of Western cultures as a rational, strong, and masculine polity. That such an artificial binary-relation originates from the European psychological need to create a "difference" of inequality, between the West and the East, which inequality originates from the immutable cultural essences innate to the peoples of the Oriental world.

### **Criticism of Orientalism**

Orientalism provoked much professional and personal criticism for Said among academics. Traditional Orientalists, such as Albert Hourani, Robert Graham Irwin, Nikki Keddie, Bernard Lewis, and Kanan Makiya, suffered negative consequences, because Orientalism affected public perception of their intellectual integrity and the quality of their Orientalist scholarship. The historian Keddie said that Said's critical work about the field of Orientalism had caused, in their academic disciplines:

Some unfortunate consequences ... I think that there has been a tendency in the Middle East field to adopt the word Orientalism as a generalized swear-word, essentially referring to people who take the "wrong" position on the Arab-Israeli dispute, or to people who are judged "too conservative." It has nothing to do with whether they are good or not good in their disciplines. So, Orientalism, for many people, is a word that substitutes for thought, and enables people to dismiss certain scholars and their works. I think that is too bad. It may not have been what Edward Saïd meant, at all, but the term has become a kind of slogan.

— Approaches to the History of the Middle East (1994), pp. 144–45.

In *Orientalism*, Said described Bernard Lewis, the Anglo–American Orientalist, as "a perfect exemplification Establishment Orientalist purports to be objective, liberal scholarship, but is, in reality, very close to being propaganda against his subject material."

Lewis responded with a harsh critique of *Orientalism* accusing Said of politicizing the scientific study of the Middle East (and Arabic studies in particular); neglecting to critique the scholarly findings of the Orientalists; and giving "free rein" to his biases.

Said retorted that in *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (1982), Lewis responded to his thesis with the claim that the Western quest for knowledge about other societies was unique in its display of disinterested curiosity, which Muslims did not reciprocate towards Europe. Lewis was saying that "knowledge about Europe the only acceptable criterion for true knowledge." The appearance of academic impartiality was part of Lewis's role as an academic authority for zealous "anti–Islamic, anti–Arab, Zionist, and Cold War crusades." Moreover, in the Afterword to the 1995 edition of the book, Said replied to Lewis's criticisms of the first edition of *Orientalism* (1978).

### **Influence of Orientalism**

In the academy, *Orientalism* became a foundational text of the field of Post-colonial studies, for what the British intellectual Terry Eagleton said is the book's "central truth ... that demeaning images of the East, and imperialist incursions into its terrain, have historically gone hand in hand."

Said's friends and foes acknowledged the transformative influence of *Orientalism* upon scholarship in the humanities; critics said that the thesis is an intellectually limiting influence upon scholars, whilst supporters said that the thesis is intellectually liberating. The fields of post-colonial and cultural studies attempt to explain the "post-colonial world, its peoples, and their discontents", for which the techniques of investigation and efficacy in *Orientalism*, proved especially applicable in Middle Eastern studies.

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As such, the investigation and analysis Said applied in *Orientalism* proved especially practical in literary criticism and cultural studies, such as the post-colonial histories of India by Gyan Prakash, Nicholas Dirks and Ronald Inden, modern Cambodia by Simon Springer, and the literary theories of Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Hamid Dabashi (*Iran: A People Interrupted*, 2007).

In Eastern Europe, Milica Bakić-Hayden developed the concept of *Nesting Orientalisms* (1992), derived from the ideas of the historian Larry Wolff (*Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, 1994) and Said's ideas in *Orientalism* (1978). The Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova (*Imagining the Balkans*, 1997) presented the ethnologic concept of *Nesting Balkanisms* (*Ethnologia Balkanica*, 1997), which is derived from Milica Bakić-Hayden's concept of *Nesting Orientalisms*.

In *The Impact of "Biblical Orientalism" in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (2014), the historian Lorenzo Kamel, presented the concept of "Biblical Orientalism" with an historical analysis of the simplifications of the complex, local Palestinian reality, which occurred from the 1830s until the early 20th century. Kamel said that the selective usage and simplification of religion, in approaching the place known as "The Holy Land", created a view that, as a place, the Holy Land has no human history other than as the place where Bible stories occurred, rather than as Palestine, a country inhabited by many peoples.

The post-colonial discourse presented in *Orientalism*, also influenced post-colonial theology and post-colonial biblical criticism, by which method the analytical reader approaches a scripture from the perspective of a colonial reader. See: *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (2007). Another book in this area is *Postcolonial Theory* (1998), by Leela Gandhi, explains Post-colonialism to how it can be applied to the wider philosophical and intellectual context of history.

## Politics

In 1967, consequent to the Six-Day War (5–10 June 1967) the academic Edward Said became a public intellectual when he acted politically to counter the stereotyped misrepresentations (factual, historical, cultural) with which the U.S. news media explained the Arab–Israeli wars; reportage divorced from the historical realities of the Middle East, in general, and Palestine and Israel, in particular. To address, explain, and correct such Orientalism, Said published "The Arab Portrayed" (1968), a descriptive essay about images of "the Arab" that are meant to evade specific discussion of the historical and cultural realities of the peoples (Jews, Christians, Muslims) who are the Middle East, featured in journalism (print, photograph, television) and some types of scholarship (specialist journals).

In the essay "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims" (1979), Said argued in favour of the political legitimacy and philosophic authenticity of the Zionist claims and right to a Jewish homeland; and for the inherent right of national self-determination of the Palestinian people. Said's books about Israel and Palestine include *The Question of Palestine* (1979), *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994), and *The End of the Peace Process* (2000).

### **Palestinian National Council**

From 1977 until 1991, Said was an independent member of the Palestinian National Council (PNC). In 1988, he was a proponent of the two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (1948), and voted for the establishment of the State of Palestine at a meeting of the PNC in Algiers. In 1993, Said quit his membership to the Palestinian National Council, to protest the internal politics that led to the signing of the Oslo Accords (Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, 1993), which he thought had unacceptable terms, and because the terms had been rejected by the Madrid Conference of 1991.

Said disliked the Oslo Accords for not producing an independent State of Palestine, and because they were politically inferior to a plan that Yasir Arafat had rejected—a plan Said had presented to Arafat on behalf of the U.S. government in the late 1970s. Especially troublesome to Said was his belief that Yasir Arafat had betrayed the right of return of the

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Palestinian refugees to their houses and properties in the Green Line territories of pre-1967 Israel, and that Arafat ignored the growing political threat of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories that had been established since the conquest of Palestine in 1967.

In 1995, in response to Said's political criticisms, the Palestinian Authority (PA) banned the sale of Said's books; however, the PA lifted the book-ban when Said publicly praised Yasir Arafat for rejecting Prime Minister Ehud Barak's offers at the Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David (2000) in the U.S.

In the mid-1990s, Said wrote the Foreword to the history book *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years* (1994), by Israel Shahak, about Jewish fundamentalism, which presents the cultural proposition that Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinians is rooted in a Judaic requirement (of permission) for Jews to commit crimes, including murder, against Gentiles (non-Jews). In his Foreword, Said said that *Jewish History, Jewish Religion* is "nothing less than a concise history of classic and modern Judaism, insofar as these are relevant to the understanding of modern Israel"; and praised the historian Shahak for describing contemporary Israel as a nation subsumed in a "Judeo-Nazi" cultural ambiance that allowed the dehumanization of the Palestinian Other:

In all my works, I remained fundamentally critical of a gloating and uncritical nationalism. . . . My view of Palestine . . . remains the same today: I expressed all sorts of reservations about the insouciant nativism, and militant militarism of the nationalist consensus; I suggested, instead, a critical look at the Arab environment, Palestinian history, and the Israeli realities, with the explicit conclusion that only a negotiated settlement, between the two communities of suffering, Arab and Jewish, would provide respite from the unending war.

— "Orientalism: an Afterword" (Raritan, Winter 1995)

In 1998, Said made *In Search of Palestine* (1998), a BBC documentary film about Palestine past and present. In the company of his son, Wadie, Said revisited the places of his boyhood, and confronted injustices meted

out to ordinary Palestinians in the contemporary West Bank. Despite the social and cultural prestige usual to BBC cinema products in the U.S., the documentary was never broadcast by any American television company. In 1999, the American monthly Commentary cited ledgers kept at the Land Registry Office in Jerusalem during the Mandatory period as background for his boyhood recollections.

### **In Palestine**

On 3 July 2000, whilst touring the Middle East with his son, Wadie, Edward Said was photographed throwing a stone across the Blue Line Lebanese–Israel border, which image elicited much political criticism about his action demonstrating an inherent, personal sympathy with terrorism; and, in Commentary magazine, the journalist Edward Alexander labelled Said as "The Professor of Terror", for aggression against Israel. Said explained the stone-throwing as a two-fold action, personal and political; a man-to-man contest-of-skill, between a father and his son, and an Arab Man's gesture of joy at the end of the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon (1985–2000): "It was a pebble; there was nobody there. The guardhouse was at least half a mile away."

Despite having denied that he aimed the stone at an Israeli guardhouse, the Beirut newspaper *As-Safir* (The Ambassador) reported that a Lebanese local resident reported that Prof. Said was at less than ten metres (ca. 30 ft.) distance from the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers manning the two-storey guardhouse, when Said aimed and threw the stone over the border fence; the stone's projectile path was thwarted when it struck the barbed wire atop the border fence. Nonetheless, in the U.S., despite a political fracas by right-wing students at Columbia University and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith International (Sons of the Covenant), the university provost published a five-page letter defending Prof. Said's action as an academic's freedom of expression: "To my knowledge, the stone was directed at no-one; no law was broken; no indictment was made; no criminal or civil action has been taken against Professor Said."

Nevertheless, Said endured political repercussions, such as the cancellation of an invitation to give a lecture to the Freud Society, in

## Notes

Austria, in February 2001. The President of the Freud Society justified withdrawing the invitation by explaining to Said that "the political situation in the Middle East, and its consequences" had rendered an accusation of anti-Semitism a very serious matter, and that any such accusation "has become more dangerous" in the politics of Austria; thus, the Freud Society cancelled their invitation to Said in order to "avoid an internal clash" of opinions, about him, that might ideologically divide the Freud Society. In *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward Saïd* (2003), Saïd likened his political situation to the situation that Noam Chomsky has endured as a public intellectual:

"It's very similar to his. He's a well-known, great linguist. He's been celebrated and honored for that, but he's also vilified as an anti-Semite and as a Hitler worshiper. ... For anyone to deny the horrendous experience of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust is unacceptable. We don't want anybody's history of suffering to go unrecorded and unacknowledged. On the other hand, there's a great difference, between acknowledging Jewish oppression and using that as a cover for the oppression of another people."

### **Criticism of U.S. foreign policy**

In the revised edition of *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (1997), Saïd criticized the Orientalist bias of the Western news media's reportage about the Middle East and Islam, especially the tendency to editorialize "speculations about the latest conspiracy to blow up buildings, sabotage commercial airliners, and poison water supplies." He criticized the American military involvement in the Kosovo War (1998–99) as an imperial action; and described the Iraq Liberation Act (1998), promulgated during the Clinton Administration, as the political license that predisposed the U.S. to invade Iraq in 2003, which was authorized with the Iraq Resolution (2 October 2002); and the continual support of Israel by successive U.S. presidential governments, as actions meant to perpetuate regional political instability in the Middle East.

In the event, despite being sick with leukemia, as a public intellectual, Saïd continued criticising the U.S. Invasion of Iraq in mid-2003; and, in



the Egyptian Al-Ahram Weekly newspaper, in the article "Resources of Hope" (2 April 2003), Said said that the U.S. war against Iraq was a politically ill-conceived military enterprise:

My strong opinion, though I don't have any proof, in the classical sense of the word, is that they want to change the entire Middle East, and the Arab world, perhaps terminate some countries, destroy the so-called terrorist groups they dislike, and install régimes friendly to the United States. I think this is a dream that has very little basis in reality. The knowledge they have of the Middle East, to judge from the people who advise them, is, to say the least, out of date and widely speculative. . . .

I don't think the planning for the post-Saddam, post-war period in Iraq is very sophisticated, and there's very little of it. U.S. Undersecretary of State Marc Grossman and U.S. Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith testified in Congress, about a month ago, and seemed to have no figures, and no ideas what structures they were going to deploy; they had no idea about the use of institutions that exist, although they want to de-Ba'thise the higher echelons, and keep the rest.

The same is true about their views of the army. They certainly have no use for the Iraqi opposition that they've been spending many millions of dollars on; and, to the best of my ability to judge, they are going to improvise; of course, the model is Afghanistan. I think they hope that the U.N. will come in and do something, but, given the recent French and Russian positions, I doubt that that will happen with such simplicity.

### **Under surveillance**

In 2003, Haidar Abdel-Shafi, Ibrahim Dakak, Mustafa Barghouti, and Said established Al-Mubadara (The Palestinian National Initiative), headed by Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, a third-party reformist, democratic party meant to be an alternative to the usual two-party politics of Palestine. As a political party, the ideology of Al-Mubadara is specifically an alternative to the extremist politics of the social-democratic Fatah and the Islamist Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement). Said's founding of the group, as well as his other international political activities concerning Palestine, were noticed by the

## Notes

U.S. government; in 2006, the anthropologist David Price obtained 147 pages of the 283-page political dossier that the FBI had compiled on Said, begun in 1971, four years into his career as a public intellectual active in U.S. politics.

### Music

Besides having been a public intellectual, Edward Said was an accomplished pianist, worked as the music critic for *The Nation* magazine, and wrote four books about music: *Musical Elaborations* (1991); *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (2002), with Daniel Barenboim as co-author; *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (2006); and *Music at the Limits* (2007) in which final book he spoke of finding musical reflections of his literary and historical ideas in bold compositions and strong performances.

Elsewhere in the musical world, the composer Mohammed Fairouz acknowledged the deep influence of Edward Said upon his works; compositionally, Fairouz's *First Symphony* thematically alludes to the essay "Homage to a Belly-Dancer" (1990), about Tahia Carioca, the Egyptian terpsichorean, actress, and political militant; and a piano sonata titled *Reflections on Exile* (1984), which thematically refers to the emotions inherent to being an exile.

In 1999, Edward W. Said and Daniel Barenboim co-founded the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which is composed of young Israeli, Palestinian, and Arab musicians. They also established The Barenboim–Said Foundation in Seville, to develop education-through-music projects. Besides managing the West–Eastern Divan Orchestra, the Barenboim–Said Foundation assists with the administration of the Academy of Orchestral Studies, the Musical Education in Palestine Project, and the Early Childhood Musical Education Project, in Seville.

### Honors and awards

Besides honors, memberships, and postings to prestigious organizations worldwide, Edward Said was awarded some twenty honorary university degrees in the course of his professional life as an academic, critic, and Man of Letters. Among the honors bestowed to him was the Bowdoin

Prize by Harvard University. He twice received the Lionel Trilling Book Award; the first occasion was the inaugural bestowing of said literary award in 1976, for *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1974). He also received the Wellek Prize of the American Comparative Literature Association, and was awarded the inaugural Spinoza Lens Prize. In 2001, Said was awarded the Lannan Literary Award for Lifetime Achievement, and in 2002, he received the Prince of Asturias Award for Concord. He was the first U.S. citizen to receive the Sultan Owais Prize (for Cultural & Scientific Achievements, 1996–1997). The autobiography *Out of Place* (1999) was bestowed three awards, the 1999 New Yorker Book Award for Non-Fiction; the 2000 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Non-Fiction; and the Morton Dauwen Zabel Award in Literature.

### **Death and legacy**

On 24 September 2003, after enduring a twelve-year sickness with chronic lymphocytic leukemia, Edward W. Said died, at 67 years of age, in New York City. He was survived by his wife, Mariam C. Said, his son, Wadie Said, and his daughter, Najla Said. The eulogists included Alexander Cockburn ("A Mighty and Passionate Heart"); Seamus Deane ("A Late Style of Humanism"); Christopher Hitchens ("A Valediction for Edward Said"); Tony Judt ("The Rootless Cosmopolitan"); Michael Wood ("On Edward Said"); and Tariq Ali ("Remembering Edward Said, 1935–2003"). In November 2004, in Palestine, Birzeit University renamed their music school the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music.

The tributes to Edward Said include books and schools; such as *Waiting for the Barbarians: A Tribute to Edward W. Said* (2008) features essays by Akeel Bilgrami, Rashid Khalidi, and Elias Khoury; *Edward Said: The Charisma of Criticism* (2010), by Harold Aram Veaser, a critical biography; and *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representations* (2010), essays by Joseph Massad, Ilan Pappé, Ella Shohat, Ghada Karmi, Noam Chomsky, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Daniel Barenboim; and the Barenboim–Said Academy (Berlin) was established in 2012.

### **Check your Progress-1**

## Notes

1. Where was Edward Wadie Said born?

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2. When was Edward Wadie Said born?

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3. Which citizenship did Edward Said have?

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4. What was the name of Edward Said's father?

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### **5.3 LET US SUM UP**

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The American writer and academic Edward Said (1935–2003) has been ranked among the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century, with much of the field of postcolonial studies springing directly or indirectly from his ideas. He was also an intellectual in action, devoting much of his energy to advocacy for the Palestinian people and their aspirations.

Controversial in his work, Said had both admirers and detractors. Few statements beyond the bare facts of his life would meet with universal agreement from observers, and even those bare facts were sometimes in dispute. But divergent views of Said were, in a way, inevitable, for Said was a man of many contradictions. He was an academic, and yet he spent much of his time addressing the public, often having to cancel classes he taught at Columbia University because he was booked for television appearances. He was a Christian Arab who both defended the Islamic world and, by his own testimony, felt close to Jews for much of his life. He spent many years working toward the goal of Palestinian nationhood

but renounced that goal in the last decade of his life. He was attacked by Israelis as a terrorist, and by Palestinians as too accommodating to Israel. Said's scholarly works indicted Western cultural traditions as complicit in colonialism, but he played and wrote about European classical music extensively and enthusiastically.

### **Grew Up in Cairo**

Said (sah-EED) was born in Jerusalem on November 1, 1935, when the city was part of British-occupied Palestine. His father was an American citizen who had fought for the United States in World War I, and Said himself was named after Britain's King Edward VIII. Said's father, Wadie, who preferred the name of Bill, operated a profitable stationery business, and Said was discouraged from speaking Arabic while growing up; the household language was English. He was a member of the Anglican church. Later in his life Said occasionally spoke of himself as a refugee displaced by the formation of the country of Israel in 1948, but he actually spent much of his childhood in Cairo, Egypt, sometimes traveling to Jerusalem to spend time with relatives, or to Beirut, Lebanon.

The family moved permanently to Cairo in 1947, and for a time Said attended Victoria College, an upscale British preparatory school there. Among his classmates were actor Omar Sharif and Jordan's future King Hussein. At 15, Said came to the United States to attend Mount Hermon School, an elite boarding institution in Massachusetts. Said, who had already traveled through many countries but never really called any of them home, felt out of place at Mount Hermon and frequently circulated among a group of Jewish friends. He did take to American classroom teaching, which encouraged more independent thinking than had the British instructors he had experienced previously.

Said, a charismatic figure who favored tailored suits, found a natural place in academic life. He spoke English, French, and Arabic fluently, and he could read Spanish, German, Italian, and Latin. He attended Princeton University, graduating in 1957, and earned master's and Ph.D. degrees at Harvard, receiving his doctorate in 1964. Hired at Columbia University in New York as an instructor in 1963, Said spent the rest of

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his working life there, becoming assistant professor in 1965, associate professor in 1968, and professor of English and comparative literature in 1970;

Later his title of professor was attached to several endowed chairs at Columbia. He was married twice; with his second wife, the former Mariam Cortas (a Quaker), he raised a son and a daughter.

Said's first book, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, published by Harvard University Press in 1966, dealt with an author to whom he felt a kinship (Conrad, Polish by birth, traveled the world and learned English later in life). The following year, Israel defeated the combined forces of several Arab countries in the Six-Day War, an event that began to awaken Said's political consciousness. He wrote a book called *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975) about literary creativity, but he was at work on a larger project that broke new ground in literary studies.

### **Examined Language of Western Enlightenment**

That book, *Orientalism*, was published by Pantheon (a mainstream, not an academic publisher) in 1978. It remains Said's best-known and most influential work. The book took issue with Western depictions of the Middle East, and the methods of analysis Said employed were quickly applied to the West's relations to other cultures of the developing world by other scholars. Indeed, Said observed that the "East," as opposed to the "West," was an invention partly designed as an ideological underpinning for Western colonialism. Said's central thesis was that Western views of Middle Eastern cultures were rife with stereotypes of irrationality, degeneracy, and violence. His demonstration of this thesis was perhaps the book's most original component, as he showed how such stereotypes found their way into scholarly writings, literary and popular fiction, and journalistic writing in an interconnected web.

Some reviewers felt that the book painted the works of Western writers with too broad a brush, but Said's elegant style (his writing was free of academic jargon) quickly made the book a favorite. Said's work opened up numerous new avenues for investigation of Western representations

of other cultures—and of indigenous responses to such representations in so-called post-colonial literature. Three decades after it was written, *Orientalism* has remained a solid part of reading lists in college and graduate-level English courses in the United States and beyond. The book's tone, sharp and provocative yet with arguments buttressed by an obvious depth of knowledge, have made it ideal for educational uses. The ideas of postcolonial studies and of the relationships between language and power became fodder for academic studies and graduate school papers over the next few decades, and these ideas were traceable to Said's innovations.

Said expanded and generalized on the ideas in *Orientalism* in *Culture and Imperialism* (1992). He was also a prolific writer of both academic and general articles, and bits and pieces of his ideas on Western culture emerged in such writings as his introduction to a new edition of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, and in several collections of writings by others that he edited. In the 1980s, however, Said became equally well known for purely political writings and public appearances, in which he argued for recognition of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. According to the *New York Times*, Said describe himself as "a man who lived two quite separate lives," although one could equally well describe him as an intellectual in action. Indeed, Said's book *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) dealt with how literary critics could come to terms with their own cultural assumptions.

In 1977 Said became a member of the Palestinian National Council, a provisional parliament established with the goal of pursuing eventual Palestinian nationhood; he was an independent, not a member of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization or any other group. Said wrote his first book on the Middle East situation, *The Question of Palestine*, in 1979. He rejected the use of violence (although in some statements he argued that it was understandable) and accepted the existence of Israel, saying in an interview quoted in the *London Guardian*, "I don't deny claims" to land in the Palestine region, "but their claim always entails Palestinian dispossession." In the 1980s Said favored a two-state solution, with Israel and a Palestinian state

existing side by side. In 1988 he was sent by Arafat to negotiate on the Palestinians' behalf with U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz.

### **Became Disillusioned with Peace Process**

Said's attitudes changed during the negotiations leading to the so-called Oslo Accords of 1993 (the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements), which called for Israeli withdrawal from parts of the territories it had occupied in the Gaza Strip and West Bank areas, as well as for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority as a governing body, and for continued negotiations on remaining issues such as the status of the city of Jerusalem. Said became a critic of the Palestinian leadership, which he felt was giving up too much in the negotiations, and he resigned from the Palestinian National Council in 1991.

Specifically, Said objected to the lack of provision in the PLO's position for the so-called right of return, the right of Palestinians to inhabit lands from which they had been expelled when the Israeli state was established. In the 1990s he began to advocate the peaceful coexistence of Palestinians and Israelis in a single democratic country—a solution viewed by many Israelis as tantamount to the destruction of their country as it had existed. "I see no other way than to begin now to speak about sharing the land that has thrust us together, and sharing it in a truly democratic way, with equal rights for each citizen," Said wrote in the *New York Times*.

Said outlined his case for Palestinian aspirations in *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination* (1994) and *End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (2000), as well as in numerous shorter writings and in U.S. television appearances. But he had many interests other than those of politics and scholarship. A pianist of near concert-level skill, he wrote extensively on classical music, penning a column for the *Nation* magazine. In the early 1990s he was diagnosed with leukemia but was able to continue his public activities after treatment. One of several books published after Said's death (he wrote voluminously during his final years) was *On Late Style* (2006), an examination of works produced by literary and musical artists toward the



ends of their lives. Beginning in 1999, he and conductor Daniel Barenboim co-founded the East West Divan Orchestra, a joint Israeli-Palestinian youth ensemble that continued to win acclaim after Said's death. In 2002 Barenboim and Said published a joint book of their collected conversations, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society*.

Controversy continued to envelop the ailing Said, with the magazine *Commentary* referring to him (according to the *Guardian*) as a "professor of terror." He was photographed throwing a stone at an Israeli guardhouse, but maintained that his gesture was symbolic and that he had not aimed the stone toward any individual; Columbia, despite calls for his censure, found in his favor and took no action. Said participated vigorously in the give-and-take of debate, carrying on long disputes in print with Princeton scholar Bernard Lewis and other conservative thinkers. In 1999 an article in *Commentary* by an Israeli scholar charged that Said had deliberately falsified the details of his childhood in order to heighten the impression that his family had been refugees displaced from their Jerusalem home in the 1940s. The article pointed to such statements by Said as one that appeared in the *London Review of Books*: "I was born in Jerusalem and spent most of my formative years there and, after 1948, when my entire family became refugees, in Egypt." But Said's memoir *Out of Place*, which appeared that same year, went into detail about his Cairo childhood. "I don't think it's that important, in any case," Said told the *New York Times*. "I have never represented my case as the issue to be treated. I've represented the case of my people, which is something quite different.

Said's medical condition worsened in 2002, and he worked against the clock to finish several new books, including *On Late Style*, *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map*, and *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. All were published after his death from leukemia on September 25, 2003, in New York. Among the literary awards he received in his last years was one for lifetime achievement, bestowed by the Lannan Foundation in 2001.

Books

## Notes

Said, Edward, *Out of Place: A Memoir*, Knopf, 1999.

Sprinker, Michael, ed., *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, Black-well, 1993.

### Periodicals

- Commentary, September 1999.
- Daily Telegraph (London, England), September 26, 2003.
- Economist (U.S.), October 4, 2003.
- Financial Times, September 26, 2003.
- Guardian (London, England), September 26, 2003
- Irish Times, September 27, 2003.
- New Statesman, March 29, 2004; June 14, 2004; May 29, 2006
- New York Times, September 26, 2003.

### Online

Contemporary Authors Online, Gale, 2007,  
<http://www.galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC> (January 7, 2007).

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## 5.4 KEYWORDS

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- **Consciousness:** the state of being aware of and responsive to one's surroundings.
- **Palestinian:** relating to Palestine or its peoples.
- **Colonialism:** the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.
- **Postcolonial:** occurring or existing after the end of colonial rule.
- **Divergent:** tending to be different or develop in different directions.

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## 5.5 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- Write about Edward Wadie Said's life.

- Write a short note on the career of Edward Wadie Saïd.

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## 5.6 SUGGESTED READING AND REFERENCES

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- Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, New York & London: Routledge, 1990.
- Ian Buchanan, ed. (2010). "Saïd, Edward". *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ferial Jabouri Ghazoul, ed. (2007). *Edward Saïd and Critical Decolonization*. American University in Cairo Press. pp. 290–. ISBN 978-977-416-087-5. Retrieved 19 November 2011. Edward W. Saïd (1935–2003) was one of the most influential intellectuals in the twentieth century.
- Zamir, Shamoon (2005), "Saïd, Edward W.", in Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, 12, Macmillan Reference USA, Thomas Gale, pp. 8031–32, Edward W. Saïd (1935–2003) is best known as the author of the influential and widely-read *Orientalism* (1978) ... His forceful defense of secular humanism and of the public role of the intellectual, as much as his trenchant critiques of *Orientalism*, and his unwavering advocacy of the Palestinian cause, made Saïd one of the most internationally influential cultural commentators writing out of the United States in the last quarter of the twentieth century.
- Joachim Gentz (2009). "Orientalism/Occidentalism". *Keywords re-oriented. interKULTUR, European-Chinese intercultural studies*, Volume IV. Universitätsverlag Göttingen. pp. 41–. ISBN 978-3-940344-86-1. Retrieved 18 November 2011. Edward Saïd's influential *Orientalism* (1979) effectively created a discursive field in cultural studies, stimulating fresh critical analysis of Western academic work on "The Orient". Although the book, itself, has been criticized from many angles, it is still considered to be the seminal work to the field.

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## **5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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- Edward Wadie Said was born in Jerusalem. (**answer to check your progress – 1Q 1**)
- Edward Wadie Said was born on 1 November 1935. (**answer to check your progress – 1Q 2**)
- Said was born with Lebanese citizenship. (**answer to check your progress – 1Q 3**)
- Edward Said's father's name is Wadie Said. (**answer to check your progress – 1Q 4**)

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# **UNIT- 6 EDWARD SAID- INTRODUCTION TO ORIENTALISM -2**

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## **STRUCTURE**

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Cultural Background
- 6.3 Thesis Of Representation
- 6.4 Influence
- 6.5 Criticism
- 6.6 Main Ideas
- 6.7 Let us sum up
- 6.8 Keywords
- 6.9 Questions for Review
- 6.10 Suggested Reading and References
- 6.11 Answers to Check your Progress

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## **6.0 OBJECTIVES**

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Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn about cultural background,
- you would also go through thesis of representation
- further, you would also go through influence, criticism and main ideas of Orientalism.

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## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Orientalism is a 1978 book by Edward W. Said, in which the author discusses Orientalism, defined as the West's patronizing representations

## Notes

of "The East"—the societies and peoples who inhabit the places of Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. According to Said, orientalism (the Western scholarship about the Eastern World) is inextricably tied to the imperialist societies who produced it, which makes much Orientalist work inherently political and servile to power.

According to Said, in the Middle East, the social, economic, and cultural practices of the ruling Arab elites indicate they are imperial satraps who have internalized the romanticized "Arab Culture" created by French, British and, later, American Orientalists; the examples include critical analyses of the colonial literature of Joseph Conrad, which conflates a people, a time, and a place into a narrative of incident and adventure in an exotic land.

The critical application of post-structuralism in the scholarship of Orientalism influenced the development of literary theory, cultural criticism, and the field of Middle Eastern studies, especially regarding how academics practice their intellectual inquiry when examining, describing, and explaining the Middle East. The scope of Said's scholarship established Orientalism as a foundation text in the field of post-colonial culture studies, which examines the denotations and connotations of Orientalism, and the history of a country's post-colonial period.

As a public intellectual, Edward Said debated Orientalism with historians and scholars of area studies, notably, the historian Bernard Lewis, who described the thesis of Orientalism as "anti-Western". For subsequent editions of Orientalism, Said wrote an "Afterword" (1995) and a "Preface" (2003) addressing criticisms of the content, substance, and style of the work as cultural criticism.

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## 6.2 CULTURAL BACKGROUND

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### The Middle East

When speaking of the Orient, Said refers to the continent of Asia and, for the purposes of his text, the countries of the Middle East (including Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Palestine). Prior to

World War II (1939–45), this Arabic-speaking region was known as the Near East, but this term transitioned during World War II to become the Middle East, defining the area extending from the Mediterranean Sea to Southwestern Asia.

By the time of Said's birth in 1935, the Middle East had been reorganized and divided by world powers. Prior to World War I (1914–18), the Ottomans, originally a Turkish tribe from Anatolia, had ruled the entire region of the Middle East since the 15th century. However, after an initial period of territorial growth and expansion, the Ottoman Empire was characterized by territorial concessions to European countries (mainly England and France) and a slow decline in power. During World War I, the Ottoman Empire was, practically speaking, dissolved (although officially the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire would not occur until 1922) and reorganized according to new national and political boundaries. The results of these boundary reorganizations by Britain and France are generally recognized as having shaped the conflicts to come in the region, since boundaries that existed after World War I were entirely unrecognizable when contrasted with those of the Ottoman Empire.

When Britain and France signed the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916), they did not foresee the negative impacts such reorganizations would have on the cultural groups living in these regions. The agreement divided the Middle East into British and French "spheres of influence," or regions of imperialism where a country exerts its power over another region through territorial and economic control. Britain controlled the region currently including Iraq, Jordan, and Israel, while France claimed parts of Turkey (shared with Italy and Russia), Syria, and Iraq. This reorganization (without any attempt to include input from Arabic countries), combined with the rise of nationalism (attachment of specific groups of individuals to a particular territory often for economic, religious, or ethnic reasons) within the affected countries, exacerbated tensions in the region.

The reorganizational efforts of World War I (1914–18) were marked by periods of relative stability as the Middle East adjusted to the territorial

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changes. However, by the 1940s and 1950s, nationalism would play an increasingly large role in shaping the actions of Middle Eastern nations. During this period, three major nationalist movements arose: Israeli nationalism or Zionism, which was organized around the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine; Palestinian nationalism; and Egyptian nationalism. These nationalistic sentiments resulted in the rise of conflict in the Middle East prior to World War II. One of the most well-known instances of this conflict is the Arab Revolt (1936 and 1939) in Palestine. This was a revolt against British rule because of rising tensions between the Arab and immigrant Jewish populations—the direct result of having two competing nationalistic groups within the same territory.

These nationalistic tensions persisted and were increased even further after World War II; the Cold War (1947–91, rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union over the spread of communism and nuclear proliferation); and the Vietnam War (1954–75, conflict between North and South Vietnam over the spread of communism; the United States supported South Vietnam). Thus, the initial reorganization of the Middle East by Britain and France after World War I exasperated tensions between different ethnic groups that resulted in the rise of nationalism—framing the continuing conflicts that occurred during Said's lifetime. Equally, it is the history of British and French imperialism that resulted in Said's focus on these countries in *Orientalism*.

The nationalistic conflict increasingly focused on the issue of whether there should or should not be a Jewish state. By the end of World War II, opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state, as had been proposed by Israeli nationalists or Zionists, was spearheaded by the Arab League, a coalition of Arab states including Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan (modern-day Jordan), Saudi Arabia, and Yemen (the composition of the league has changed since its initial formation). The league had formed in 1945 at the end of World War II as an organizational body with the aim to mitigate the conflict that had characterized the region up to this point. By this time, some countries, such as Egypt and Iraq, had already gained independence. However, others, such as Syria and Yemen, would not be independent until 1946 and 1967, respectively.



In contrast to the wishes of the Arab League, the United States, under President Roosevelt, supported the formation of a Jewish state in Israel, and on November 29, 1947, the state of Palestine was divided by the United Nations into separate Arab and Jewish states. The partition ignited a war between Arabs and Jews in 1948, which ended in a truce that failed to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish state in Israel.

In 1967 conflict between Israel and Arab nations once again came to a head, leading to the Six-Day War. Israel's victory led to their occupation of Arab-claimed regions, including the Sinai and Old Jerusalem. Israel refused to return these occupied areas unless the Arab nations recognized the Jewish state—something the Arab nations refused to do. In 1978—coincidentally, the year *Orientalism* was published—the Camp David Accords ultimately led to a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. The United States was fundamental in the structuring of this diplomatic outcome, but by this point, Islamic fundamentalism was on the rise.

In 1980 the countries of Iraq and Iran went to war over territorial disputes. The countries of the Middle East—apart from Egypt—continued to refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Jewish state of Israel. Iraqi aggression toward surrounding states in the Middle East continued, and reached its climax a decade later in the Persian Gulf War (1990–91), a conflict involving the United States. Said later credited this—along with the terrorist attack on New York City on September 11, 2001—for the public criticism he received, labeling him "anti-Western." Overall, the rapidly changing political landscape over the period of Said's life—as well as continued U.S. involvement in Middle Eastern affairs—account for the viewpoint he takes in *Orientalism* and the changes in response to his work over time.

### **Cultural History and Literary Analysis**

Orientalism is based on an analytical approach known as "cultural history" that is used within the field of cultural anthropology, the study of modern human culture and interactions. Said uses the cultural history approach, generally used to evaluate a group of people, to show how Western-Eastern relationships were constructed by the idea of Orientalism. In order to do so, Said looks at the historical basis for the

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concept and discusses the modern implications. Said analyzes the historical context of Orientalism to understand the contemporary anthropological definition of the terms Orient and Orientalism.

By the time *Orientalism* was published in 1978, the terms had been, for the most part, replaced with more culturally specific terms, such as Arabic, Islamic, and Jewish. Said's argument is thus that the terms Orient and Orientalism are culturally inappropriate because they refer to the period when these territories were under imperialist control. This thesis frames the entire text. While the words Orient and Orientalism had fallen out of use, the power dynamic they implied between the East and the West (with the West having power over the East) continued to persist. Part of Said's goal is to explain how this initial power dynamic continued to persist and subjugate the East. *Orientalism* marked a major turning point in conceptualizing the West's relationship with the East in the postcolonial period that Said describes (when the East was officially independent from colonial rule by another country). Thus, the work falls into what is known today as postcolonial anthropology, or anthropology dedicated to interrogating the traditional colonial viewpoint and empowering disenfranchised voices. Said does so by showing how the traditional colonial viewpoint continued to affect the Middle East, using historical examples grounded in literature.

Part of the uniqueness of Said's work is his use of explication to break apart portions of a literary text, examine the usage of specific words or phrases, and discern the implied meaning. This technique requires an understanding of the underlying historic and literary context and the ability to accurately describe the literary devices being used—such as figurative language or point of view. Said uses this approach to support his argument that the framework for *Orientalism* was based on textual sources and that these textual sources show a continued history of colonialist speech stretching from the initial colonization of the Orient to the postcolonial world of the Middle East. His methodology aids in the understanding of the power dynamic between the West and East over time, and the strength of his argument is grounded in Said's background in literary criticism, or the study of how to interpret literature.

### **Anthropological Impact**

Despite the limited attention Said gives to anthropological theory in *Orientalism*, mentioning only a few authors from the field directly within the text, the book had an immense impact on later anthropological works dealing with not only the area traditionally known as the Orient but with colonized cultures worldwide. That said, *Orientalism* was not the first text to criticize the colonialist tone of anthropological texts. British anthropologist Kathleen Gough and Saudi anthropologist Talal Asad did so starting in the 1960s. They were followed by other authors—American anthropologists Dell Hymes, Gerald Berreman, Laura Nader, and Vine Deloria Jr. all wrote on the same theme. Their premise was that anthropologists, aiming to study humanity with the goal of benefiting individual cultures, were utilizing techniques that furthered the colonization of suppressed cultures. Specifically, they argued that anthropologists treated different cultural or ethnic groups as subjects of study rather than as groups of individuals with their own voices and issues. Thus, they wanted to see anthropology transition from a field that described different cultures and ethnic groups to a field that focused on advocacy within the framework of the needs of a particular group.

*Orientalism* follows within this tradition, although it is critical of the traditional representations of the Orient that were largely focused on the Orient's lower cultural position relative to the Western hemisphere. While *Orientalism* was one of the first widely cited postcolonial texts, the work was also condemned as being "anti-Western," heedlessly critical of anthropological thought and critical without providing an alternative solution.

The anti-Western critique was leveled initially at Said in reaction to his focus on providing the perspective of the Middle East subjugated by the West. Said focused solely on the negative aspects of the West. The anti-West critique increased later in Said's life as the United States became more involved politically and militarily in the Middle East, and nationalism rose within the United States. Said, an active political proponent of Palestinian rights, was increasingly viewed as a threat.

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The accusation that Said was unnecessarily critical of anthropological thought stemmed from the fact that Said interacted minimally with anthropological theory within the text itself. Addressing the last critique that he failed to provide an alternative solution, it was not his goal within the text to do so. Said set out in *Orientalism* to fully define a problem that had been expressed incompletely prior to the publication of the work. The solution was inherent in the pages of the text—in order to stop framing the Middle East within a colonialist, power-based framework, it was necessary to change how the Middle East was conceptualized. Said believed this could be done by showing the historical basis for *Orientalism*. Said addresses many of these criticisms within the Preface and Afterward of *Orientalism* as well as in other texts he produced.

Despite these criticisms, *Orientalism* not only brought forth a new form of historical anthropology, but it also provided a framework for later postcolonial works. Previous anthropological works focused largely on modern cultures and modern interviews with individuals to the exclusion of historical interactions. Equally, for those works that did explore the historical basis of a culture or ethnic group, they failed to do so in such a rigorous and text-based manner. Said was able to show future authors how framing an issue or topic within its historical context could be important as another line of evidence for their arguments. Equally, in contrast to earlier anthropological authors, Said explicitly described how colonialism left legacies that affected the following generations. This is an idea that had not been discussed before but was used from this point on by later authors, such as Indian scholars Gayatri Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha, two postcolonial theorists from the 20th century, to describe similar processes occurring around the world.

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## 6.3 THESIS OF REPRESENTATION

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### **Thesis of Representation**

*Orientalism* (1978) proposes that much of the Western study of Islamic civilization was an exercise in political intellectualism; a psychological exercise in the self-affirmation of "European identity"; not an objective

exercise of intellectual enquiry and the academic study of Eastern cultures. Therefore, Orientalism was a method of practical and cultural discrimination that was applied to non-European societies and peoples in order to establish European imperial domination. In justification of empire, the Orientalist claims to know more—essential and definitive knowledge—about the Orient than do the Orientals. Western writings about the Orient, the perceptions of the East presented in Orientalism, cannot be taken at face value, because they are cultural representations based upon fictional, Western images of the Orient. The history of European colonial rule and political domination of Eastern civilizations, distorts the intellectual objectivity of even the most knowledgeable, well-meaning, and culturally sympathetic Western Orientalist; thus did the term "Orientalism" become a pejorative word regarding non-Western peoples and cultures:

I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India, or Egypt, in the later nineteenth century, took an interest in those countries, which was never far from their status, in his mind, as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact—and yet that is what I am saying in this study of Orientalism.

— Orientalism (1978) p. 11.

The notion of cultural representations as a means for domination and control would remain a central feature of Said's critical approach proposed in *Orientalism* (1978). Towards the end of his life for instance, Said argued that while representations are essential for the function of human life and societies – as essential as language itself – what must cease are representations that are authoritatively repressive, because they do not provide any real possibilities for those being represented to intervene in this process.

The alternative to an exclusionary representational system for Said would be one that is “participatory and collaborative, non-coercive, rather than imposed”, yet he recognised the extreme difficulty involved in bringing about such an alternative. Difficult because advances in the

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“electronic transfer of images” is increasing media concentration in the hands of powerful, transnational conglomerates. This concentration is of such great magnitude that ‘dependent societies’ situated outside of the “central metropolitan zones” are greatly reliant upon these systems of representation for information about themselves - otherwise known as self-knowledge. For Said, this process of gaining self-knowledge by peripheral societies is insidious, because the system upon which they rely is presented as natural and real, such that it becomes practically unassailable.

### **Occidental and Oriental origins**

The Græco–Persian Wars: The Sea Battle at Salamis (1868, Wilhelm von Kaulbach), depicts the East–West clash of civilizations.

The romanticized Orient: The Reception of the Ambassadors in Damascus (1511) depicts the "Arabic culture" of 16th-century Syria.

Said said that the Western world sought to dominate the Eastern world for more than 2,000 years, since Classical antiquity (8th c. BC – AD 6th c.), the time of the play *The Persians* (472 BC), by Aeschylus, which celebrates a Greek victory (Battle of Salamis, 480 BC) against the Persians in the course of the Persian Wars (499–449 BC)—imperial conflict between the Greek West and the Persian East. Europe's long, military domination of Asia (empire and hegemony) made unreliable most Western texts about the Eastern world, because of the implicit cultural bias that permeates most Orientalism, which was not recognized by most Western scholars.

In the course of empire, after the physical-and-political conquest, there followed the intellectual conquest of a people, whereby Western scholars appropriated for themselves (as European intellectual property) the interpretation and translation of Oriental languages, and the critical study of the cultures and histories of the Oriental world. In that way, by using Orientalism as the intellectual norm for cultural judgement, Europeans wrote the history of Asia, and invented the "exotic East" and the "inscrutable Orient", which are cultural representations of peoples and things considered inferior to the peoples and things of the West.

**The Other**

Orientalism concluded that "Western knowledge of the Eastern world", i.e. Orientalism fictionally depicts the Orient as an irrational, psychologically weak, and feminized, non-European Other, which is negatively contrasted with the rational, psychologically strong, and masculine West. Such a binary relation, in a hierarchy of weakness and strength, derives from the European psychological need to create a difference of cultural inequality, between West and East, which inequality is attributable to "immutable cultural essences" inherent to Oriental peoples and things.

The notion of an Orient has played a central role in constructing European culture, and "helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience". The binary relationship of strong-West-and-weak-East reinforces the cultural stereotypes invented with literary, cultural, and historical texts that are more fictitious than factual; yet, which give the reader of Orientalist texts (history, travelogue, anthropology, etc.) a limited understanding of life in the Middle East, because Orientalism conflates the different societies of the Eastern world, into the homogeneous world of "the Orient".

**Geopolitics and cultural hierarchy**

The contemporary, historical impact of Orientalism (1978) was in explaining the How? and the Why? of imperial impotence; in the 1970s, to journalists, academics, and Orientalists, the Yom Kippur war (6–25 October 1973) and the OPEC petroleum embargo (October 1973 – March 1974) were recent modern history. The Western world had been surprised, by the pro-active and decisive actions of non-Western peoples, whom the ideology of Orientalism had defined as essentially weak societies and impotent countries. The geopolitical reality of their actions, of military and economic warfare, voided the fictional nature of Orientalist representations, attitudes, and opinions about the non-Western Other self.

**The academy**

Moving from the assertion that ‘pure knowledge’ is simply not possible (as all forms of knowledge are inevitably influenced by ideological standpoints), Said sought to explain the connection between ideology and literature. He argued that “Orientalism is not a mere political subject or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions”, but rather “a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts”. European literature for Said carried, actualized, and propelled Orientalist notions forward and constantly reinforced them. Put differently, literature produced by Europeans made possible the domination of the people of the ‘East’ because of the Orientalist discourse embedded within these texts. Literature here is understood as a kind of carrier and distributor of ideology.

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## 6.4 INFLUENCE

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The greatest intellectual impact of *Orientalism* (1978) was upon the fields of literary theory, cultural studies, and human geography, by way of which originated the field of Post-colonial studies. Edward Said's method of post-structuralist analysis derived from the analytic techniques of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault; and the perspectives to *Orientalism* presented by Abdul Latif Tibawi, Anouar Abdel-Malek, Maxime Rodinson, and Richard William Southern.

The Oriental threat to Eastern Europe: the Ottoman Wars (1299–1922) of Muslim imperial expansion.

### **Post-colonial culture studies**

As a work of cultural criticism, *Orientalism* (1978) is the foundation document in the field of Post-colonialism, because the thesis proved historically factual, true, and accurate for the periods studied; and for the How? and the Why? of the cultural representations of "Orientals", "The Orient", and "The Eastern world" as presented in the mass communications media of the Western world.

Post-colonial theory studies the power and the continued dominance of Western ways of intellectual enquiry and the production of knowledge in



the academic, intellectual, and cultural spheres of the de-colonised country. Said's survey concentrated upon the British and the French varieties of Orientalism that supported the British Empire and the French Empire as commercial enterprises constructed from colonialism, and gave perfunctory coverage, discussion, and analyses of German Orientalist scholarship.

Such disproportional investigation provoked criticism from opponents and embarrassment for supporters of Said, who, in "Orientalism Reconsidered" (1985), said that no one opponent provided a rationale, by which limited coverage of German Orientalism limits either the scholarly value or the practical application of Orientalism as a cultural study. In the Afterword to the 1995 edition of *Orientalism*, Said presented follow-up refutations of the criticisms that the Orientalist and historian Bernard Lewis made against the book's first edition (1978).

### **Literary criticism**

In the fields of literary criticism and of cultural studies, the notable Indian scholars of post-colonialism were Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (In *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, 1987) whose essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) also became a foundational text of Post-colonial culture studies; Homi K. Bhabha (*Nation and Narration*, 1990); Ronald Inden (*Imagining India*, 1990); Gyan Prakash ("Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography", 1990); Nicholas Dirks (*Castes of Mind*, 2001); and Hamid Dabashi (*Iran: A People Interrupted*, 2007).

In *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (1990), Robert J. C. Young reported Post-colonial explanations of the "How?" and the "Why?" of the nature of the post-colonial world, the peoples, and their discontents; which verify the efficacy of the critical method applied in *Orientalism* (1978), especially in the field of Middle Eastern studies.

In the late 1970s, the survey range of *Orientalism* (1978) did not include the genre of Orientalist painting or any other visual arts, despite the book-cover featuring a detail-image of *The Snake Charmer* (1880), a popular, 19th-century Orientalist painting—to which the writer Linda

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Nochlin applied Said's method of critical analysis "with uneven results". In the field of epistemological studies, Orientalism is an extended application of methods of critical analysis developed by the philosopher Michel Foucault. The anthropologist Talal Asad said that the book Orientalism is:

not only a catalogue of Western prejudices about and misrepresentations of Arabs and Muslims" ... authoritative structure of Orientalist discourse—the closed, self-evident, self-confirming character of that distinctive discourse, which is reproduced, again and again, through scholarly texts, travelogues, literary works of imagination, and the obiter dicta of public men-of-affairs.

The historian Gyan Prakash said that Orientalism describes how "the hallowed image of the Orientalist, as an austere figure, unconcerned with the world and immersed in the mystery of foreign scripts and languages, has acquired a dark hue as the murky business of ruling other peoples, now forms the essential and enabling background of his or her scholarship" about the Orient; without colonial imperialism, there would be no Orientalism.

### **Oriental Europe**

In Eastern Europe, Milica Bakić-Hayden developed the concept of Nesting Orientalisms (1992), based upon and derived from the work of the historian Larry Wolff (*Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, 1994), and the ideas Edward Said presented in *Orientalism* (1978).

The Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova (*Imagining the Balkans*, 1997) presented her ethnologic concept of Nesting Balkanisms (*Ethnologia Balkanica*, 1997), which is thematically extended and theoretically derived from Milica Bakić-Hayden's Nesting Orientalisms.

Moreover, in "A Stereotype, Wrapped in a Cliché, Inside a Caricature: Russian Foreign Policy and Orientalism" (2010), James D. J. Brown said that Western stereotypes of Russia, Russianness, and things Russian are cultural representations derived from the literature of "Russian studies", which is a field of enquiry little afflicted with the misconceptions of

Russia-as-the-Other, but does display the characteristics of Orientalism—the exaggeration of difference, the presumption of Western cultural superiority, and the application of cliché in analytical models. That overcoming such intellectual malaise requires that area scholars choose to break their "mind-forg'd manacles" and deeply reflect upon the basic cultural assumptions of their area-studies scholarship.

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## 6.5 CRITICISM

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Orientalism proved intellectually, professionally, and personally controversial. The thesis, content, substance, and style were much criticised by Orientalist academics, such as Albert Hourani (*A History of the Arab Peoples*, 1991), Robert Graham Irwin (*For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*, 2006), Nikki Keddie (*An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, 1968), and Bernard Lewis ("The Question of Orientalism", *Islam and the West*, 1993).

In a review of a book by Ibn Warraq, American classicist Bruce Thornton dismissed Orientalism as an "incoherent amalgam of dubious postmodern theory, sentimental Third Worldism, glaring historical errors, and Western guilt".

In the book-review article "Enough Said" (2007), about *Dangerous Knowledge* (2007), by Robert Irwin, in the preface paragraphs, Martin Kramer recapitulates the professional trials and tribulations of and repercussions to Orientalists caused by Orientalism (1978):

The Good Orientalist: Edward William Lane, the translator and lexicographer who compiled the *Arabic–English Lexicon* (1863–93).

the British historian Robert Irwin is the sort of scholar who, in times past, would have been proud to call himself an Orientalist ... someone who mastered difficult languages, like Arabic and Persian, and then spent years bent over manuscripts, in heroic efforts of decipherment and interpretation. In *Dangerous Knowledge*, Irwin relates that the 19th-century English Arabist Edward William Lane, compiler of the great *Arabic-English Lexicon*, "used to complain that he had become so used

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to the cursive calligraphy of his Arabic manuscripts that he found Western print a great strain on his eyes."

Orientalism, in its heyday, was a branch of knowledge as demanding and rigorous as its near cousin, Egyptology. The first International Congress of Orientalists met in 1873; its name was not changed until a full century later. But there are no self-declared Orientalists today. The reason is that the late Edward Said turned the word into a pejorative. In his 1978 book *Orientalism*, the Palestinian-born Said, a professor of comparative literature at Columbia University, claimed that an endemic Western prejudice against the East had congealed into a modern ideology of racist supremacy—a kind of anti-Semitism directed against Arabs and Muslims. Throughout Europe's history, announced Said, "every European, in that he could say about the Orient, was a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric."

In a semantic sleight of hand, Said appropriated the term "Orientalism", as a label for the ideological prejudice he described, thereby, neatly implicating the scholars who called themselves Orientalists. At best, charged Said, the work of these scholars was biased, so as to confirm the inferiority of Islam. At worst, Orientalists had directly served European empires, showing proconsuls how best to conquer and control Muslims. To substantiate his indictment, Said cherry-picked evidence, ignored whatever contradicted his thesis, and filled the gaps with conspiracy theories.

— "Enough Said", *Commentary* magazine (March 2007)

Nonetheless, the literary critic Paul De Man said that, as a literary critic, "Said took a step further than any other modern scholar of his time, something I dare not do. I remain in the safety of rhetorical analysis, where criticism is the second-best thing I do."

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## 6.6 MAIN IDEAS

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### The "Orient" Is a Western Creation

The basis of Said's argument in *Orientalism* is that the concept of the "Orient" as understood and used by the West—specifically France, England, and the United States—is not the "real" Orient. Rather, it is a constructed understanding of what citizens believe the Orient to be. This fundamental misunderstanding is based on centuries-old descriptions and entrenched power dynamics between East and West. The goal of these early depictions was to facilitate imperialist actions in the East. Said argues these early depictions underlie modern relations with the "Orient," or what is today considered the Middle East and Asia.

### **Orientalism Continues Today**

Said spends the majority of the text on the relations between the East and the countries of France and England. However, in Chapter 3, Part 4 as well as in the Preface and Afterword, he describes how America, having risen to the position of a major world power during the 20th century, has adopted the traditional Orientalist perspectives toward Eastern countries. Since the initial publication of his work, Said argues that because of the current political situation in the Middle East, the stereotypical representations and imperialist views of Western power in contrast to that of the East have become only more entrenched.

### **Orientalism**

#### **Literary and Religious Tradition**

Fundamental to Said's argument, and part of what makes his analytical technique so effective, is the fact that the Orientalist traits he discusses are based on earlier literary, scholarly, and religious texts relating to the East. Many of these texts encompass several categories. For example, Dante Alighieri's literary work includes religious themes, and British writer Edward Lane's scholarly depiction of *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) includes both literary and religious tones. Thus, Said's analytical approach of literary analysis is appropriate for the identification of these initial Orientalist themes that formed the basis for the later imperialist views of the West. As a result, while previous scholars had broached the subject of Orientalism, Said's argument is more rigorous thanks to the method he used to approach the

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subject. Through literary analysis, Said was able to approach Orientalism with a breadth and depth previous scholars were unable to attain.

### **Knowledge and Power**

Said argues at the outset of the text that the effectiveness of Orientalism is derived from perceived knowledge and power. Using the early literary and scholarly texts, the West was able to dictate a degree of "knowledge" about the Orient—even if this "knowledge" was fundamentally flawed and stereotypical. This knowledge then formed the basis for power. The West created a discourse whereupon the East was "backward" and "less advanced" than the West. Thus, the West had an obligation to facilitate "progress" in the East. One of the most obvious examples of this was the building of the Suez Canal, a massive undertaking the West justified based on the perceived benefits it would bring to Egyptians. However, in actuality, the Egyptians were largely left out of the planning process. The building of knowledge and power is an idea that persists throughout the book and structures Orientalism across both time and space.

### **Check your Progress-1**

1. When did Edward Wadie Said die?

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2. When was the first International Congress of Orientalists?

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3. What does Orientalism prove?

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## **6.7 LET US SUM UP**

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Edward Said's untimely death in 2003 left an intellectual void that can never truly be filled. I have tried elsewhere to write about the sense of melancholy occasioned by his loss, and at the same time, the way in which his work demands that we keep going. Said's relationship to both social injustice and intellectual mediocrity was one of impatience. Some of this seems to have been rooted in his character; as he described movingly in his 1999 memoir *Out of Place*, from his childhood on he was haunted by the feeling that he had already wasted too much time. This sense was later exacerbated by the knowledge of his impending death, which seems to have haunted his late writings in a different way. In this late work—*Out of Place*, the political essays collected in *The End of the Peace Process* (2000) and *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map* (2003), his writings on music in *Parallels and Paradoxes* (2002), and especially in the two posthumous volumes *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004) and *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (2006)—we find an amplified sense of a writer with no time to waste, one who refuses to suffer fools gladly, and one who, as he insisted in his 2003 preface to *Orientalism*, kept his “faith in the ongoing and literally unending process of emancipation and enlightenment that...frames and gives direction to the intellectual vocation.”

Said's first major theoretical work was *Beginnings: Intentions and Methods*, published in 1975, four years before *Orientalism*. As its title suggests, the book is an extended meditation on the very nature of what it means to undertake an intellectual or creative project. Said, following the philosopher Giambattista Vico, one of his greatest intellectual influences, distinguishes “beginning,” which is human and secular, from “origin,” to which is attributed mythical, divine qualities. For Said, championing the former—and with it, a true humanist vision—is the primary vocation of the critic. In his final work, *On Late Style*, Said turns to the other side of the equation, asking how the artist, scholar, and critic find ways to mark the “lateness” of a mortal life when one finds the end in sight. He ranges far and wide, from Beethoven to Adorno to Genet, marking the complexities and contradictions of their magnificent “late” work. *On Late Style* itself belongs to this suite of late masterpieces.

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However, it is his other posthumous work, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, that provides the most valuable bridge between Orientalism and Said's late work. The book collects several lectures that Said presented at Columbia University in 2000. Throughout these lectures, he returns again and again to the point from Vico that he cites at the opening of *Orientalism*, and that indeed underwrites the entire project of that book: "men make their own history what they can know is what they have made." The project of *Orientalism*, he continues, involves extending this insight to geography: "as both geographical and cultural entities—to say nothing of historical entities—such locales, regions, geographical sectors as 'Orient' and 'Occident' are man-made. Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history." In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said extends this insight from Vico into a credo for all criticism, whose job it is precisely to "reexamine history from the point of view of the maker." As a result, "the relationship between the reader-critic and the text is transformed, from a one-way interrogation of the historical text by an altogether alien mind at a much later time, into a sympathetic dialogue of two spirits across ages and cultures."

One finds in this late book a re-statement of—one could almost say a doubling-down on—the seeming contradiction that James Clifford had noted in *Orientalism*. On the one hand, Said's critique of the Eurocentric, colonizing, and deadly nature of traditional Western humanism remains as scathing as ever. On the other hand, he remains deeply committed to crucial aspects of traditional humanism, going so far as to link himself with arch-conservative figures such as Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot to assert that "we must in some perhaps almost instinctual way continue to hold on to a wonderfully stable order of great works of art whose sustaining power means a great deal to each of us in his or her own way." So, as Akeel Bilgrami suggests in his Foreword to *Humanism and Late Criticism*, Said reveals more clearly in this late book that criticism is in fact "two seemingly inconsistent things: it is philology, the 'history' of words, the 'reception' of tradition, and, at the same time it is a 'resistance' to that tradition." It is to this double mission that Said makes his final commitment: "situating critique at the very heart of humanism,



critique as a form of democratic freedom and as a continuous practice of questioning and accumulating knowledge that is open to, rather than in denial of, the constituent historical realities.”

This is all quite unfashionable stuff. It runs in many ways against the grain of a number of current intellectual tendencies, from the embrace of a more orthodox form of materialist analysis against Said’s so-called “culturalism,” to the current trend in literary and cultural criticism towards what has come to be called “postcritique.” From the first tendency, Vivek Chibber’s influential and vitriolic *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* nods briefly towards Said’s “modern classic” *Orientalism* before moving towards its skewering of the field of postcolonial studies without another mention of Said’s work. From the second tendency, Rita Felski’s *The Limits of Critique*—one of the founding texts of the “postcritique” field—includes one sentence praising Said’s reading of *Mansfield Park* before moving on to enumerate the dangers of the “suspicious interpretation” genre to which Said’s work is said to belong. Even Joseph North’s innovative and erudite *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History*, which argues for a form of politicized literary criticism that seems recognizably Saidian, barely acknowledges Said’s work, except to lump it in with other works that he terms “scholarly” and thus part of the current dominant paradigm of literary criticism.

Said, of course, was famously impatient with all forms of orthodoxy, Marxist or otherwise. However, I suspect he would have been equally impatient with what we might call the rush from judgment found in the “postcritique” school of criticism. The power of *Orientalism*, and of Said’s work more generally, lies in its ability to unsettle the reader, from all directions. For this reason, perhaps the greatest threat to the legacy of *Orientalism* lies in the book’s very success. It is all too easy to use (or misuse) the term “Orientalism” without having to grapple with Said’s close readings of Flaubert or Edward Lane or his complex methodological engagement with humanism. There is the danger, therefore, that like that other great and difficult writer of liberating texts, Frantz Fanon, Said might become someone to be name-checked without being read closely, or at all.

Against this tendency, let me end by exhorting you who may be reading this—whether you are new to Orientalism; whether you have maybe been made to read the introduction or excerpts from the text; whether you are generally familiar with its argument; or whether you have read and re-read the book many times—to return to it, together with this incomplete set of companion readings. In wrestling with Orientalism, take as your credo Said’s final sentences, which contain both the hope for a more liberating form of human knowledge and a warning of the dangers found in the history of humanistic study, a warning that seems as apt today as it was four decades ago: “If the knowledge of Orientalism has any meaning, it is in being a reminder of the seductive degradation of knowledge, of any knowledge, anywhere, at any time. Now perhaps more than before.” Indeed.

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## 6.8 KEYWORDS

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- **Seductive:** tempting and attractive; enticing.
- **Humanistic:** relating to or supporting the principles of humanism.
- **Liberating:** freeing a place or people from enemy occupation.
- **Humanism:** a rationalist outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters.

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## 6.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- Write a short note on main ideas of “ Introduction to Orientalism”.
- Criticize the “ Introduction to Orientalism”.
- Write the cultural background of “ Introduction to Orientalism”.

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## 6.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- Ned Curthoys, Debjani Ganguly, ed. (2007). *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*. Academic Monographs. p. 27. ISBN 9780522853575.
- Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, New York & London: Routledge, 1990.
- Ian Buchanan, ed. (2010). "Said, Edward". *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ferial Jabouri Ghazoul, ed. (2007). *Edward Saïd and Critical Decolonization*. American University in Cairo Press. pp. 290–. ISBN 978-977-416-087-5. Retrieved 19 November 2011. Edward W. Saïd (1935–2003) was one of the most influential intellectuals in the twentieth century.
- Zamir, Shamoon (2005), "Saïd, Edward W.", in Jones, Lindsay (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, 12, Macmillan Reference USA, Thomas Gale, pp. 8031–32, Edward W. Saïd (1935–2003) is best known as the author of the influential and widely-read *Orientalism* (1978) ... His forceful defense of secular humanism and of the public role of the intellectual, as much as his trenchant critiques of *Orientalism*, and his unwavering advocacy of the Palestinian cause, made Saïd one of the most internationally influential cultural commentators writing out of the United States in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

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## 6.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- Edward Said's untimely death in 2003. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q1)**
- The first International Congress of Orientalists met in 1873. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q2)**
- *Orientalism* proved intellectually, professionally, and personally controversial. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q3)**

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# **UNIT-7 EDWARD SAID- INTRODUCTION TO ORIENTALISM – 3**

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## **STRUCTURE**

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Defining Orientalism

7.3 Summary

7.3.1 Chapter 1

7.3.2 Chapter 2

7.3.3 Chapter 3

7.3.4 Afterword

7.4 Characteristics of Orientalism

7.5 Let us sum up

7.6 Keywords

7.7 Questions for Review

7.8 Suggested Reading and References

7.9 Answers to Check your Progress

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## **7.0 OBJECTIVES**

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Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn the definition of Orientalism,
- and, you would also go through the summary of Chapters 1, 2, 3 and Afterword of “Introduction to Orientalism”.
- further, you would also go through the Characteristics of Orientalism.

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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Edward Said's *Orientalism* has been credited with opening out the field of Postcolonial Studies / Colonial Discourse Analysis because of its persistent linking together of the colonial experience with the Empire, and of politics with culture. It has served as an agency to the formerly marginalised peoples and has allowed the Empire to write back. *Orientalism* was published in 1978. This work offered a critique of oriental studies or what is also, known as the construction of knowledge of the Orient by the West. Said's book generated a lot of hostility among scholars of the Orient who accused Said of crossing the line between arts and politics. But many who found its iconoclastic violation of boundaries and conventions in unsettling received ideas of Orient and Occident liberating and enabling greeted it with immense enthusiasm.

In response to Western treatment of the Middle East, Said explains how the framework of *Orientalism* developed historically and how it persists today. Said's text remains relevant because Western relations with the Middle East continue to be marred by enduring stereotypes and imperialist relations. The work has had an enormous impact on the field of cultural anthropology (study of human cultural variations), not just in Middle Eastern studies, but also for the development of historical anthropology (study of the historical significance of culture) and postcolonial anthropology (study of the cultural impacts of colonialism on societies). Said's method of analysis is unusual in his combination of literary analysis with anthropological themes and historical context. This method creates a rigorous framework for understanding the development and relevance of *Orientalism*. Equally, his argument that *Orientalism* is a Western creation based on imperialist values contributes to the current discourse on postcolonialism.

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## 7.2 DEFINING ORIENTALISM

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What do we understand by *Orientalism*? Said gives us three definitions in the Introduction to his book. It would be appropriate that we examine

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each definition before we attempt an overall characterization of Orientalism. Said states the initial meaning to be the following:

Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient - and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist - either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (p.2)

What is notable in this definition is the number of disciplines that Said includes in the study of Orientalism, pointing to the fact that they are all interlinked rather than separate entities. Thus, the study of humankind, the study of the origin, development and structure of societies, the study of the past and the study of languages, obviously share a great deal of common ground, but construct different kinds of knowledge structures. Said's attempt to define Orientalism begins by transgressing academically sanctified disciplinary boundaries by claiming that academic classifications should be disregarded when their subject matter is the Orient. This takes us into the next definition.

The second definition that Said gives is a more general one, though it still pertains to the academy; Said says:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident". (p.2)

With the second definition Said moves to a much broader area of the academy - the study of the very nature of knowledge, and the study of existence itself. The parameters of the study of Orientalism then become almost limitless, and open the floodgates for writers from a variety of disciplines:

Poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists and imperial administrators". (p.2)

We are now moving from the theoretical space of academics out into the political realm of administration. The scope of writers who can be brought into the purview of Orientalist writing extends to include creative artists and administrators as well. The internal academic

boundaries that were transgressed in the first definition now take a step further to violate the boundary between academics and politics, opening up a number of possibilities for studying Orientalism. Said now moves out of the academy and its related disciplines into the world of power, authority and control in his third meaning. This definition is located in a historical, material context and articulates his thesis more clearly:

Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, - authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (0.3)

A corporate institution, by definition, refers to a large group of people that perform multiple functions in different fields but act as a single entity. The academy that has thus, disseminated knowledge of the Orient is now replaced with a corporate institution whose function and powers are far more than the academy could ever have. Orientalism's main feature is that it is constituted of the West and it deals with domination of the Orient through every socio-political institution available to it.

To structure the field of Orientalism, Said uses Foucault's notion of a discourse, that is, of constituting a discursive field that is able to unite disparate materials as an area of study. Said argues that it is only by examining Orientalism as a systematic discipline that it is possible to understand that European culture has not just managed but also produced the Orient "politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively". Orientalism tries to show how the West achieved Orientalism And this, but more important than that, it also asserts that the reason this immense project After was undertaken was because Europe "gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self." (p.3) That is, the Occident needed to produce the Orient as a means of defining itself as a superior power.

Said makes one more attempt to define the enormous scope of Orientalism later in the Introduction. He does not consider the

institutions or the areas of study, practice that can be seen as orientalist; he looks at the methods by which it is produced and established, or the modes through which it is expressed. He defines it as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness.. .an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of 'interest'. . .a certain will or intention to understand.. .!" (p. 12 original emphasis) He concludes by clarifying his argument thus:

Here, Orientalism is defined as a dimension of the modern culture of the West as manifest in its politics and academic disciplines, with the express aim to gain authority over the Orient. Having defined the scope of Orientalism in different ways, let us now examine how Orientalism works as a discursive field of study.

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## 7.3 SUMMARY

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### 7.3.1 CHAPTER 1

#### PART - I

In Chapter 1, Part 1, Said defines what he means by Orientalism. He does so through the evaluation of specific Orientalists at a time when the Orient itself was defined generally as "Asia or the East, geographically, morally, culturally." In 1910 Arthur James Balfour addressed his qualifications for being "superior with regard to people you choose to call Oriental." He argued he was able to speak regarding the Orient based on his knowledge of the Orient civilization.

Another well-known Orientalist was Lord Cromer, England's representative in Egypt between 1883 and 1907. Rather than speaking about the Orient as an abstract, Cromer spoke more specifically about his experiences in India and Egypt, emphasizing that both knowledge and power made the management of these countries easy. Said argues that these aspects of Orientalism did not serve to justify colonialism after the fact but rather provided the premise for colonial rule at the outset. The initial creation of a framework of domination during the 18th and 19th



centuries allowed for domination to occur. This framework was initially characterized as an "us" versus "them" dichotomy, established by those who were in power, and thus in a position to act as knowledge producers. Said states that this is the basis of the "main intellectual issue raised by Orientalism." In those cases where an "us" versus "them" dichotomy arises, is it possible to avoid the "hostility expressed by the division"? Said argues that to understand how the framework of Orientalism arose, it is necessary to understand the historical context under which it was generated. At its core, Orientalism represented a system of "knowledge" and perceived "power" regarding the Orient that framed interactions with the West. Said concludes the chapter by setting up the historical timeline for the development of Orientalism through the 18th–20th centuries he goes on to describe in later parts.

## **PART - II**

Said begins by stating that Orientalism is a field of learned study. Until the mid-18th century, Orientalists were biblical scholars. In the 19th century, academic Orientalists were interested in the classical period of whatever language or society they studied. When academic study of the modern Orient gained traction, Said argues, Orientalists began to construct "imaginative geographies," dividing East and West.

In order to describe how this occurred, Said describes Claude Lévi-Strauss's argument that the mind creates order through arbitrary categorization. This creates "imaginative knowledge," or the idea that through the construction of categories, these groups are imbued with a set of qualifications that are seen, erroneously, as "knowledge" about the category. Thus, "the Orient was something more than what was empirically known." He uses the example of two plays, *The Persians* and *The Bacchae*, arguing that the dichotomy between the "Orient" and the "West" is artificial and serves only to further the boundary between the two groups. Thus, early literary and scholarly works describing Orientalism served only to create categories meant to "control" the Orient, a need born out of fear to "domesticat[e] ... the exotic."

Said claims the categorization of the Orient made the Orient appear more "knowable" to the West. However, since this categorization was not

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grounded in fact, but was instead a "self-reinforcing" and "closed system," this grouping resulted in the perpetuation of erroneous information about the Orient. In and of itself, this is not problematic. Many societies do this to the "other." However, since Europe was in a position of power relative to the Orient, this characterization of the Orient was harmful. Said says these categories were put into place in the 19th and 20th centuries through a long history of literature, such as Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*. These categorical descriptions create "imaginative geography," or a constructed landscape that divides East and West.

### **PART – III**

Said uses a series of examples to discuss how the West was able to advance on the East. He argues the initial attitude toward Orientalism was framed by the perceived threat of Islam. The early works by Simon Ockley (author of *History of the Saracens*), Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron's translation of *Avesta*, and the codification of Indian laws and languages by William Jones were born out of a sense of "duty" to recover a portion of the Oriental past. They also provided the background for Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. Unlike leaders of earlier expeditions, Napoleon was the first to prepare prior to traveling to the Orient, using works such as *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie* by Comte de Volney (1787). Thus, Napoleon arrived in the Orient accompanied by a team of Orientalist intellectuals with plans to dominate Egypt. "Everything said, seen, and studied" was written down in *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–28), and it was done in a way that emphasized the Orient's ancient connection with Europe.

Thus, everything that was good about the Orient was framed as the product of a European connection. The book emphasized the heroic nature of Napoleon and the greatness of the project he was undertaking in a nation that had fallen into barbarism. The pervading idea at the time was that once Egypt was restored to its former glory, other Oriental nations would fall in line. Said argues that Napoleon's journey marked the point at which the language used to discuss the Orient shifted from descriptive to "a means of creation." He claims this shift can clearly be

seen in the conception of the Suez Canal by Ferdinand de Lesseps. The enormous amount of money and effort required to build the canal was justified by the benefits de Lesseps argued would be passed on to people who "could never have done for themselves."

#### **PART – IV**

Said begins by describing what constitutes a "textual attitude." It is a preference for textual information in contrast to oral or experiential information. He goes on to explain why one might prefer textual information to other forms. He also claims texts provide a sense of knowledge about something unknown, and this sense of knowledge reinforces the idea that textual information is accurate. This occurs, in part, because textual knowledge can create what Michel Foucault calls a "discourse," or the "very reality they appear to describe." This concept can be seen in Napoleon's and de Lesseps's treatment of the Orient in which they interacted with the Orient as a "fierce lion" that needed to be dealt with, because the texts they read described the Orient as such. Thus, "Orientalism overrode the Orient."

Said emphasizes that while the "official intellectual genealogy of Orientalism" would fail to include travel literature, these works were fundamentally important to the understanding of how Orientalism was constructed. The dichotomy between East and West has served to lump the entire Orient into one category that fails to acknowledge the legitimate distinctions between groups. Equally, the same characterizations of the Orient that Orientalists originally developed are still in play because of a commitment to this "textual attitude." Said provides a portion of a lecture given by H.A.R. Gibb in 1945 at the University of Chicago, and another lecture given in 1963 at Harvard University, in which he uses the same discriminatory language used to characterize the Orient. Said's aim is to describe the pervasiveness of these text-based paradigms over time.

### **7.3.2 CHAPTER 2**

#### **PART - I**

## Notes

Said details the changes that occurred in Orientalism in the 18th century in order to set the stage for Orientalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Orientalism in the 18th century was fundamentally different from the Orientalism that preceded it. However, the paradigms it created were the same. In contrast to earlier Orientalism, 18th-century Orientalism shifted from a religious basis to a secular one. Said argues this occurred because of an expansion "beyond the Islamic lands" to the rest of the East, an increased understanding of Oriental history, a perceived relationship in the histories of both the East and West, and the "impulse to classify nature and man into types." These elements secularized Orientalism, and in return, these elements led to "imperialism" and "colonialism."

Said sets out to understand how this occurred, claiming this mentality toward the Orient can be understood only through the lens of history. Without the historical context of Orientalism, it is impossible to understand how the formative ideas surrounding the Orient were fashioned, and how those ideas led to the imperialism and colonialism of the Orient. In Said's ideas, the history of Orientalism created the "modern Orientalist" who perceived of himself as a hero "rescuing the Orient," the same paradigm that characterized the previous centuries. However, now the concept was secularized and characterized as "power that dwelt in the new, scientifically advanced techniques of philology and of anthropological generalization."

Instead of a religious basis, the modern Orientalists were grounded in secular arguments that served only to increase their authority despite having a fundamentally flawed premise regarding the Orient. In essence, the modern Orientalist is the product of an "accumulation" of ideas that persist not because they are grounded in reality but rather because they existed in the first place and are backed by secular authority.

### **PART – II**

Said describes the two main figures of the 18th century who transformed Orientalism into a secular field: Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan. Said first discusses Sacy as the individual who created the first "systematic body of texts" on Orientalism. His efforts at translation, public presentation, secularization, and linkage to public policy provide the

premise for Orientalism's spread within the academic world. Indeed, at the time, every academic around the world "traced his intellectual authority back to him." Sacy served to canonize Orientalist thought and effectively confirm the position of the Orient not as an unknowable divine, but rather as another object of "European scholarship."

In contrast, Renan linked Orientalist studies to the popular field of the day, philology. Best known for his work on Semitic languages, Renan is known to have perpetuated racist and prejudiced views against Orientals, while at the same time removing languages from the realm of the divine and affording them a purely human construction. Said emphasizes that in the context of the times, this was extremely effective in solidifying Renan's own Orientalist views. Thus, "Semitic was not fully a natural object" because of the negative views Renan placed upon it, but neither was it "an unnatural or divine object." In essence, what Renan was using philology to describe—the relative unnaturalness of the Semitic language compared to the Indo-European language—was actually being constructed by the very language he was using to describe it. Renan's approach served only to perpetuate his "European ethnocentrism."

Renan's approach was extremely effective not only in promoting his racist views but in solidifying himself as a "cultural figure" that was then drawn upon for generations. Said emphasizes part of the power of the Orientalist worldview was the self-perpetuation of the ideology. There was no room for self-questioning or doubt.

### **PART – III**

Said discusses how in the late 19th century, Orientalism was characterized and categorized mainly through the development of a "knowing vocabulary." While Renan and Sacy's works served to "reduce the Orient" to create a sense of understanding, the latter half of the century was characterized by Orientalists who used language to create their own visions of the Orient. This was made possible by a series of efforts in the early 19th century to make the Orient "subordinate intellectually to the West," dehumanized through a discussion only of abstract "Orientals" rather than individuals, and the establishment of

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texts and terminology that allowed for the creation of the "Orient" as seen through the eyes of European scholar-travelers.

There are three different types of travelers: those who travel for scholarship's sake; those who travel for scholarly interest, but are not dedicated Orientalists; and those who travel for personal reasons. Said argues that in all cases, there is no fundamental difference in the outcome of their accounts regarding the Orient because they all use similar structures of language. The Orientalist description of the Orient was advanced by the large degree of travel to the Orient at the time, serving to increase the available lexicon about the Orient. Said discusses the work *Modern Egyptians* by Edward Lane and argues that Lane's lack of narrative, commitment to disseminating information, and level of detail served to dehumanize the Orient and helped create a discourse solidifying Orientalists as the holders of specialized knowledge about the Orient.

### **PART – IV**

Part of the reason Orientalists characterized the Orient as inferior was the history of how the Orient interacted with the West in the 19th century. Knowledge about the Orient was transmitted to the West by European travelers. The response of these "pilgrims" was to guard against the "unsettling influences" of the Orient, at least according to European sensibilities. While the "pilgrimage" was slightly different between English and French travelers because of the different histories of interaction with the Orient, their experiences were both characterized by passage through "the Biblical lands."

The English passed through India where "imaginative play was limited by the realities of administration," whereas the French were freer in their choice of location but consequently relied more on imagination than shared experience in their writings. The Orient was the product of those who visited and wrote about it. Previously, Said established the Orient as "less a place than a topos, a set of references." Now, in the 19th century, information about the Orient came from personal experiences. All of these ideas were propagated as scholarship during the period through the advent of mass text production, dissemination, and research.

### 7.3.3 CHAPTER 3

#### **PART – I**

Said distinguishes between "latent" and "manifest" Orientalism in this section. Latent Orientalism refers to the background of Orientalism formulated in the 18th and 19th centuries that underpins later Orientalist ideas. This form of Orientalism does not change. In contrast, manifest Orientalism is how those latent traits are incorporated into modern Oriental policy. While latent Orientalism cannot change, manifest Orientalism can, and does. Latent Orientalism explains why throughout the history of Orientalism, the Orient was seen as a place "requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption."

In the 19th century, the manifest theories of Orientalism were best explained through the "ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality." This formed the basis of how the colonial powers of Britain and France believed they had "penetrated and possessed the Orient." In essence, the long-standing ideas that the Orient was weak, subservient, and understood only as part of the West resulted in the colonial ideas of later centuries. Two mechanisms led to this: through the increase in the spread of knowledge about the Orient, and through the reduction in metaphysical and physical distance between the Orient and the Orientalists themselves. Regarding the second mechanism, there was a tension between latent and manifest Orientalism at the time. Orientalists began to advise the government on the Orient, effectively influencing public policy. Conflict occurred and was ultimately resolved as the "real" Orient collided with the latent Orientalist ideas, resulting in early 20th-century manifest Orientalism.

#### **PART – II**

Said begins with a discussion of "Kipling's White Man." This "White Man" was a generalized European who held specific views regarding the Orient. His duty was to help the "colored races." The White Man had knowledge the Orient did not, and as a result, he held a position of power over the Orient. Individuals did not exist within the Orient. Instead, they

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were all lumped together under this larger category, serving only to distinguish them as the "other." Rather than being described further by ethnic traits, an Oriental individual was "first an Oriental and only second a man." Other categories, such as "the Arab" and "the Semite" referred to phonological distinctions backed up by a series of "scientific" generalizations and categorizations that were not actually indicative of any true "Arab" or "Semitic" traits.

However, because of the pervasive paradigms that had persisted up to this point, there was an inability to argue with these categorizations. The White Man was further supported in his distinction from the Orient by perceived scientific categories classifying races during this period. Said describes how in the early 20th century, this "knowledge" of the Orient was translated into political activity. The Orientalist became the agent for translating knowledge about the Orient into public policy. For instance, following World War I, British archaeologist T. E. Lawrence discusses restoring the Orient. However, he argues for the reestablishment of the Orient from a "White Orientalist" perspective. This furthered Western politics but did not address the actual needs of the Orient. In this respect, the Orientalist became the "representative Oriental," or the spokesperson for a group of people who were not given their own voice. Interestingly, Orientalists proclaimed a liberalism they themselves were undermining. Rather than providing knowledge about the Orient, they were actively hindering "the process of enlarged and enlarging meaning."

### **PART – III**

Said is concerned with the differences in Orientalist reasoning between the periods prior to and immediately following World War I. Prior to the war, it was assumed that the Orient was in "need of Western enlightenment" and "domination." In contrast, after the war, the degree of unrest in the East and calls for independence resulted in the transformation of the Orientalist role.

Said focuses on two 20th-century Orientalists during this period, Gibb and Massignon, breaking down their work to reveal that the reasoning behind Orientalist ideals shifted, but the baseline assumptions and arguments remained the same. This was accomplished through the



Orientalists' "estrangement" from Islam that "intensified their feelings of superiority about European culture." During this period, the lack of progressive movement beyond old Orientalist conceptions about the West despite new developments around the world was in stark contrast to other humanistic and scientific fields. This characterized Orientalism during the interwar period up to the present day.

Said explores Gibb and Massignon's work in detail. While they came from very different backgrounds and approached their Oriental scholarship differently, the underpinning assumptions characterizing Oriental scholarship from the 19th century remained unchanged in the 20th century. While the specific requirements changed over time, it cannot be argued that in all cases they were meant to serve a Western purpose through the creation of knowledge about the Orient. This knowledge is based on the premise that the Orient is the "other" and cannot speak for itself. Thus, the Orientalist must speak "the truth about Islam."

#### **PART – IV**

Said focuses in this final section on the period after World War II and up to the modern day. At this point, he notes that America had displaced England and France as the major Orientalist nation. America was mainly concerned with the Orient as it related to public policy, although by this time, the term had been displaced by other categories such as "Japan, Indochina, China, India, Pakistan."

America asserted itself over the Orient in four different areas. The first is in the area of popular representation, and the replacement of a literary background with one based on the social sciences. Following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the world's increasing hunger for oil, the popular image of the Arab was negative and stemmed from the fear that "the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world." Equally, the Orientalist discourse was based not on the traditional literary texts. American scholars focused instead on "facts" that argued the same baseline. This stems from the fact that after World War II, the Orient became a matter of administrative policy for America. Thus, philological studies were replaced by "objective" texts and "expertise."

The second area where America asserted itself was through the transformation of Orientalist studies from purely scholarly in form to overtly political. Third, Americans perpetuated the "myth of the arrested development of the Semites," and thus justified the need for the West to control their operations. Finally, America embraced the fact that Orientalism is fundamentally valid because of the premise it is based upon. Those who could argue against it are unable to voice an opinion because the very mechanism they wish to speak out against has taken their voice. In his final paragraph, Said states, "Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed also to see it as human experience." From the beginning of Orientalism's conception, the Orient has been dehumanized, explaining why these perceptions continue even today.

### **7.3.4 AFTERWORD**

Fifteen years after the initial publication of *Orientalism*, Said included an Afterword to address some of the critiques leveled against the work within the context of political events since that time. He states the largest critique leveled against his work has been its "alleged anti-Westernism." He refutes this by claiming that his criticism of Orientalism does not imply he is "a supporter of Islamism or Muslim fundamentalism." Rather, he argues his point was to show the Orient was made into the "other" by the West, as cultures are apt to do. In and of itself, this is not negative. However, when policy-makers are using the same stereotypical definitions of the Orient as their predecessors did centuries ago, this is ineffective as it "hides historical change" and "hides the interests of the Orientalist."

Thus, it is necessary to understand the historical context of how these identities were formed in order to understand how they are being used today. There are two main reasons Said's work is considered anti-Western. First, it is easier to cling to stereotypes, and second, the political events that occurred since the initial publication of *Orientalism* have turned public and scholarly opinion against Arab nations. Said maintains that Orientalism was written to support multiculturalism and suggests that his views regarding the relationship between Orientalists

and Orientals could be applied to the discourse between other groups such as Native Americans or African Americans. He concludes that, in general, cultural groups should not be defined on the basis of geography and language alone. Different cultural groups are not easily defined or categorized, and as such, they should not be reduced to stereotypical caricatures in order to facilitate public policy.

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## 7.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF ORIENTALISM

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Orientalism is defined as the sometimes-biased perspective through which Westerners view languages, lifestyles, art, cultures, values and sciences of the East, notably the Middle East and North Africa. The term is especially used to describe the attitudes of 19th-century intellectuals who depicted their travels to these regions in art and literature, particularly works by French and British writers and artists. Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said's 1978 book "Orientalism" served as a critique for these attitudes by basically defining Orientalism as latent, manifest or contemporary.

### **Western Intellectual Domination**

Pre-19th-century scholars typically viewed people of the Orient — comprising Asia, northern Africa and the Middle East — as lacking in culture, unable to change ancient ways of living, biologically inferior to those of European descent and eager to be dominated by the "superior" race, the colonialists. According to Edward Said and other critics, Western scholarship strove to dominate the East by first apprehending it intellectually.

### **Latent Orientalism**

According to Edward Said, latent Orientalism refers to cultural differences that are neither seen nor easily identified by Western attitudes, such as manners of speaking and thought, which were primarily responsible for creating early stereotypical views of the East among Westerners. Said writes that the West continued to view the East as

## Notes

“separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual and passive.” Most of this view is derived from a comparison with the technological progress of the West. Writers on the Orient, from Ernest Renan to Karl Marx, Gustave Flaubert and Gérard de Nerval, asserted the need for reconstruction of the East by the West to prevent the Orient from remaining isolated from the sciences, arts and commerce that came to epitomize the Industrial Revolution.

### **Manifest Orientalism**

Manifest Orientalism, according to Said, deals with the obvious visible features of Eastern culture such as clothing, architecture and art — those things that can be seen by the West and therefore easily interpreted to mean “opposing Western culture.” A greater understanding of Orientalist thinking, according to Said, will open the door for more realistic Western attitudes toward the East, leading to greater influence on politics and policy-making decisions.

### **Contemporary Orientalism**

In "Orientalism," Edward Said describes current Western stereotyping of Arabs as “irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and — perhaps most importantly — prototypical.” These attitudes are the direct result of pre-19th-century Orientalism, he argues, writing “This is the culmination of Orientalism as a dogma that not only degrades its subject matter but also blinds its practitioners.” Overcoming these views, he believes, is often hindered by the ongoing Middle Eastern conflicts and by 9/11.

### **Check your Progress-1**

1. What does the book “Introduction to Orientalism” emphasize?

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2. What does Chapter 1, Part 1 of “Introduction to Orientalism” define?

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3. What does Chapter 1, Part 4 begins with?

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## 7.5 LET US SUM UP

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### **Summary: Introduction to Orientalism by Edward Said**

Edward Said opens his introduction to Orientalism by arguing that "The Orient was almost a European invention" (Orientalism, p.1). He goes on to explain that "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (ibid, p.1-2). Said claims that Orientalism is a man-made discourse, alluding to the Foucaultian influence on his book. The fact that Orientalism is a discourse does not mean it is a lie that would simply disappear by pointing out the truth. It is rather a construction of reality which is embedded in very factual mechanism of reality ranging from politics and military through law and economics all the way to literature and cinema. All these rely on what Said calls "an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" (ibid, p.2)

Said's Orientalism analyses mostly texts, but he strongly holds that there is no separation between ideas, images and representations and actual material reality. Therefore he uses his analysis of texts to show how Orientalism has formed as a highly powerful system of control due to the combination of actual institutions of power and discursive ones. Both military and literary excursions, both political and cultural endeavors, both administrative and anthropological practices and theories all served together to establish Europe's superiority over the Orient.

Said continues to blame contemporary research in being Eurocentric by not recognizing its own bias position and the political nature of its so

called "pure" knowledge. Said demonstrates how a "canon" of knowledge was crystallized to serve as the basis for everything that could be written by the West about the East (and even if an Eastern person were to write about himself, he would also have to abide by these premises in order to be heard and considered).

In the final part of his introduction to *Orientalism* Said states his own personal dimension and biographical interest in his subject of study, acknowledging their political influence on his research.

### **Summary: *Orientalism* / Chapter 1: The Scope of Orientalism**

Chapter 1 of Edward Said's *Orientalism* describes how the science of orientalism developed as a system of knowledge in modern times. According to Said, the Western Oriental structured the world as made of two opposing elements, ours and theirs. These were not just geographical divisions but more importantly epistemological ones. The West and East were to be cultural distinctions, differences in civilization or lack of it. In Western eyes orientals were incapable of taking care of themselves, they were lazy, lustful, irrational and violent but also exotic and mysterious. The self-proclaimed superiority of the West over the East also led Western scholars to think that they are more apt to understand the orientals than the orientals themselves, thus "orientalizing" them and subjecting them to Western standards which did not favor them.

According to Edward Said researchers and men of administration took a very Eurocentric and therefore biased and selective approach to understanding the Orient and the orientals. All accounts of the Orient according to Said were prone to generalizations, attributing collective significance to acts of individuals. The West also used its own terminology to define and analyze the Orient, applying terms were unknown to their subjects. This is how concepts of the Orient were developed by Western eyes and for Western eyes.

Orientalism for Said was fundamentally a system of self projection. The Orient served as a mirror for the West who wanted to see himself as superior. By describing the oriental as uncivilized the West attempted to proclaim its own civilization. Said also employs the Freudian mechanism

of projection, arguing that Europe projected everything it didn't want to acknowledge about itself onto the Orient (including sexual fantasies). The point of Said's chapter 1 of *Orientalism* is that Western Knowledge of the East was never neutral since it was always involved with a political and cultural agenda.

### **Summary: Orientalism / Chapter 2: Orientalist Structures and Restructures**

In chapter 2 of *Orientalism* Edward Said describes a shift in Western attitude towards the Orient in modern times. According to Said Orientalism as a field of knowledge romanticized the non-Western world for Western viewers. The shape and content of the Orient was devised by Western eyes for western eyes. The Orient was to become the exotic, a land of sunshine and romantic fantasies.

Said explains that the Orient as the West's "other" in the 19th century took on a new modern shape which saw it as an "unspoiled" and innocent form of human existence compared with the highly civilized, therefore complicated and even "unnatural" Western world. This does not mean that Westerners saw the Orient as superior to them, on the contrary, the purity of the Orientals made them inferior to the sophisticated West. The Orient's innocence was cause for the West to justify controlling them, even for their own sake.

Another justification provided by Orientalism for the rule of the West over the East was a form of social Darwinism which pointed to the fact that the West developed faster than other parts of the world as proof of the Westerners as biologically superior. The higher development rate of the West led to Westerners "discovering" others and not the other way around. This was seen as additional proof of the West's evolutionary advantage.

Chapter 2 of *Orientalism* also includes an analysis by Said on the works of dominant Orientalists in the 19th century (like Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan). Said shows the bias and prejudice inherited in their works and offers a genealogy of their development. Finally, in the final part of chapter 2 of *Orientalism* Said describes how the image of the Orient was

a cause for pilgrimage making excursions to visit and receive inspiration for it while protecting themselves from "its unsettling influences" (Orientalism, p.166)

### **Summary: Orientalism / Chapter 3 : Orientalism Now**

The third and final chapter on Edward Said's "Orientalism" is devoted to exploring the most recent (for Said's time) developments in Orientalism and the manner in which the Orient was perceived and treated by the Occident.

Said opens chapter 3 of "Orientalism" by describing how European colonialism was the geographical basis of Orientalism, both in geopolitical and cultural aspects. Orientalism and colonialism were both driven by a quest for knowledge and power and their results and products were knowledge and power

Said then moves on to talk about 20th century politics and change in the relationship between East and West. One of the main differences in the 20th century is that Orientalists became much more involved in the everyday lives of Orientals, unlike their predecessors who were uninvolved observers. People studying non-Western cultures attempted to live with them and integrate with them (like Lawrence of Arabia for example). This was not driven by a wish to resemble the Orientals but rather by a wish to gain more knowledge about them and to rule them better.

Like in chapter 2 of "Orientalism", Said explores works by important Orientalists (like Massignon and Gibb) that now take on a more liberal position, but without losing their bias and prejudice. The main attempt was to portray Islam as a weak and inferior religion.

Said holds the center of Orientalism shifted from Europe to the US following World War 1. Orientalism in the US was related to social sciences (unlike linguistics in Europe). Orientalism as a field of study was aimed to assist the government in finding ways to control non-Western societies. Decolonization processes following World War 2 did not mean the end of Orientalism which was made implicit instead of



explicit. Even in the age of globalization and higher interaction between East and West Arabs are all terrorists while all Japanese know Karate.

Said concludes "Orientalism" by arguing that Orientals should get a less passive position in the construction of their own image. He also warns about the practice of making generalizations in human sciences.

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## 7.6 KEYWORDS

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- **Eccentric:** (of a person or their behaviour) unconventional and slightly strange.
- **Revolution:** a forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favour of a new system.
- **Civilization:** the stage of human social and cultural development and organization that is considered most advanced.
- **Ontological** : relating to the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.
- **Epistemological:** relating to the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion.

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## 7.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- Summarize chapter 1 of "Introduction to Orientalism".
- Write a summary of Chapters 2 and 3 of "Introduction to Orientalism".
- Write the characteristics of Orientalism.

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## 7.8 SUGGESTED READING AND REFERENCES

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- 'A Late Style of Humanism', Field Day Review 1 (Dublin: 2005), <http://oconnellhouse.nd.edu/assets/39753/sdeanefdr.pdf> Archived 13 May 2013 at the Wayback Machine
- Christopher Hitchens, "A Valediction for Edward Said" Slate, September 2003.

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## 7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- The book emphasized the heroic nature of Napoleon and the greatness of the project he was undertaking in a nation that had fallen into barbarism. (**answers to check your progress – 1 Q1**)
- In Chapter 1, Part 1, Said defines what he means by Orientalism. (**answers to check your progress – 1 Q2**)
- Said begins by describing what constitutes a "textual attitude." (**answers to check your progress – 1 Q3**)