

# Ethnocentrism, Racism, Genocide...

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There is no experience which is not a way of thinking, and which cannot be analysed from the point of view of the history of thought...  
Michel Foucault.

As introduction, I shall examine some aspects of the background to this paper concerning the transition, as I see it, from ethnocentrism in the eighteenth century to genocide in the twentieth.

When I came to reflect on the cultural construction of race, I posed some fairly obvious questions; How can one understand the concept (or 'idea', as Robert Miles in this volume has argued) of 'race' in the eighteenth century when European voyagers began 'discovering' different societies at an increasingly rapid rate? Is it the same as the term we use today? Or is it that we tend to conflate two things; ethnocentrism, which has been with us for centuries, and today's term 'race'? I came to the view that the least one could do was pay some attention to what has been written about race, how it emerged within twentieth-century context, especially as regards Natural History and the writings of voyagers and naturalists. To begin in this way means that conclusions other than those we are used to have to be entertained. We have to consider, for instance, the possibility that 'race' as it initially appeared in Western thought had nothing to do with the notion of race we understand today, even if many historians fail to recognise this.

Indeed, upon consideration, it seemed reasonably clear to me that what I call eighteenth-century ethnocentrism (exemplified in the thought of the Enlightenment) is certainly not the same thing as nineteenth- or twentieth-century racism. Moreover, I contend that we are all ethnocentric up to a point, but not necessarily racist.

In light of the above remarks, I now outline some of my own thought processes in seeking to clarify the issues involved, and then discuss what I think are some pertinent arguments put forward by Michel Foucault about race and politics in the twentieth century.

I am confining my remarks to a particular kind of discontinuity in European thinking about the 'other', one that is associated both with the change

from absolute monarchies to the rise of nation states in Europe and with Europe's developing hegemony over the colonial world. Like Foucault, I see discontinuities in history but to analyse them it is sometimes necessary to write as if history were continuous.

What initially led to my reconsideration of the notion of race was my reading about the ethnocentrism of eighteenth-century voyagers' encounters with, or blindness to, the sacred and the profane in Pacific societies. In this context, I was particularly interested in Mary Douglas's study of the sacred; in *Purity and Danger* (1979) Douglas alludes to the paradox that the sacred is inscribed *in* the profane, a point that has been further exploited by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* (1982). Both Douglas's and Kristeva's treatment of the sacred, I thought, was bound to expose a European's blindness to the effect of the sacred in an alien culture, if not in their own. And indeed, to some extent I believe that this can be demonstrated. Part of what I have to say below will confirm this point.

When we come to examine the views of the sacred expressed in the accounts of members of Bougainville's voyage in the Pacific, there is no doubt that we are confronted - as one might expect from the disciples of Rousseau - with ethnocentrist views regarding the non-European other's notion of the sacred (cf. Taillemite, 1977). This other, I thought I could show, with its own peculiar version of the sacred, would be a quintessentially *racial* other. With just a slight change of register, I believed, this ethnocentrism could be seen as a form of racism - or at least as 'racentrism' resulting from thought that used race as one of its categories for describing the world.

The Pacific, after all, is well-entrenched in Western mythology. The 'noble' and/ or 'ignoble savage' can easily seem to offer the basis of a racist view of the world (cf. B. Smith, 1969). I began to think that the sacred (let us define it loosely as a series of interdictions, as a system of 'inclusions' and 'exclusions', as well as that which is bound up with the inexpressible origin of society, the individual, of life) was the domain which, most of all, became the vehicle for constituting the other as inferior, that is, racially speaking. What scholars tell us today about the term *tapu* might even be seen to confirm this point.

They argue that the key term *tapu* in Pacific cultures - a term which has to do with rituals relating to the sacred, with what should be done as well as with what should not be done - came to be understood as the exclusively interdictive term of European coinage, 'taboo'. Thus in the Pacific islands of the Marquesas, when the first Europeans arrived, women had to swim out to the ships because the canoes were *tapu*. Similarly, hogs were never

traded because they were *tapu*. Again, it was *tapu* for men to be below decks while women were above: *tapu* for men to eat with women or touch their clothing, or their sleeping mats (Denig 1980:51). And if *tapu* was all there was, then, for the eighteenth-century Frenchman especially, this was for the equivalent of there being no religious system at all. Bougainville, for instance, asked while at Tahiti whether the people had a religion. And he answered his own question by saying:

I have seen no temple, no external manifestation of adoration: such acts of devotion as we have performed before [the Tahitians] have neither struck nor interested them. In the houses of the important people, large wooden figures are to be found, one of each sex. In order to establish whether these were idols, we went on bended knee before them, then spat at their feet, stepped upon them. Each of these very different acts drew the derision of the Indian spectators 15 April 1758; (Taillemite, 1977:328. My translation).

Not to have tangible and familiar evidence of religion - of the sacred - was reason to doubt its presence. But what if the sacred were tied up with the intangible, the implicit, the inexpressible, the secret? Or what if the very absence of any outward, visible manifestation of the sacred were indeed a kind of negative index of its power? Might it not be, finally, that disguise is one of the sacred's most profound characteristics? Questions of this kind are not new: but they do nevertheless serve to remind us of the ambiguous and shifting boundary that emerges between two cultures and of two quite different modes of thought. We certainly have the basis of ethnocentrism here in European attitudes to the sacred, but do we have the basis of racism as well? This is the issue I elaborate in the following pages. My conclusion will suggest that an initial assumption about continuities between eighteenth and twentieth century thinking need revision. We need to distinguish very clearly between eighteenth century ethnocentrism and twentieth century racism and not conflate the two.

If there is an idea of race in the eighteenth century, it seems to be very different from that of the latter part of the nineteenth and of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it also seems to be true that many eighteenth-century forms of thought are still with us today. This is particularly so with regard to the law and politics; but, more specifically, what Rousseau says about 'natural' woman is still very influential in many quarters. Indeed, something seems to have occurred at the level of discourse and language - or more precisely, has not occurred - which has led to our commonly-used terminology and modes of expression being out of kilter with the changing circumstances in which we find ourselves.

In this regard, Jacques Attali in his book, *Noise* (1985), makes the point that it is not so much thought as music and its changes which often prefigure

and at times accompany social and economic changes. Thus, Attali writes that;

[Music] heralds, for it is *prophetic*. It has always been in its essence a herald of times to come. Thus ... if it is true that the *political organization of the twentieth century is rooted in the political thought of the nineteenth, the latter is almost entirely present in embryonic form in the music of the eighteenth century* (1985:4, emphasis in original).

If we consider this point, we note that for some reason political discourse today is largely that of the juridical state: our references to sexuality and power are still largely those of the Romantics: our notions of the economy and society remain those of the theorists of wealth and the Social Contract. I am not only referring to the language of everyday life, but also to the language of specialists, and to the growing dominance in the late eighteenth century of representation which made stereotypes possible. With the French Revolution there emerged in Europe a more or less fully developed state apparatus founded on the principle of representation (e.g., 'state' = nation). The eighteenth century also bequeathed a mode of subjectivity which corresponded to the conscious 'self' or psychological subject, that is, an entirely secular subject which began to treat the irrational, the non-conceptual, the unrepresentable, the feminine and 'mystical' dimensions of the individual and the world (the sacred, in a word) with scepticism and disdain.

With regard to race and racism, people still tend to speak as though these were the products of certain arrogant, egocentric nations, groups or individuals who are out to further their own interests against other nations, groups and individuals, largely through the use of force. We still speak, indeed, as though egotistical self-interest (a very eighteenth-century term if ever there was one) is at the heart of what is wrong with the world. This explains to me how (if not why) ethnocentrism and racism have been conflated. It is as though the language-cum-discourse of everyday life in the twentieth century has been bequeathed to us by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: and this can lead us to reflect upon the notion that even the category 'everyday life' and the attendant opposition of appearance and reality (which so concerned Rousseau and Kant, albeit in different ways) were also bequeathed to us by the neo-Platonism of the late eighteenth century. I say all this simply as a reminder that the language we use needs to be reflected upon at length.

Turning back to the eighteenth century for a moment, I believe the ethnocentrism evident in the observations and interpretations of that time concerning various forms of exotic behaviours and the levels of so-called civilisation attained by very different peoples, was the result of more of a

European cultural blindness than of any desire to rid the world of diversity, or make the human species 'racially' pure. In this sense particularly, eighteenth century ethnocentrism differs profoundly from modern forms of racism.

Consider Buffon's (1749) writings, for example. Here, we find that Bonnet's 'immense variety' (1779a:212) of nature required a long and laborious effort of observation which eventually provided the basis of a system for classifying nature - both the realm of the inanimate and the animate - into a hierarchical table of imperceptible gradations' with God at the head. As Robinet would have it in representing Buffon's position; 'All matter is organic and living ... Inorganic matter, dead and inanimate, is a chimera, an impossibility' (1768:7). In effect, we are yet to arrive at the point where the three domains of 'animal', 'vegetable' and 'mineral' are relatively discontinuous with one another.

Moreover, so-called objective description was the stock-in-trade of the eighteenth-century naturalist. Thus Buffon urges that,

... in order to describe exactly, it is necessary to have seen, examined and compared the thing that is being described, and all this without prejudice, without an idea of system; without this, the description no longer has the character of truth which is the only thing it should embody (1749:25).

Such a statement indicates that to describe nature truthfully there should be no rush to judgement, no hasty generalisations based on mere prejudice. In other words, this is hardly the approach of latter-day racism.

Despite all this, it is also true that accounts by eighteenth century voyagers and naturalists of the peoples they saw are locked into another set of exigencies; the need to satisfy a public's voracious appetite for stories of the 'bizarre, the 'pittoresque' and the avowedly 'exotic'. Books by voyagers sold more than any other genre in the latter half of the eighteenth century (Smith 1821:32). Few published accounts of the time are entirely free from the distortions produced by the pressure of this public demand. These distortions were no doubt spurred on by assertions like those of Robinet (1768:168) concerning the existence of 'Negroes with tails', and of course there are the interminable references to the Patagonian giants. Even so reputable a naturalist as Commerson (the French Banks), who sailed with Bougainville into the Pacific, accepted as valid the stories of the giants' existence (Commerson 1766: Fol. 76).

Such distortions could well be called fictions. This designation does not necessarily contradict the notion that everything in nature is somehow connected to everything else, or that nature is a continuous whole of in-

finite gradations. It is merely to assert that in constructing 'fictions' people were either poor observers, or that the voids in the existing state of knowledge meant that certain phenomena appeared in isolation, and thus in sharp relief, when compared with other phenomena. The task, at least in principle, was to fill these voids, to *name* the visible world in its entirety, to bring it into the Symbolic Order (the realm of consciousness) and thereby place the exotica and the bizarre in perspective, and thus transform them into the 'ordinary'. Bonnet thus asks:

... are we to judge the chain of Beings by our existing knowledge? Because we discover here and there in this chain some interruptions, some voids, are we to conclude that these voids are real? ... We can only begin by covering the vast exhibition rooms of nature; and among this innumerable multitude of diverse productions that she has assembled, how many of them are there that we have not even glimpsed and the existence of which we do not suspect? (1781:197)

In effect, knowledge of the 'known' cannot serve as the model for the 'unknown', for the models have been varied to infinity. 'Difference' is not excluded as a matter of course. As a result, every natural historian is at some point likely to resemble

a French voyager who would expect to find in the *Terres Australes* the manners of his own country, and who would be quite scandalised not to see them there. The animal kingdom, too, has its *Terres Australes*, where it is probably not normal to have a brain, a heart, a stomach, etc. (Bonnet, 1781:182).

In sum, whatever else it is, eighteenth-century natural history is inclusive rather than exclusive. Everything is necessary in the whole that is nature. Ethnocentrism there may be: but it is an ethnocentrism which is profoundly paternalistic in its attitudes to other societies and cultures rather than openly hostile and aggressive - at least initially. It is thought which, at least in principle, strives to comprehend individuality and diversity, not to destroy it through fear and blind prejudice.

The issues raised here do, to be sure, need to be unravelled still further. However, my purpose in drawing attention to them is simply to bring to mind the nature of the dilemma they evoke: the dilemma of how one can ever escape the confines of one's own culture in order to know the culture of the other.

It is this dilemma that Claude Lévi-Strauss refers to in, among other places, his famous essay written for UNESCO in 1952, entitled *Race and History* (1978:323-362). Lévi-Strauss argues that the notion that 'one culture is unable to hold true judgement about another' because it is caught 'in a relativism without appeal' (1978:344) is true only at the level of abstract

logic. In fact, he says, if we look around us we will see that no culture is entirely cut off from all others, and it is unlikely that this has ever been the case in human history. Lévi-Strauss thus argues for the interconnectedness of all cultures, with borrowings and contacts of one kind or another always having taken place. Indeed, he suggests that, far from isolation being the catalyst that produces differences, it is more often than not the very proximity of one culture to another which leads, and has led, to energetic assertions of cultural identity (1978:328). For Lévi-Strauss, this means, too, that there has never been a 'pure' race: that there are no 'innate racial aptitudes', as there are no 'aptitudes related to the anatomical or physiological constitution of black, yellow and white races' (1978:325). In short, there is no biological basis for race - something to which I will return.

What does exist is a diversity of societies and civilisations in human history, each of which has been creative and progressive in its own way through having made contacts with other societies and civilisations. This diversity suggests the idea of an underlying *equality* of humanness in principle between societies and cultures.

If we accept two general points emerging from Lévi-Strauss's *Race and History*, namely, that a pure race does not exist and that nearly every society, whether Western or not, has initially tended to characterise outsiders as barbarians and inferiors without necessarily subjugating them, then, we tend to render benign the very real political ends that the term race and the practice of racism have been made to serve if we simply equate racism with ethnocentrism. From this, it can be seen that certain consequences stem from using the *term* race if, in reality, there is no such thing as a pure race. That is, if among all myths the myth of race is the 'most dangerous', as Ashley Montagu (1974) argues, the political consequences of using the term are also dangerous.

The recent debate about sociobiology has seen eminent biologists such as François Jacob reiterate the view that the concept of race has no real scientific validity (1979:16). For Jacob, it is diversity and difference at the individual and social levels which have been the strength of human biological evolution. It is possible and necessary, I believe, to pursue this argument further.

In the light of the work of Michel Foucault, it is possible to contend that the development of Biology in the nineteenth century is the condition of possibility of the political use of the concept, or term, race in the twentieth. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault argues that, as opposed to the classifying of the visible which dominated the eighteenth century's approximation to our social and natural sciences, the nineteenth century saw

the emergence, in the work of Cuvier and others, of the concept of 'life'. Unlike the eighteenth century, the realm of the visible in the nineteenth became connected to the invisible, to the 'deeper' cause of life. Thus Foucault writes:

From Cuvier onward, it is life in its non-perceptible, purely functional aspect that provides the basis of the exterior possibility of a classification... [T]he possibility of classification now arises from the depths of life, from those elements most hidden from view. Before, the living being was a locality of natural classification: now, the fact of being classifiable is a property of the living being (1973:268).

François Jacob confirms this by pointing to the notion of 'organisation' which by the nineteenth century referred to the *hidden* configuration of beings. 'Organisation', according to Jacob, 'provided a hidden foundation for the bare data of description, for the being as a whole and for its functioning' (1974:83).

Through the concept of 'life', then, and the second-order concept of 'organisation', the interiority - the hidden depths - of individuals and societies became an area open to speculation. These speculations were not, by any means, specific to Biology itself, but opened up the discipline to the prospect of political exploitation which had not existed before. Racism became one of these possibilities. 'Life', 'biology', and the 'body' (both individual and body politic) also came to constitute, in all their complexity, the unconscious frames of reference for all knowledge in the *social* sciences. That is to say, that only when 'life' came to occupy the place once occupied by 'nature' could there be discourses about the bases of social life, the 'health' and 'purity' of the social and individual body, as well as discourses about the human species *as* specifically and separately *human*, rather than as a species which, like any other, was part of nature.

If Foucault's thesis in *The Order of Things* sets up the possibility of a link between 'biology', 'life' and 'race', the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* (1979) - and especially its final part ('Right of Death and Power over Life') - is an even more scandalous proposition concerning the idea of race. Before going into more detail about the argument in this text, I offer some remarks regarding the way Foucault's work may be appreciated, particularly in relation to his discussion of sexuality.

As with much of Foucault's work, the volume on sexuality provides a relentless attempt to contest prevailing stereotypes, to undermine received ideas and to challenge unquestioned presuppositions; in other words, Foucault thinks differently from the guardians of conventional wisdom. This is his strength - and maybe his weakness. For Foucault, to think in the prevailing modes is not really thinking at all. It is necessary to take this into account when coming to grips with his thought.



Take the term 'power', for instance. It is very often used to connote force or oppression; people often refer to the possession of power, or its lack; to the maintenance of order; the police; the state; the law - in short, all that is negative, interdictive, and repressive. For Foucault, however, power does not exist in a vacuum; if it is negative, it still moves against *something* - an object: and this 'object' (e.g. the delinquent, or the criminal) is itself constituted by those with power and knowledge to do so. There is, therefore, no object of power separate from the workings of power - power working in conjunction with the knowledge that marks out its object. The appearance of the delinquent in history is thus a *product* of nineteenth-century power configurations.

To elaborate, I turn to sexuality and its history as it is relevant to race. According to Foucault, sexuality has also been constituted as an object of knowledge and hence power. The repression of sexuality, he argues, did not as is often thought reduce people to silence on the topic. In fact, it was necessary to talk about sex at length if it was to be repressed at all. The perversions and pleasures of sex therefore had to be described, specified and rendered quite explicit. Since the eighteenth century, pedagogical institution, for example, rather than impose a silence on the sex of children and adults has

multiplied the forms of discourse on the subject; it has established various points of implantation for sex; it has coded contents and qualified speakers. Speaking about children's sex, inducing educators, physicians, administrators and parents to speak of it, or speaking to them about it, causing children themselves to talk about it, and enclosing them in a web of discourses which sometimes address them, sometimes speak about them, or impose canonical bits of knowledge on them, or use them as a basis for constructing a science that is beyond their grasp - all this together enables us to link an intensification of the interventions of power to a multiplication of discourse (Foucault, 1979:29-30).

In keeping with this idea of a proliferation of discourses about sex, Foucault goes on to argue that the so-called repression of sex in the nineteenth-century has to be understood as another stereotype of the Public Culture (the domain of representations) which needs to be challenged. For, in fact, the 'repression' of sex was not the result of any 'renunciation of pleasure or a disqualification of the flesh' (122). Rather, the preoccupations of the time had more to do with 'techniques for maximising life' (123), and the concern was more for talking about 'the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that "ruled"' (ibid) than anything else.

Consequently, sex and sexuality in the modern era from the nineteenth-

century onwards has to be understood differently from the way we have been used to. Indeed it is the very domain of pleasure itself - sex - which now has to be seen as implicated in the workings of power to the extent that it has become a mechanism (even a strategy) for (re) producing 'good' health and physical perfection at both the individual and social levels.

What Foucault had in mind here were the immense public health improvement programmes in the nineteenth century (slum clearances, sewerage installations and the like) combined, at the private level, with concern for improvements to the genetic stock in the family, in its 'history'. That is, by comparison with the earlier aristocratic concern about nobility ('blood'), the bourgeoisie could pass on 'good' - or perhaps 'bad' - health, depending on whether they were combining 'healthy' or 'degenerate' genetic stock. A bourgeois marriage thus became the 'consummation' of two genetic pools of physical and mental family attributes. The bourgeoisie's 'blood' (nobility) was therefore found in its good health or, in Foucault's words, 'the bourgeoisie's "blood" was its sex'. This sex, it is worth pointing out, is not the sexuality of Freud but the sex of biology, demography and public health, that is, the sex concerned with the 'themes of health, progeny, race, the future of the species, the vitality of the social body...' (Foucault, 1979:147). That is, it is the sexuality which constitutes 'techniques for maximising' life.

It is in the context of this great concern, developed during the nineteenth century, for maximising the 'life' of a population that the conditions of the possibility for a virulent racism emerge. In their most extreme formulations, racist arguments attest that there must be no mixing through sex of (biologically) 'inferior' and (biologically) 'superior' peoples. Such mixing places the healthy genetic pool at risk. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Foucault argues,

Racism took shape ... (racism in its modern, 'biologising', statist form); it was then that a whole politics of settlement (*peuplement*), family, marriage, education, social hierarchisation, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life, received their colour and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of blood and ensuring the triumph of the race (1979:149).

Historians have made us aware for some time now that during the nineteenth century, and even more so in the twentieth, public health improved and various diseases were eliminated. It is also generally accepted that the social sciences built up profiles of 'populations' based on a ceaseless monitoring made possible by the collection of statistical data of all kinds; data on health, education, employment and income, sexual practices and fertility, family situation, patterns of consumption, criminality, ethnicity, etc. These statistics provide information which makes it possible to con-

struct the 'normal' case, namely, that which is invoked when a picture of society, or a representation of its 'normal' patterns of behaviour, is required. It is a monitoring which Foucault says is an integral part of 'bio-power' - the power relating to the *management* of populations. Because 'normal' behaviour does not exist outside the definition or construction of it, the norm in fact also produces - definitionally - a panoply of perversions which must be specified, studied and observed in their functioning *in order that* they may be controlled, ordered, repressed or even eliminated. There is therefore no perversion without the 'normal' case: no power without knowledge, as there is no power configuration, in Foucault's view, without results of all kinds being produced, i.e. deviations, perversions, abnormalities.

Thus, for Foucault, power and knowledge co-mingle with each other in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a way that is very different from that of the eighteenth. In the latter century, the juridico-discursive' articulation of power had the wherewithal to 'put to death' or to 'let live' when the monarch was thought to be under threat. The monarch, of course could take an individual's life under the guise of protecting himself. In that century, it was the protection of a centre of power - or of force - itself which was at stake, not the control or the management of a population: power therefore was not inscribed in a whole network of social behaviours. Thus the eighteenth century produced society in which sovereignty was symbolised by the sword and where 'blood' was the symbol of nobility - regardless of the mental or physical health of the population or of individuals. Wars were fought between the troops of the sovereign and those of the enemy. Men fought and died in the name of the sovereign: the sovereign had the power to let live or to put people to death. In this kind of society, Kant's extremely revealing statement about the glory and honour of war (in, let us note, *The Critique of Judgement*) makes very pertinent sense:

War itself, provided it is conducted with order and a sacred respect for the rights of civilians, has something sublime about it, and gives nations that carry it on in such a manner a stamp of mind only the more sublime the more numerous the dangers to which they are exposed, and which they are able to meet with fortitude (1973, Pt. 1: 112—113)

What we need to note, then, is that power in its twentieth century form can no longer be understood as being exclusively interdictory, or, as Kant would have it perhaps, as preserving the life of the sovereign and therefore the nation. Rather, power can now be seen to permeate all those practices which ostensibly preserve the life of a population against the threat of degeneration, and it is this which opens the way to racism in general and to Nazi eugenics in particular. As Montagu points out, the eugenicists stand for the view that "race mixture" should be prevented if "racial" degenera-

tion ... is not to ensue' (1974:329). What is scandalous and no doubt difficult to accept, is that it is also the innocent concerns with well-being, with a healthy sexuality, with life which became the basis of that which is anathema to life; the idea of race. A population became a race, and it is this factor which has potentially enormous consequences for us in the so-called post-modern age. The very existence of the species is indeed at stake.

It is only necessary to recognise the incredible (by nineteenth century standards) development and elaboration of the state and its attendant Public Culture (illustrated in part by the 'monitoring' I mentioned earlier) in the twentieth century, to understand that the very notion of a private sphere that is not itself defined by, and is therefore part of, the Public Culture, is extremely doubtful. Indeed, the social sciences have contributed towards making the most intimate social practices and individual behaviour *public* knowledge. Today, the representation of the nation is in its Public Culture (cf. Horne 1986). We can be sure, too, that, if another world war broke out, it would indeed be between state apparatuses that have become inseparable from the populations which are now also inseparable from the Public Culture. We know that the next world war will be explicitly between populations rather than armies. The seeds for this were sown during the last world war in the bombings of Dresden, London, Hiroshima and Nagasaki - bombings which targeted civilians. Kant could not have understood this: he could not have understood that wars today are no longer between soldiers but include the civilian population. He could not have understood either that a world war today risks genocide on a massive scale, both because the weaponry is nuclear and because the targets would be populations. Nuclear warfare signals the end of the 'military' target. Now, population is pitted against population, 'race' is pitted against 'race'. The almost unimaginable but potential holocausts within and between populations should serve as a terrible warning of what is in store in a nuclear war. Yet, in principle at least, Foucault suggests that genocide has become the 'dream' of modern power - the absolute domination of one population over all the rest - assuming they still existed. As he puts it:

Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended: they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone: entire populations are mobilised for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity; massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many régimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed (1979:137).

In relation to the management of life, war becomes an issue of technology: it no longer has anything whatever to do with courage, honour or, indeed, manliness. A war of races is beyond morality. In terms of Kristeva's *Powers*

*of Horror*, this nuclear, genocidal war is abject, that is, it is not even immoral but entirely a-moral (unimaginable).

The preoccupation with 'race' in our modernity, then, ushers in the possibility of race, nuclear war and genocide becoming inseparable from one another. We are now a long way indeed from the 'ethnocentrism' with which I began this paper.

To sum up, I believe that the usefulness of Foucault's thesis is that we are provided with concepts and a framework that begin to make sense of this *fin de siècle* reality with which we are faced, as far as government and 'race' are concerned. While I also believe that the notion that sex alone is at the heart of the 'norm' is questionable (for has Foucault himself not made sex everything here?), it seems clear that the Enlightenment and its thinking can no longer provide us with a framework capable of understanding the kind of political and social reality we now inhabit. It is necessary to leave the thought of the past if we are going to live in the future.

Furthermore, Foucault indicates that it is necessary to be less naive about the monitoring of populations. For while it may be innocent in intent, it must be recognised that power is inseparable from knowledge; knowledge - especially in the social sciences - is the condition of possibility for the workings of power in the modern era. It is not that knowledge as such is culpable, but that it is dangerous.

To conclude, I would like to say that there is a difference between the past and our modernity on the issue of race, and that Foucault alerts us to something fundamental regarding our situation when he links holocaust, race and nuclear madness together. He connects them in a way that would have been unthinkable less than two centuries ago (and maybe even in 1914) when wars were still fought between armies; when only the guilty were supposed to be punished, when only soldiers were supposed to die in war, and when the power of the king was so specific in its application.

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