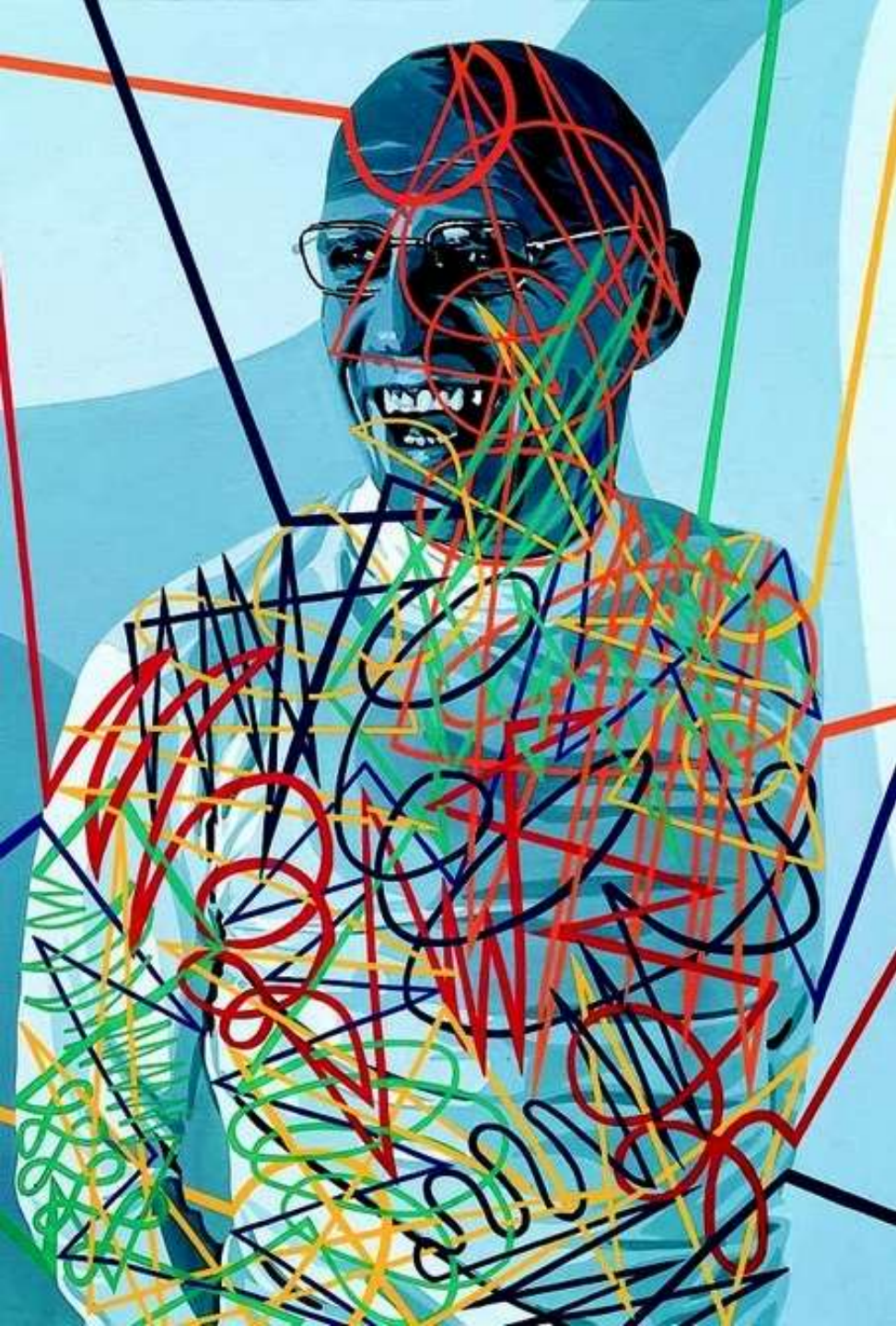


Society, Language, Difference

3. Michel Foucault



Agenda

1. Introducing Foucault
2. Archaeology
3. Madness
4. Confinement
5. Genealogy
6. Truth and Power



*Pl. Sireño
de la razón
produce
monstruos.*



‘Do not ask who I am and certainly do not ask me to remain the same’

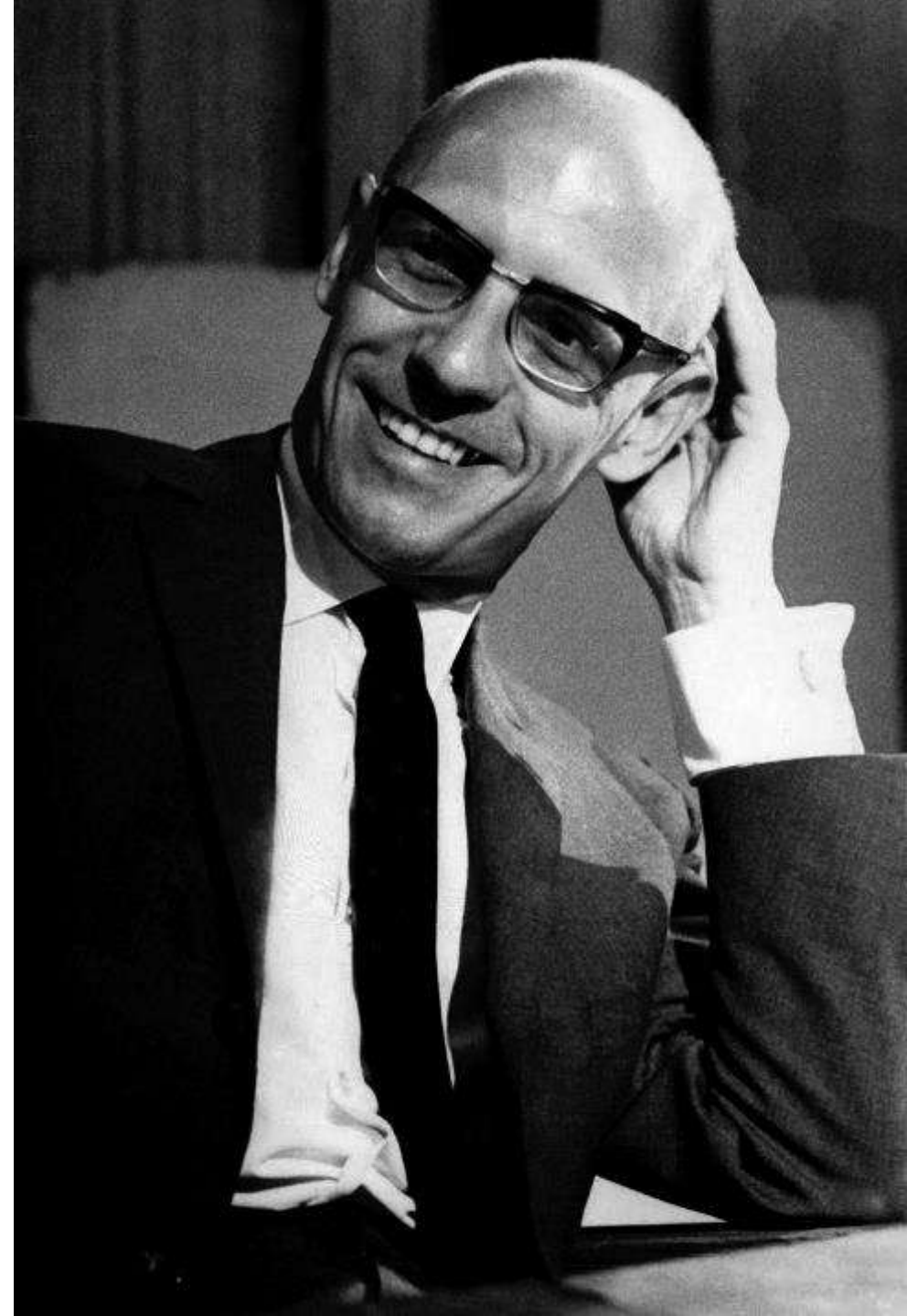
‘I think I have in fact been situated in most of the squares of the political checkerboard, one after the other and sometimes simultaneously:

... as an anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, new liberal, and so forth

...None of these description is important by itself: taken together, on the other hand, they mean something. And I must admit I rather like what they mean.’

Introducing Foucault

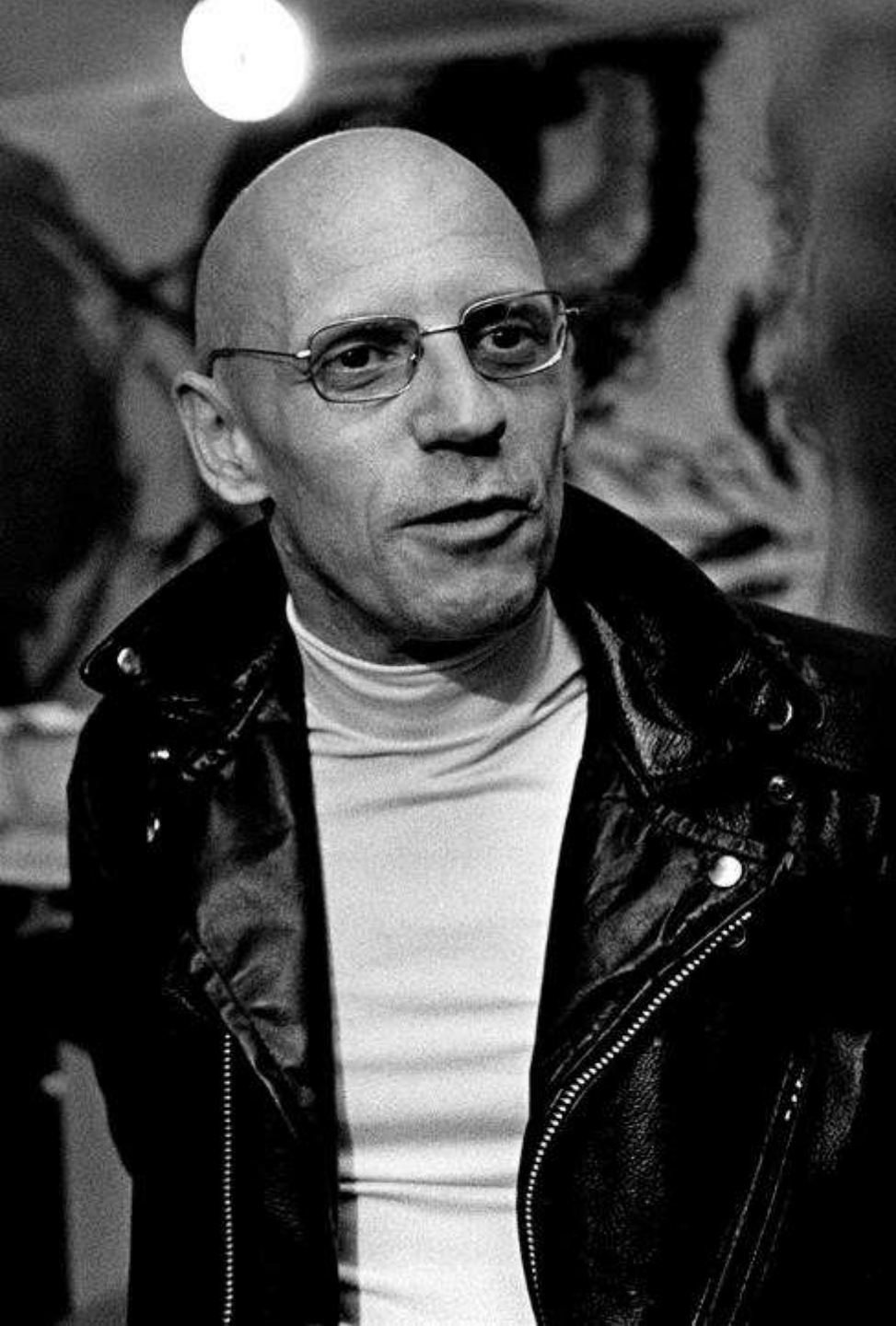
- 1926, Poitiers: upper-class family of surgeons
- Enters École Normale Supérieure in 1946, but severe depression related to his sexuality
- Sees psychiatric institutions first-hand, with initial work on psychology and madness
- Joins the Communist Party in 1950, but not an active member
- Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, 1953





Introducing Foucault

- *The Order of Things* (1966) becomes a bestseller
- Head of Philosophy at Paris VIII, 1968
- Appoints many left-wing radical academics; Ministry of Education withdraws accreditation
- Helps found the Prison Information Group, visits American often, experiments with LSD, and tours Iran in 1979, celebrating Khomeini's revolution
- Final years: 6-volume *History of Sexuality*
- Dies from Aids in 1984



Key works

1954: *Mental Illness and Psychology*

1961: *Madness and Civilization*

1963: *The Birth of the Clinic*

1966: *The Order of Things*

1968: *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

1975: *Discipline and Punish*

1976-1984: *The History of Sexuality: Vol 1.
The Will to Knowledge*

Vol 2. The Use of Pleasure

Vol 3. The Care of the Self

The Subject

‘the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself (or herself);

I am interested in the technologies of the self and a history of the subject.’

Questions: *how does language constitute that subject?*

- *What of the limits of what is sayable or thinkable?*
- *In what ways does language, and the ideas and symbols it conveys, structure but also limit a world?*

2. *Archaeology*



Towards Structuralism

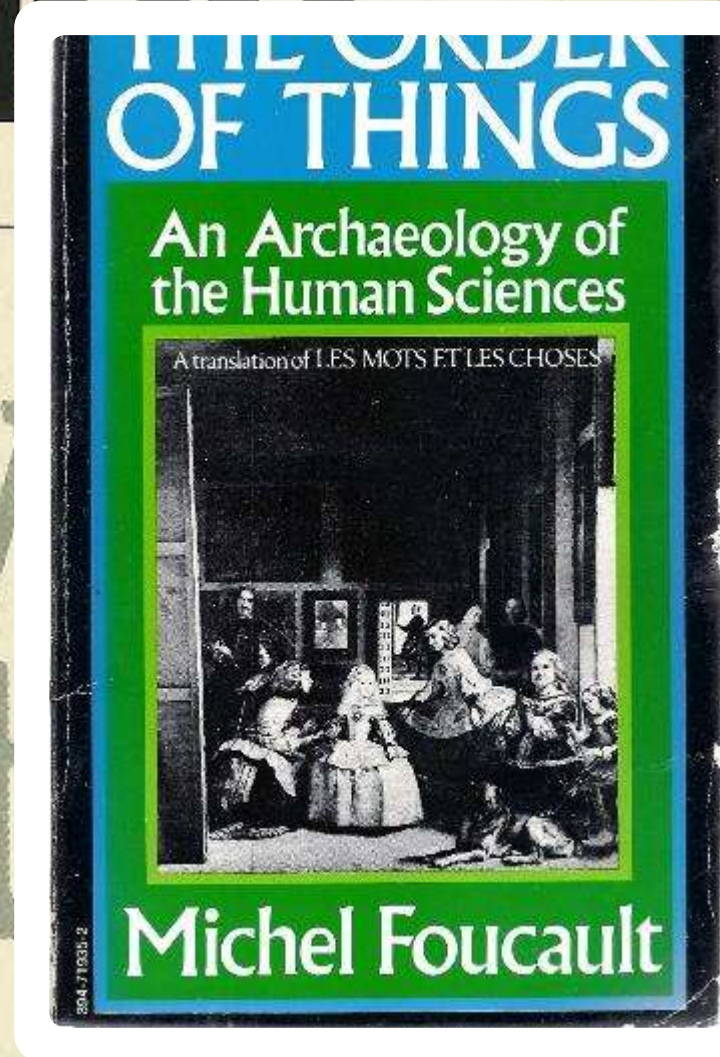
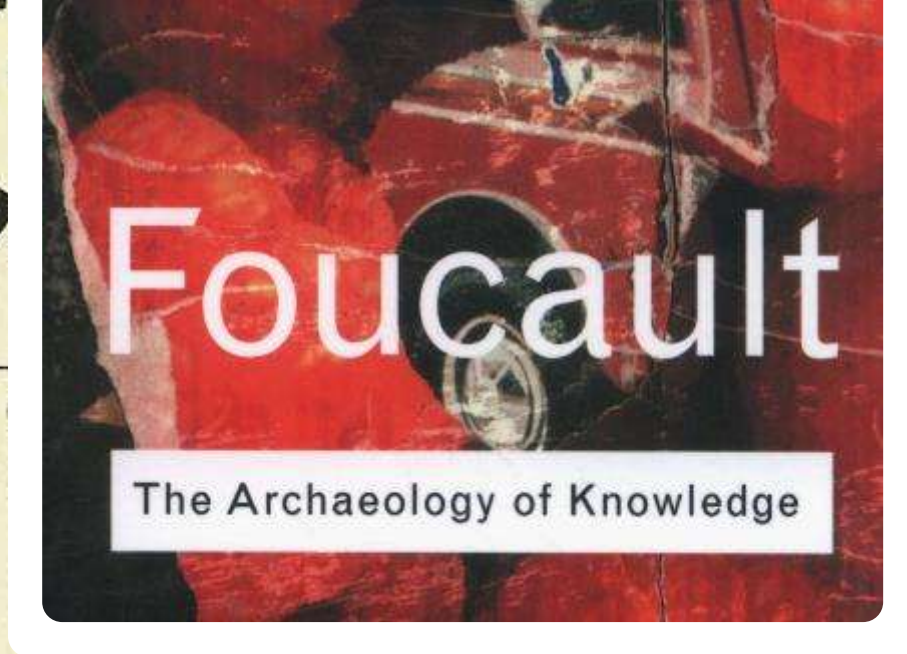
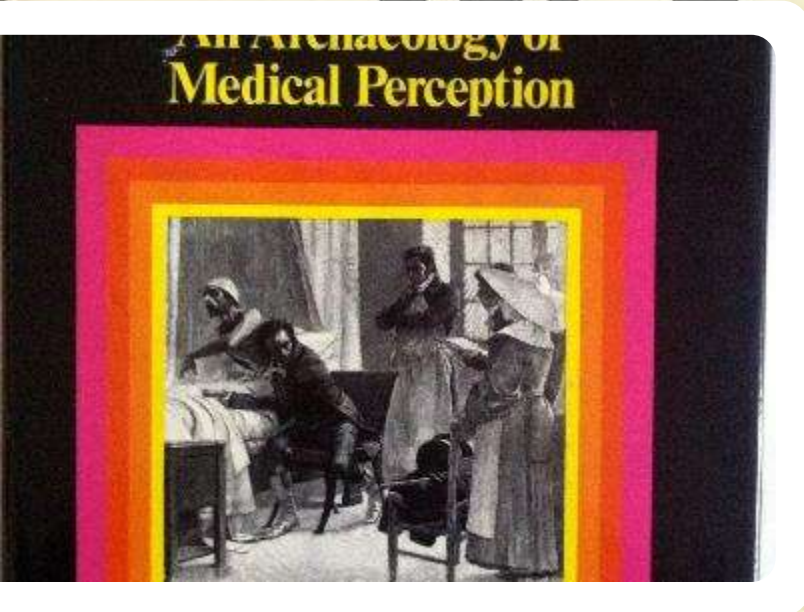
- Existentialism and Phenomenology take for granted that we can truly 'access' the self or subject
- The subject is central, but who is this subject? What's so universal about them?
- Our sense of self is constituted by our language
- Goal: investigate the rules of a language at a given time
- To discover how these structure what is thinkable or sayable (or not)

The Archaeologist.

- “[W]e need to know about the conditions and circumstances under which the values grew up, developed, and changed’ – Nietzsche, *Genealogy*
- All philosophy is shaped by its own moment – the eternal truth is an illusion
- A history of systems of thought
- But its value isn’t just historical – philosophy should strive to realise concrete human freedom
- Reminiscent of Critical Theory?

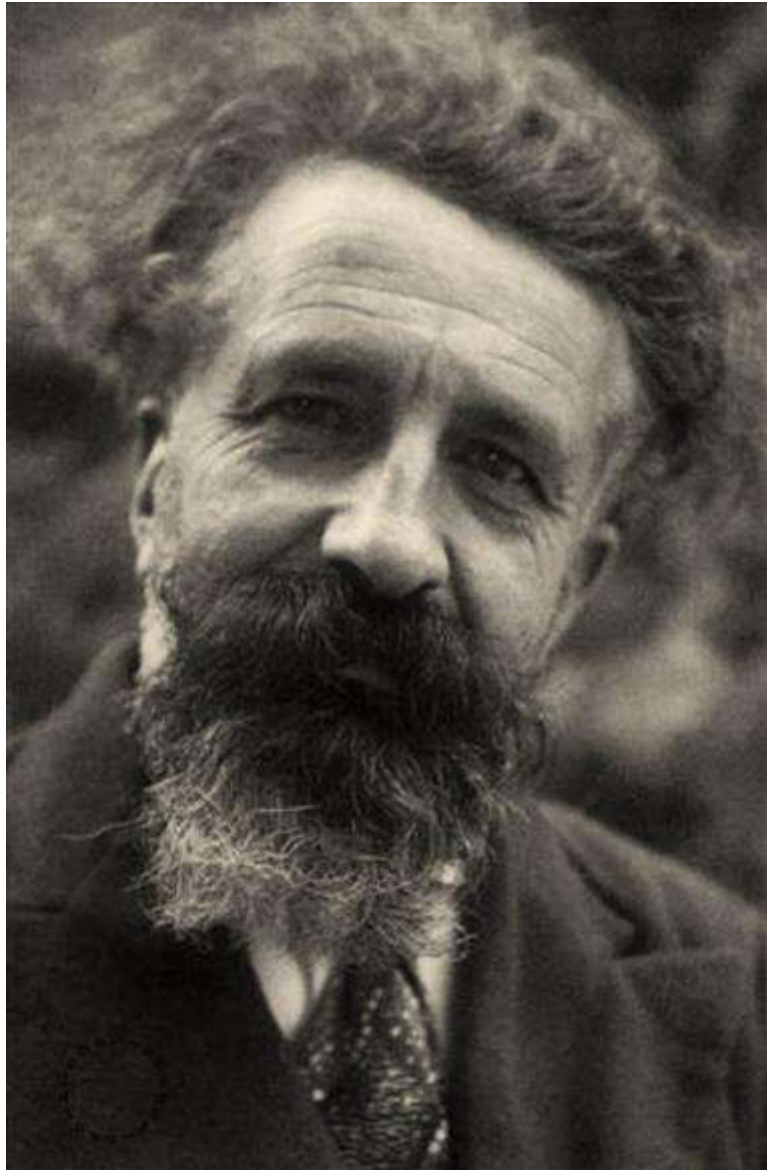


Insanity in the
Age of Reason



The Archaeologist

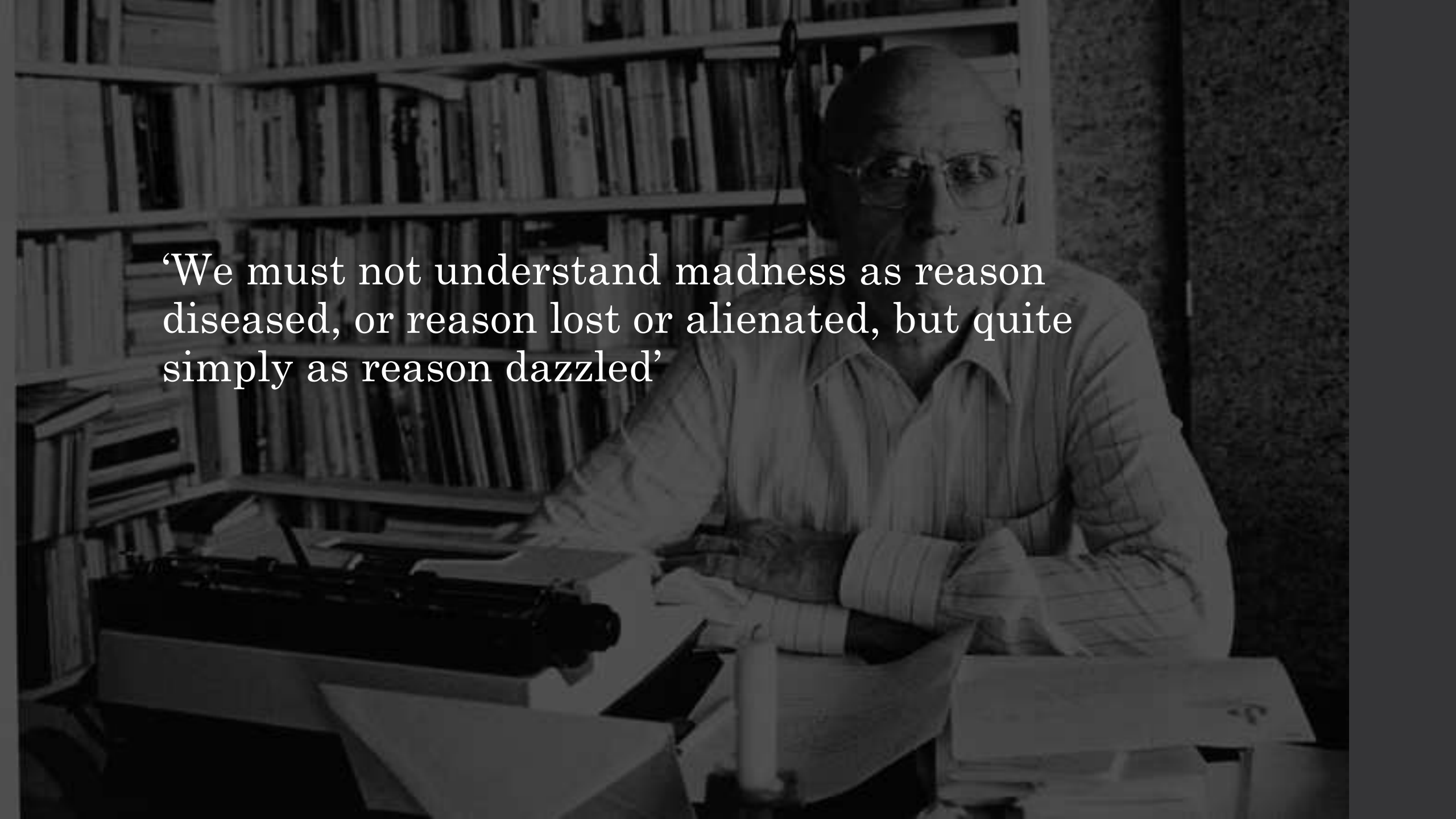
- *Madness and Civilization* (1961): the changing meaning and uses of madness in Europe from Middle Ages to modern;
- *Birth of the Clinic* (1963): the development of the medical profession, the Clinic and the 'medical gaze'
- *Order of Things* (1966): excavate the origins of the human sciences, in 'life, labour, and language' (biology, economics, and linguistics); 'epistemes' – underlying norms about what is acceptable



The Construction of Science

- Gaston Bachelard, 'epistemic breaks'
- A psychoanalytical approach to the hard sciences, where thought is constructed and even limited by mental patterns
- Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (1948)
- Through biology, how new domains of knowledge arise not objectively, but through political, technological and economic imperatives
- Thomas Kuhn, 'paradigm shift' (1962)

3. Madness

A black and white photograph of a man with glasses sitting at a desk in a library. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. In front of him is a typewriter and several sheets of paper. The background is filled with bookshelves packed with books. The image has a dark, moody tone.

‘We must not understand madness as reason diseased, or reason lost or alienated, but quite simply as reason dazzled’



adness & Civilization

A History of
Insanity in the
Age of Reason

by Michel Foucault

Introducing the book

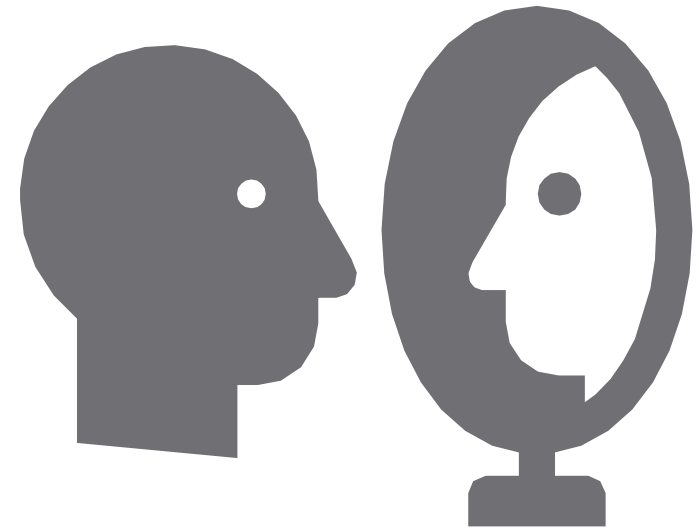
Folie et Dérison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique, 1961

Experience of madness in three epistemes:

Renaissance, Classical and Modern

Language and practises shift from madness as potentially containing wisdom/religious inspiration to something associated with economic idleness

Requiring confinement, and only much later, distinction from criminality, and then attempts to cure



‘We have yet to write the history of that other form of madness, by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbors, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness;

to define the moment of this conspiracy before it was permanently established in the realm of truth, before it was revived by the lyricism of protest.

We must try to return, in history, to that zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience, a not yet divided experience of division itself.

We must describe, from the start of its trajectory, that "other form" which relegates Reason and Madness to one side or the other of its action as things henceforth external, deaf to all exchange, and as though dead to one another.’



Reason-Madness

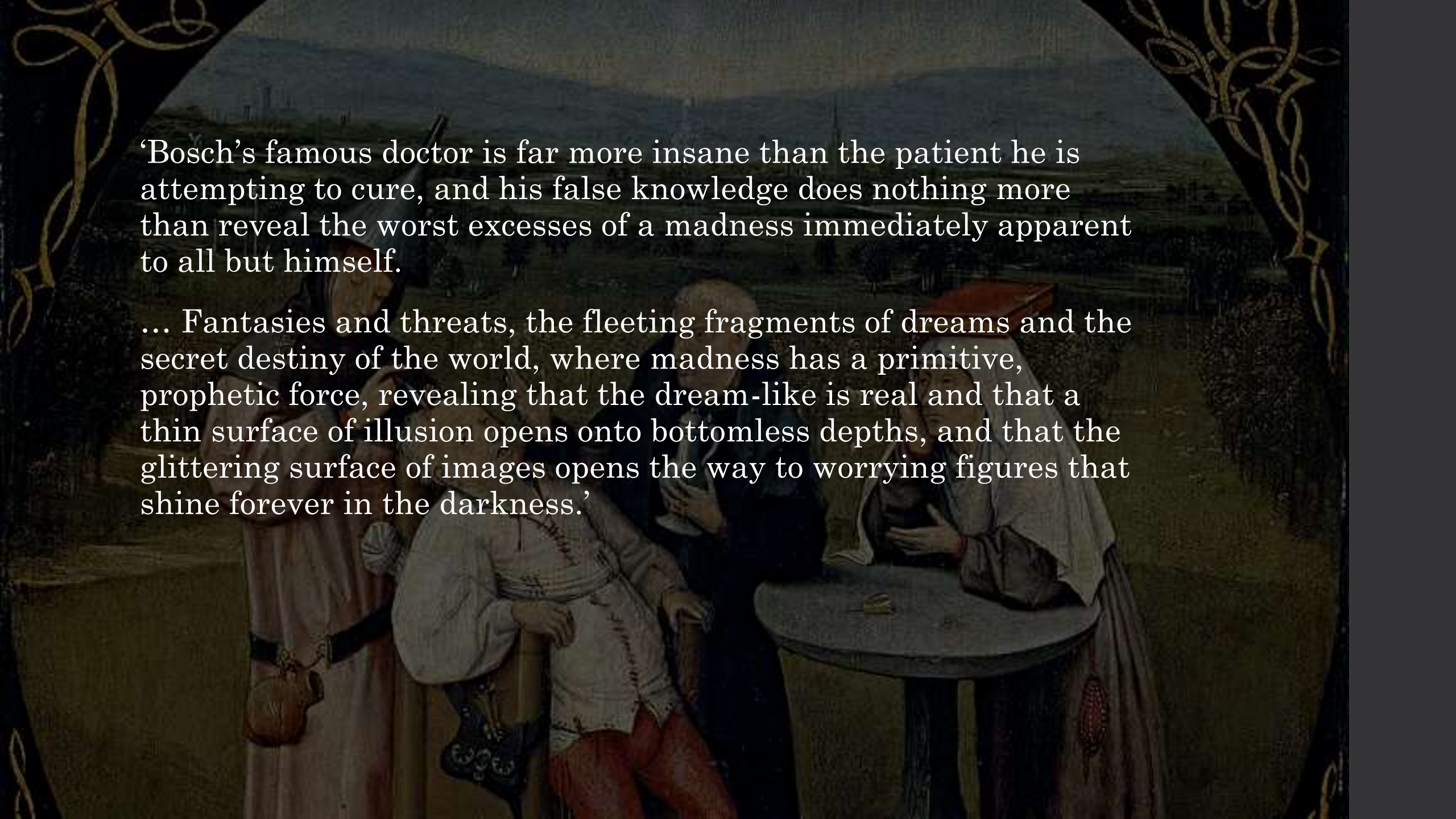
- ‘the archaeology of that silence’
- The ‘Reason-Madness nexus’, incorporating Bosch, and ...
- Antonin Artaud’s final 1947 performance, the ‘Theatre of Cruelty’
- Nietzsche’s *Untimely Meditations*, with its focus on utilising history for present purposes
- The conflict of Reason and Madness, of reason and its other, is one in which we can observe profound social shifts in the West
- From madness as something not just tolerated, but imbued with mystical power, to its confinement and hiding away, to its medicalisation as mental illness...

‘What matters here is to remove all chronology and historical succession from the perspective of a ‘progress’, to reveal in the history of an experience, a movement in its own right, uncluttered by a teleology of knowledge or the orthogenesis of learning.

The aim here is to uncover the design and structures of the experience of madness produced by the classical age.

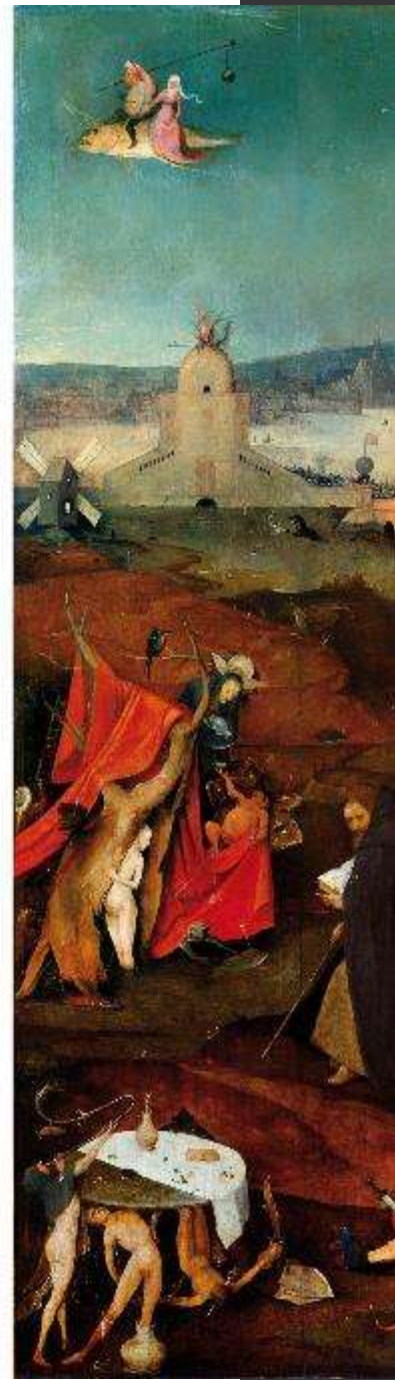
That experience is neither progress nor a step backward in relation to any other.’





‘Bosch’s famous doctor is far more insane than the patient he is attempting to cure, and his false knowledge does nothing more than reveal the worst excesses of a madness immediately apparent to all but himself.

... Fantasies and threats, the fleeting fragments of dreams and the secret destiny of the world, where madness has a primitive, prophetic force, revealing that the dream-like is real and that a thin surface of illusion opens onto bottomless depths, and that the glittering surface of images opens the way to worrying figures that shine forever in the darkness.’



‘madness also exerts a fascination because it is knowledge. And that is because these absurd figures are in reality the elements that make up a difficult, hermetic, esoteric knowledge.

These strange forms belong from the outset to the great secret, and Saint Anthony is tempted by them

... This is the inaccessible, fearsome knowledge that the madman, in his innocent foolishness, already possesses.

While men of reason and wisdom see only fragmentary figures that are all the more frightening for their incompleteness, the madman sees a whole, unbroken sphere.’





‘When the arbitrary nature of madness was exhibited, man encountered the sombre necessity of the world: the animal that haunted nightmares and visions born of ascetic deprivation was man’s own nature, revealed in the unpitying truth of hell.

The vain images of blind foolishness turned out to be the truth of the world, and in this grand disorder, this mad universe, the cruelty that lay in the day of judgement began to appear.

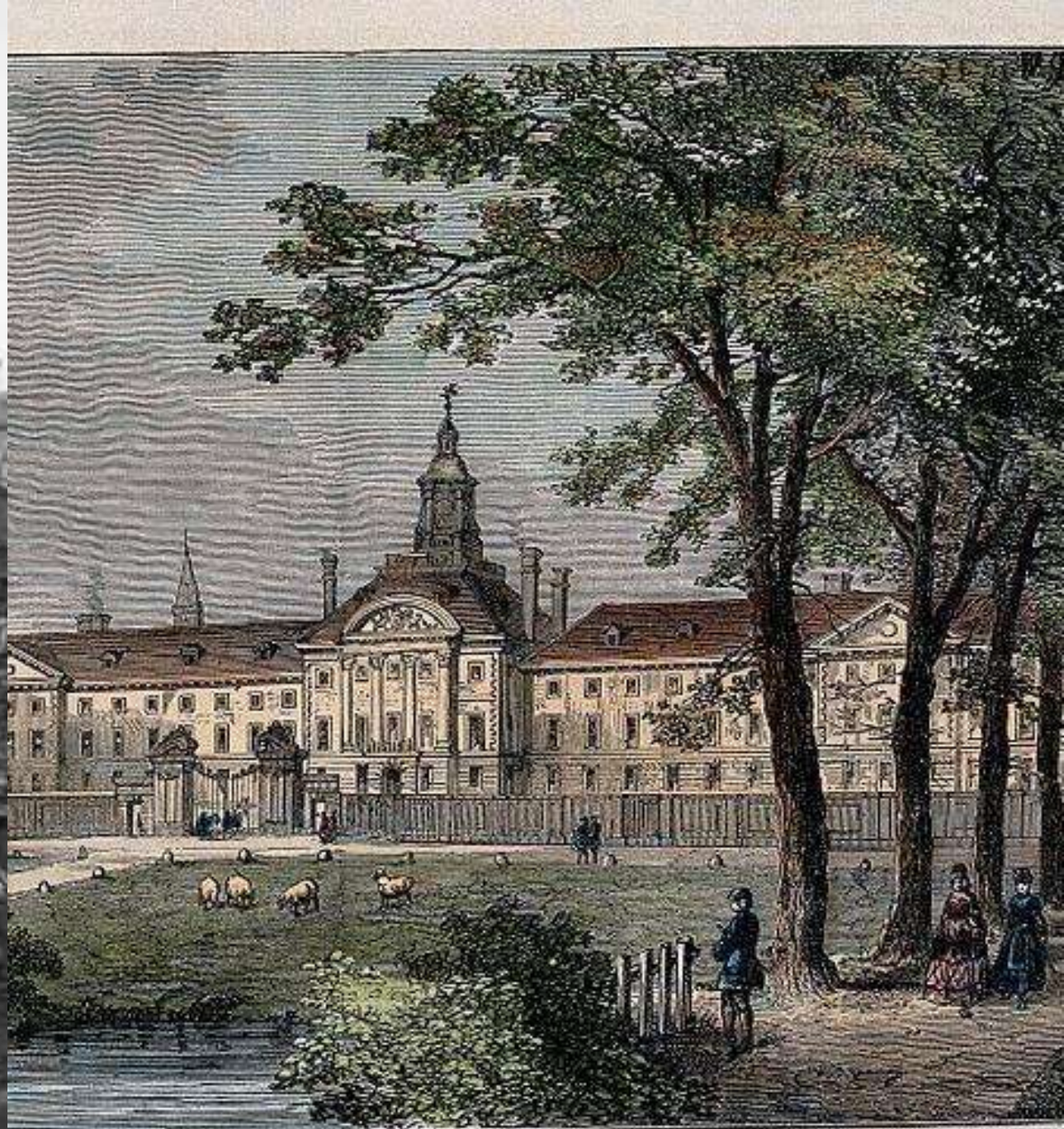
These mad images are an expression of hidden Renaissance worries about the menacing secrets of the world, and it was those fears that gave the fantastic images such coherence and lent them such power.’

4. Confinement



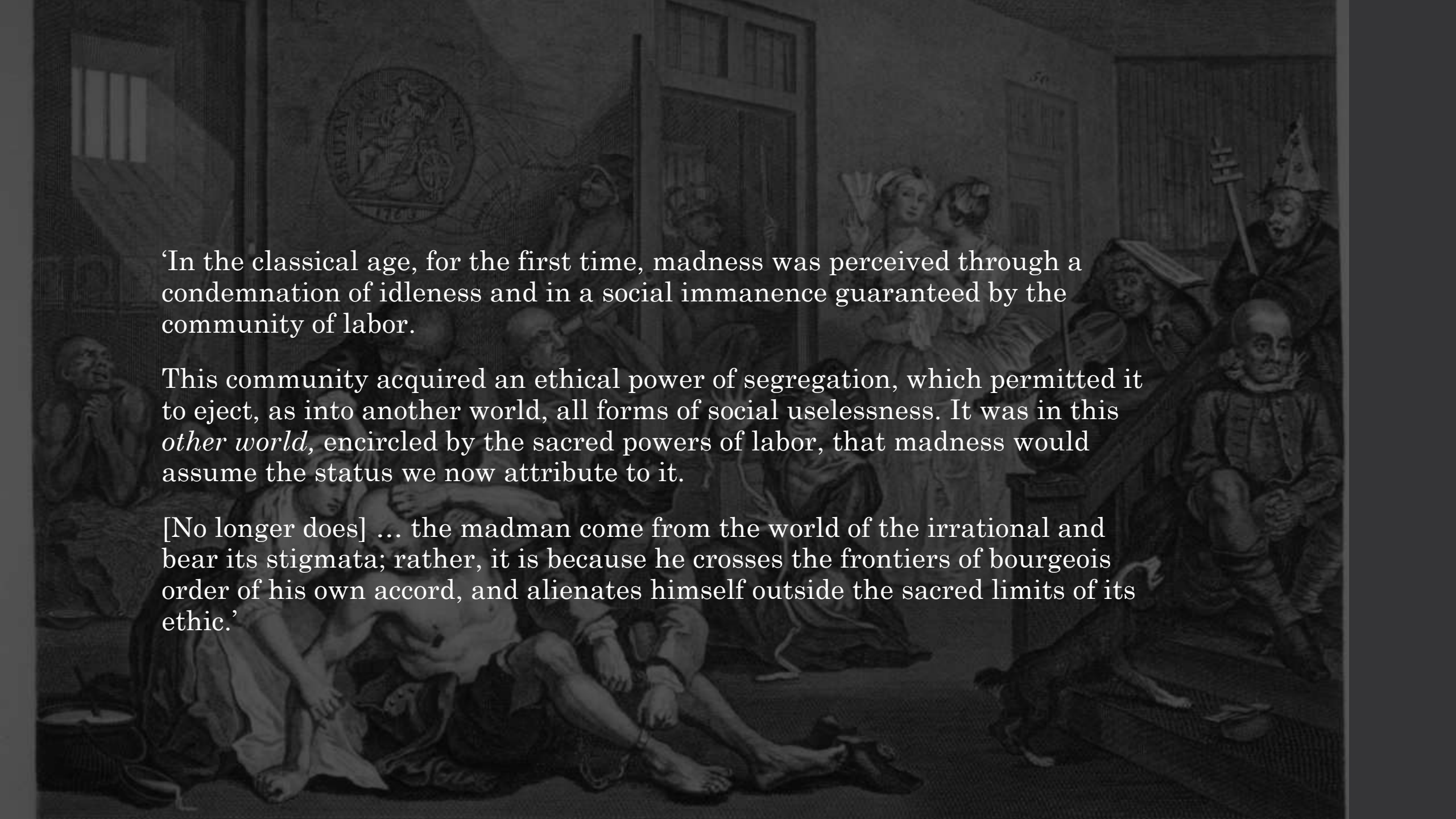
The Great Confinement

- By the early 17th century, up to a third of Parisians begged on the streets
- Previous edicts forced the poor to work in chains in sewers, or branded and exiled them
- Up to 1 in 100 Parisians are rounded up and kept in the Hopital-General, holding 5000-6000
- Aim: prevent 'mendicancy and idleness as the source of all disorders'
- Yet in economic terms, confinement wasn't effective. While it could absorb the urban poor and force them to work, thereby dispelling political agitation, the costs of confinement and manufacturing often outweighed any gains
- What it reveals is an attitude: labour would solve poverty...



OLD BETHLEM HOSPITAL, MOORFIELDS. ABOUT 1750. (See page 200.)





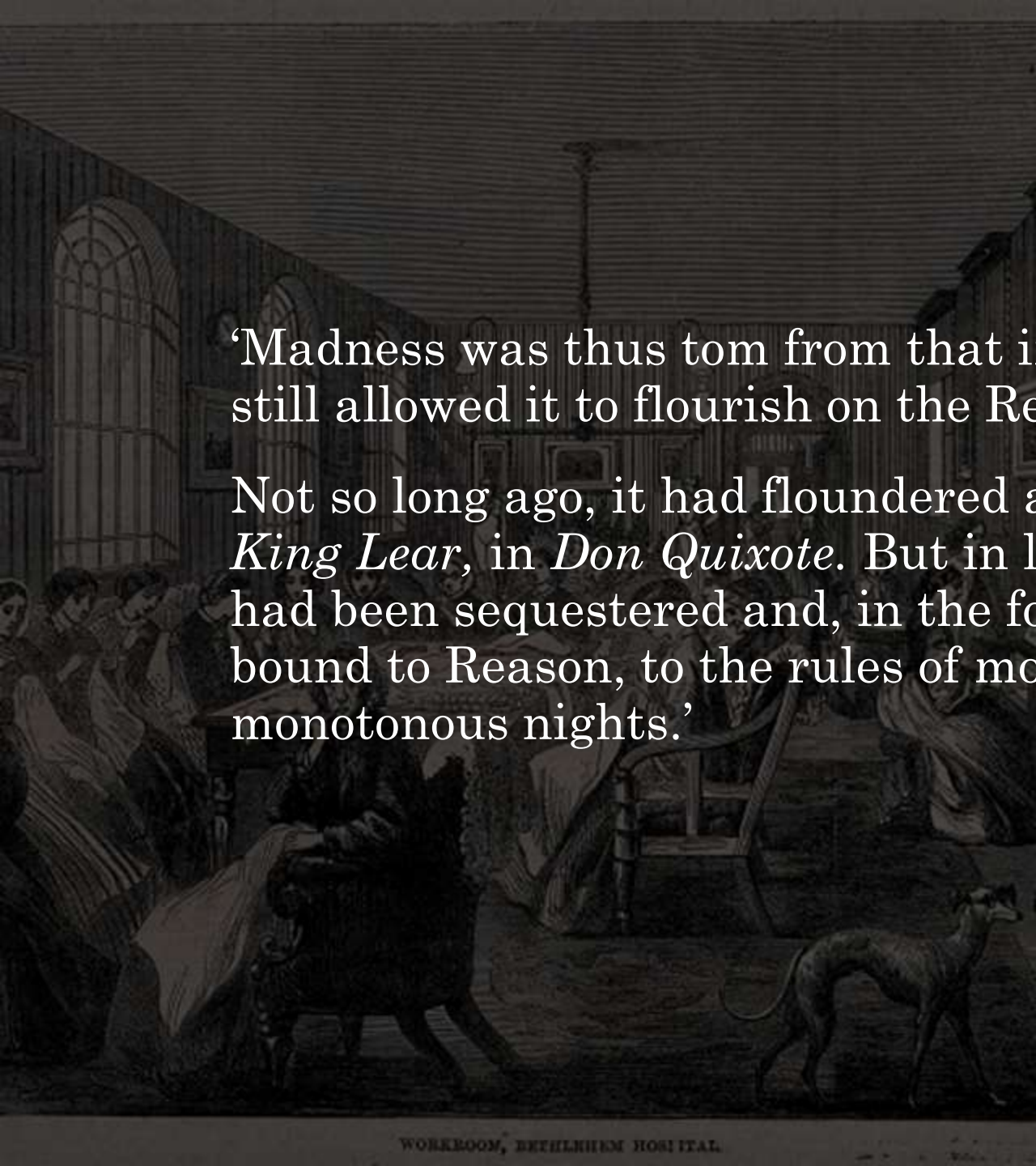
‘In the classical age, for the first time, madness was perceived through a condemnation of idleness and in a social immanence guaranteed by the community of labor.

This community acquired an ethical power of segregation, which permitted it to eject, as into another world, all forms of social uselessness. It was in this *other world*, encircled by the sacred powers of labor, that madness would assume the status we now attribute to it.

[No longer does] ... the madman come from the world of the irrational and bear its stigmata; rather, it is because he crosses the frontiers of bourgeois order of his own accord, and alienates himself outside the sacred limits of its ethic.’

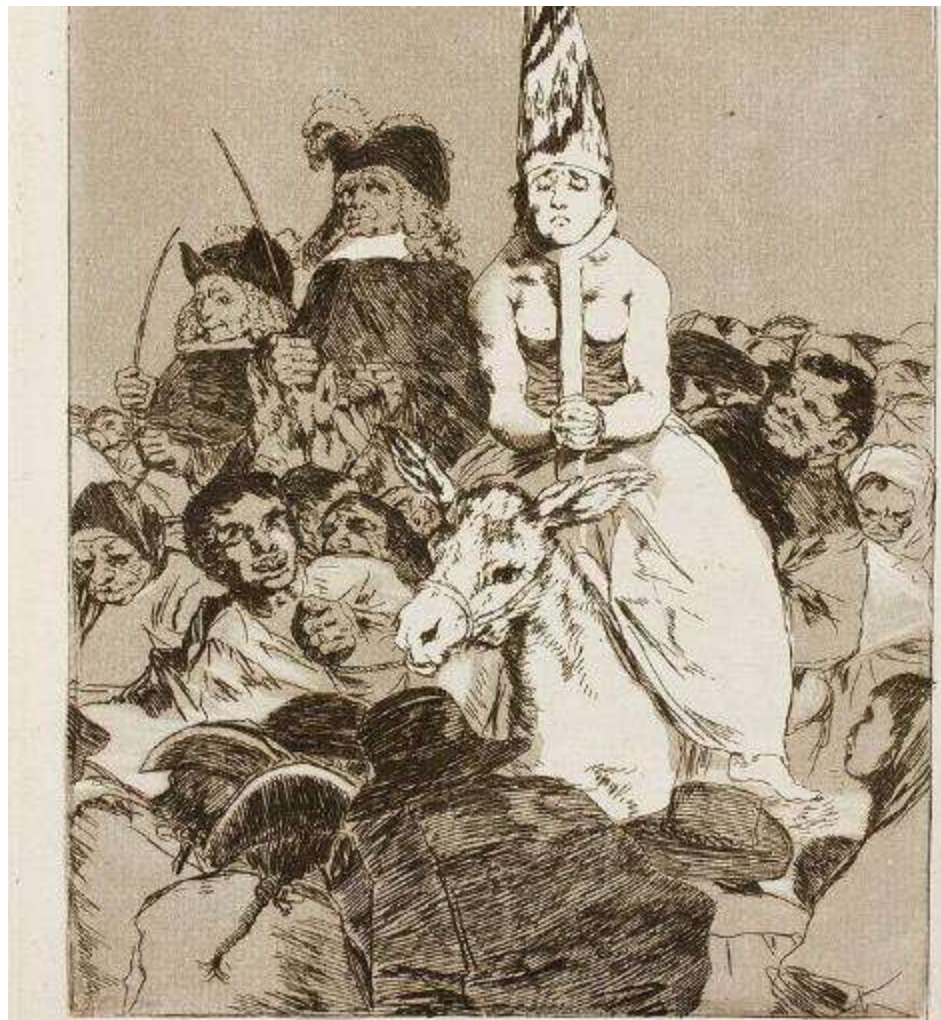


WORKROOM, BETHLEHEM HOSPITAL.



‘Madness was thus tom from that imaginary freedom which still allowed it to flourish on the Renaissance horizon.

Not so long ago, it had floundered about in broad daylight: in *King Lear*, in *Don Quixote*. But in less than a half-century, it had been sequestered and, in the fortress of confinement, bound to Reason, to the rules of morality and to their monotonous nights.’

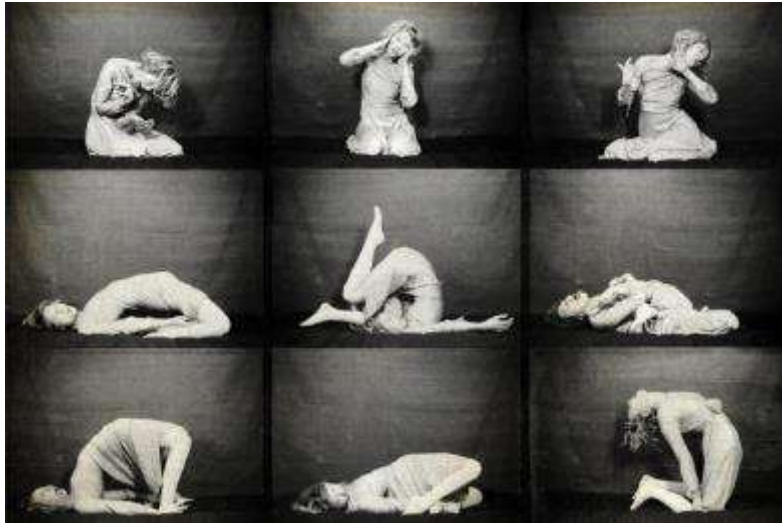


Nohubo remedio.

- The second major date for Foucault is the 1794 release of the confined in Bicêtre and Salpêtrière, partly for economic purposes
- In the classical age, madness was still seen morally as a choice of unreason and idleness
- In the modern age, this not only becomes subject to scientific medical discourse ('mental illness') but also moralised...
- The moral fault of madness becomes understood in terms of guilt and responsibility: the mad need rehabilitation and reform
- Their words are also a 'delirious discourse', shorn of secret wisdom

From Confinement to Study





5. Genealogy



*Pl. Sireño
de la razón
produce
monstruos.*

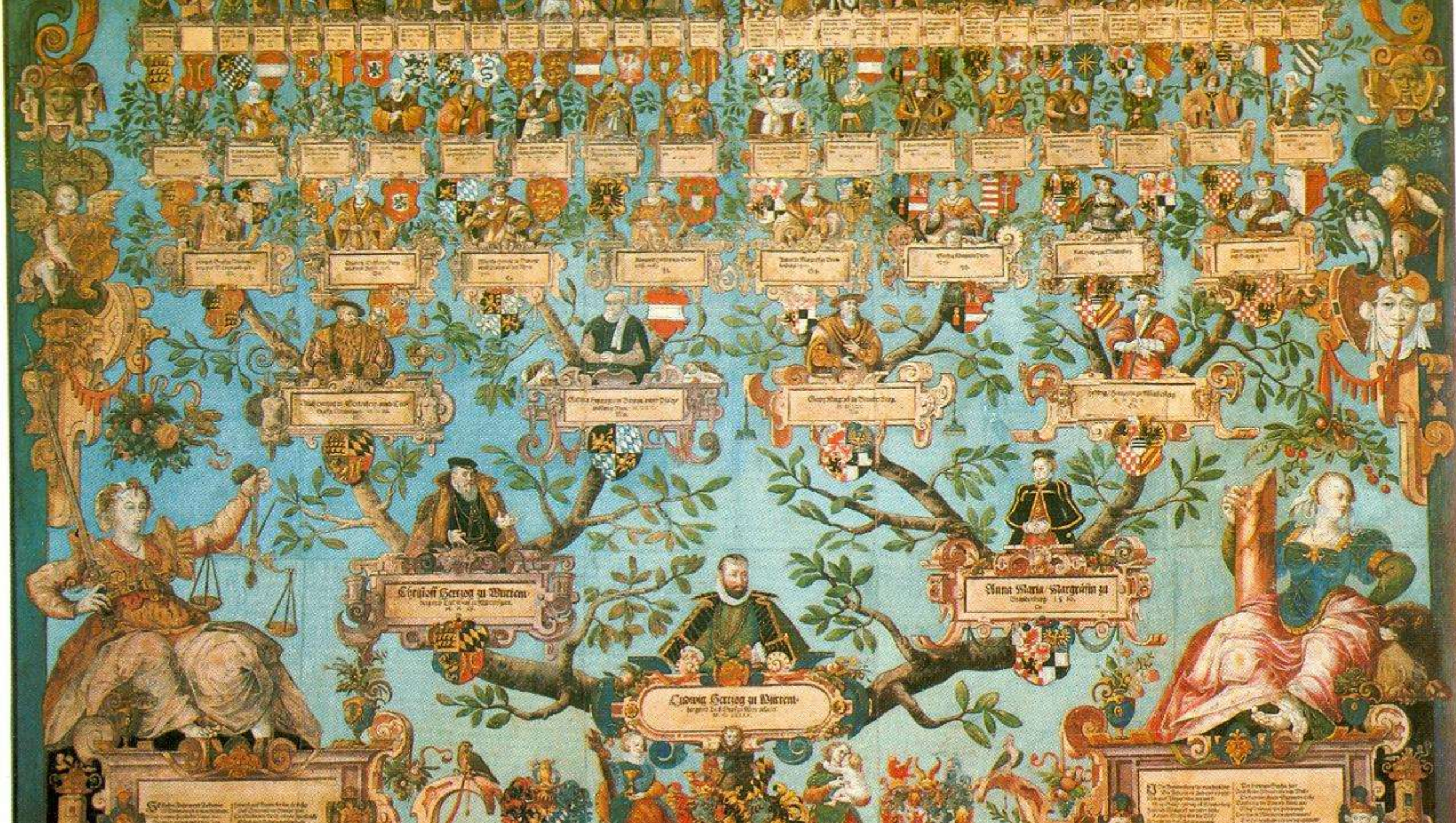
- A period's *structure of the experience* of madness is its distinctive way of viewing madness, of constituting it as an object
- The classical age did not just *exclude* madness but "positively" organised it, produced it.
- It undid the tragic nature of madness from the Renaissance: madness no longer an autonomous and positive human experience, but a *deviation* of reason; a *non-reason*.
- At the source of internment, a political-economic morality: *the war on idleness*. This institutional transformation, new modality of power, generates a new experience of madness, as a form of *unreason*.
- Nietzschean influence: critique of the moralisation of madness as something judged according to the standards of *bourgeois morality*; the mad are not other in a positive way, but as outsiders to bourgeois morals.







... To Genealogy



Christoph Herrzog in Württemberg

Anna Maria Marggräfin zu Brandenburg

Christoph Herrzog in Württemberg

St. Jakobus-Kirche in Stuttgart
1674

St. Jakobus-Kirche in Stuttgart
1674

- Not just language and speech, but everyday practices, disciplines
- Becomes a 'history of the present':
- What is our basis for thinking certain institutions, behaviours, ideas, values or ways of living are 'normal'? When did these practises first emerge?
- What is the basis for certain forms of authority or institution?

The Genealogist.

‘Three domains of genealogy are possible.

First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge;

second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others;

third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents.’

- Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics” (1983)

"Must be reckoned with by humanists, social scientists and political activists."
—The New York Times Book Review

DISCIPLINE & PUNISH



THE BIRTH OF THE PRISON

MICHEL FOUCAULT

14.99 • 11.99 CANADIAN • ISBN 0 14 026302 5

Discipline and Punish (1975)

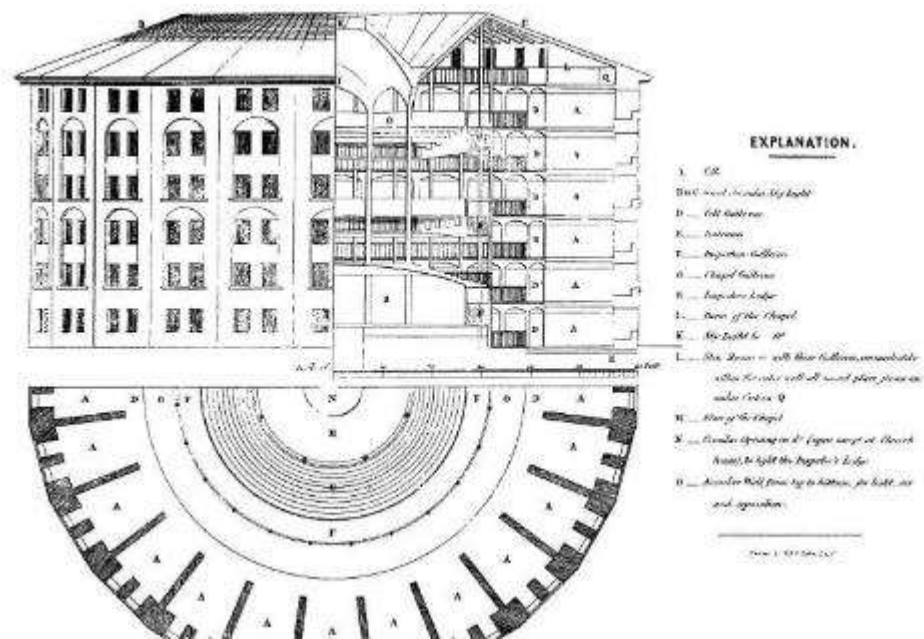
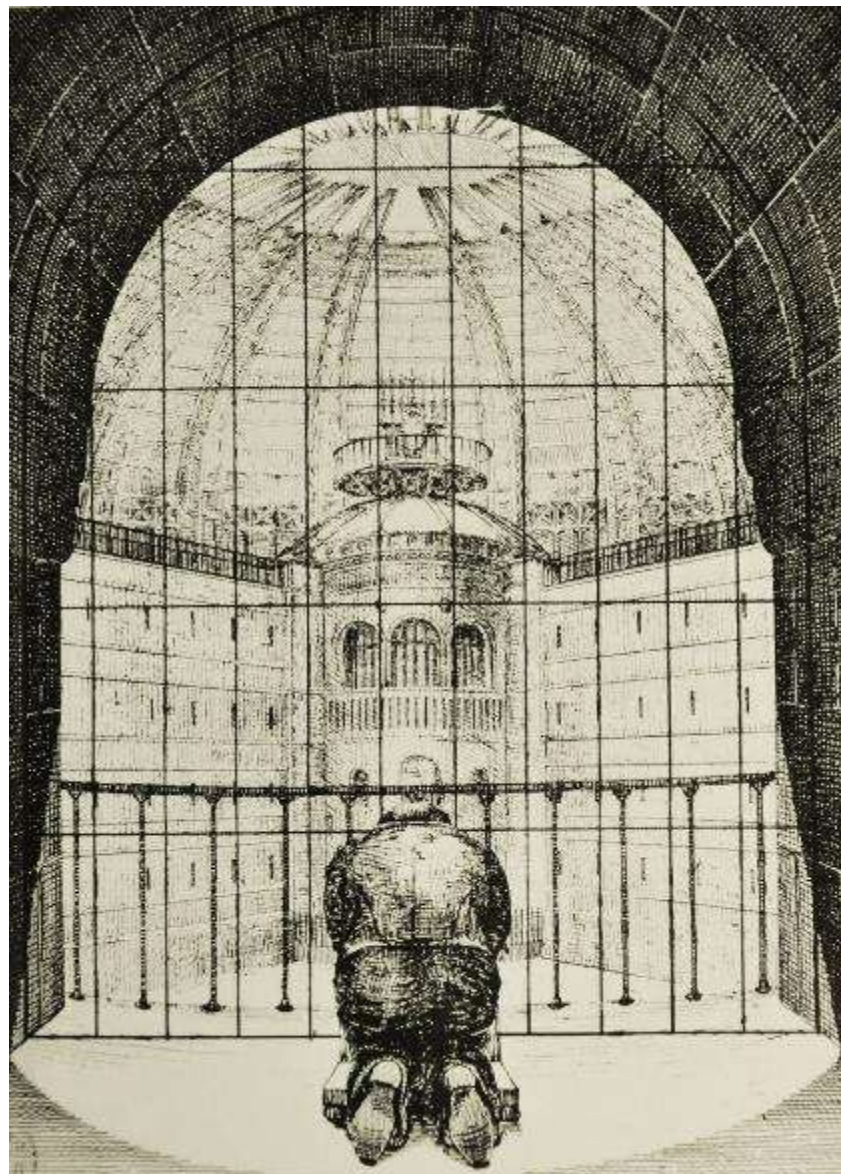
Is the prison a more humane punishment than the public execution?

Why has punishment shifted from the body to the soul?



Discipline and Punish

- Rise of disciplinary institutions: schools, hospitals, barracks, the prison
- Focus on organising the body in terms of tasks and productivity
- ‘Discipline’ (or disciplinary power) may be defined neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of applications, targets.’
- Aim: create docile bodies





6. Truth and Power



Forces of power

- ‘Power is everywhere’
- A site of continuous struggle and resistance
- ‘It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization’
- ‘philosophy is that which calls into question domination at every level and in every form in which it exists, whether political, economic, sexual, institutional, or what have you’ “The Ethics of the Concern of Self as a Practice of Freedom”, 1984)

- Diagnosis: how does power work, how does it condition bodies, and language
- The power of “benign” institutions, of the expert, to classify
- Identifying resistance within every form of oppression
- No normative political project, no “them and us”, no “legitimacy”...

Foucault on Power

Resistance

- ‘I will say that critique is the movement through which the subject gives itself the right to question truth concerning its power effects and to question power about its discourses of truth. Critique will be the art of voluntary inservitude, of reflective indocility.’
- ‘I don't write a book so that it will be the final word; I write a book so that other books are possible, not necessarily written by me.’
- ‘What is at stake, then, is this: how can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?’

‘Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits.

But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today has to be turned back into a positive one:

in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints ?

The point in brief is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression.’

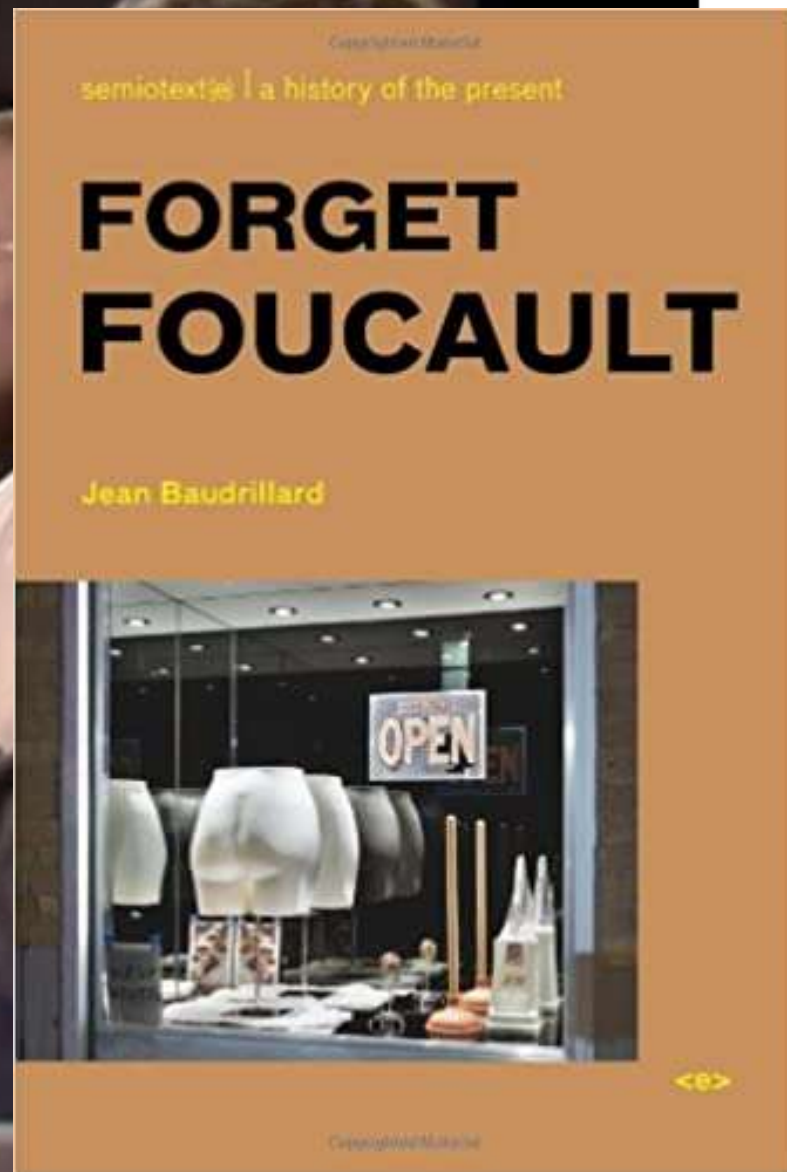
- Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”

‘This entails an obvious consequence: that criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as

a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying.

In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method.’

- Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”



innovation and creativity, freedom
and production of new elements of

Discussion points

1. Why does Foucault think that the way a society treats its mad reflects wider social currents and norms?
2. What does their eventual confinement tell us about the rise of the Enlightenment?
3. What does it mean to conduct an archaeology of a subject? Or, a genealogy?
4. To what extent is Foucault relevant today?

Monday 1st June – 6pm

Week 4 reading:
Frantz Fanon
The Wretched of the Earth
Excerpt up on
Moodle

