

1973-06-14e: [PARADIGM] Foucault, The Order of Things

[p. xi] The history of science, besides seeking the objective development of knowledge, also tries to restore what eluded the consciousness; the influences that affected it, the implicit philosophies that were subjacent to it, the unformulated thematics, the unseen obstacles; it describes the unconscious of science. This unconscious is always the negative side of science--that which resists it, deflects it, or disturbs it. What I would like to do, however, is to reveal a *positive unconscious* of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse, instead of disputing its validity and seeking to diminish its scientific nature. What was common to the natural history, the economics, and the grammar of the Classical period was certainly not present to the consciousness of the scientist; or that part of it that was conscious was superficial, limited, and almost fanciful.., it is these rules of formation, which were never formulated in their own right, but are to be found only in widely differing theories, concepts, and objects of study, that I have tried to reveal, by isolating, as their specific locus, a level that I have called, somewhat arbitrarily perhaps, archaeological.

[pp. xx-xxi] Distinguishes the fundamental codes of a culture, those governing language, perception, etc., which govern every man's empirical ordering of things, and scientific theories which explain why order exists in general. Between these two, the middle region (with which he is going to deal) where man (or culture--here he shifts from the individual to culture in a sly way) deviates from the culture codes and begins to have a conception of the fact that order exists. In effect, it would seem to me, he is talking about self consciousness of the empirical grids which normally regulate perception, etc., without any conscious knowledge of how its happening. This self-consciousness probably comes only to a few (he seems only to be talking in this book of very high level intellectuals). This middle region between [p. xxi] "the already encoded eye and reflexive knowledge..liberates order itself... This middle region then, in so far as it makes manifest the modes of being of order, can be posited as the most fundamental of all: anterior to words, perceptions and gestures, which are then taken to be more or less exact, more or less happy, expressions of it; more solid, more archaic, less dubious, always more 'true' than the theories that attempt to give those expressions explicit form, exhaustive application, or philosophical foundation."

[p. xxii] "The present study is an attempt to analyze that experience... Quite obviously, such an analysis does not belong to the history of ideas or of science; it is rather an enquiry whose aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory become possible; within what space or order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what historical a priori, and in the element of what positivity, ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed, only, perhaps, to dissolve and vanish soon afterwards what I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the episteme in which knowledge grounds its positivity and thereby manifests history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility. Such an enterprise is not so much a history, in the traditional meaning of that word, as an 'archaeology'." [Footnote "to this says: The problems of method raised by such an 'archaeology' will be examined in a later work.]

[p. xxii] "Now, this archaeological inquiry has revealed two great discontinuities in the episteme of Western culture: the first inaugurates the Classical age (roughly half-way through the 17th century) and the second, at the beginning of the 19th century, marks the beginning of the modern age."

The theory of representation of the Classical age disappears in the 19th century and gives way to a profound historicity.

