BY JAMIN RASKIN

WHEN FRENCH PHILOSOPHER-HISTORY-itus Michel Foucault died three weeks ago, he described to this world a precious intellectual legacy, a gift we are far too likely to lose in the short-term memory of American philosophy. An intense, dazzling thinker whose writing bold hand has become a symbol of modern structuralist inquiry and a figure as instantly recognizable as a result of his recent influence in French history, such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Didier, and Jean-Paul Sartre, Foucault's reputation for brilliance on his seminal application of the structuralist method of social concepts such as health, illness, normality, deviancy, chastity, promiscuity, knowledge, and power. Foucault took a flash back to the darkest corners of Western civilization.

The world is bigger because of him. In all things, Foucault wanted to show that what we often taken to be the natural order of things in fact is the culmination of a long process of human construction. That is why the French have taken to calling his work "deconstruction"—the systematic taking apart of reality to uncover the historical origins of this or that institution or idea or practice. Foucault described the nature of his project in the fascinating and overlooked book, The Birth of the Clinic, in which he took the last two decades of the 18th century, when the French, and then the rest of Europe, took a flash back to the darkest corners of Western civilization.

It was Foucault's special role in this movement to examine the intimate relationship of knowledge and power in our world. A book in the tradition of the Verite de l'Occlus, he began by dismantling the modern notions of insanity, asserting in Madness and Civilization (1961) that our concepts of mental illness reflect through the ages not the actual dispositions of the insane, but the kinds of behaviour we want to impose on the rest of society. In The Birth of the Clinic (1963), which he called an "archaeology of madness," Foucault showed that madness is already a form of insanity that is impossible to separate our medical understanding and techniques from our ways of looking at the world: "Alone, the gaze dominates the entire field of possible knowledge,..." he wrote. In the opus The Order of Things (1970), Foucault explored the "archaeology of human sciences," Foucault appeared to be the perfect task of arguing that there are shown in the sciences not just the basis of an "objective reality," but as a mirror of the mental categories that dominate social thought at any one time. Then, in The Archaeology of Knowledge and his great, in-depth, multidimensional history of thought, Foucault elaborated his central thesis that knowledge and knowledge directly might not mean the same thing, that the beguiling of ideas transposes to social power and vice versa.

At the very heart of this equation lies Foucault's most Kenton contribution to the thought of the 20th century, an age that witnessed the consolidation of institutional power over the individual. Here is his novel and inspiring insight: that the idea of an institutional discipline double as, and reference, the face of social discipline. As knowledge increases so does the power of knowledge-containing institutions over the citizen. When Foucault was the French word "clinics," it is no acci- dent that it means both the discipline of clinical medicine and a type of hospital; every subset of knowledge generates its own power relationships and institutional arrangements. The academic disciplines of medicine or political science or art are not only ways to repel off sociality of insanity; they are also methods of disciplining the mind and trained in social thought. This metaphor is pivotal to Foucault's work that at least one critic observer, Michael Walzer at the Princeton In- stitute for Advanced Study, has suggested that Foucault's entire system of thought may in fact not on the power of "a pen.

Yet the history of the 20th century cis out for Foucault's analysis of discipline and discipline. The outgrowth of science from democracy has unleashed painful conse- quences from Los Alamos to Hiroshima, 3 Mile Island, and the radical separation of technology and morals continues to corrupt power and make the core of the problem of domination. But the work of Foucault is a lively lesson we believe that knowledge can have a liberating influence in places of a repressive one. Indeed, Foucault moved his life to break down the walls between disciplines so we could unlock and recover the basic epistemological choices that are not only made in practical choices as well. In this sense, Foucault was traveling at the end of his life from deconstruction in surmountability, from the sombering of old understandings that box people in, to the formation of new knowledge and belief that liberate.

I want to suggest Foucault on a dark, shadowy morning in Sea, the kind of day when muti turis a melancholy and very beautiful place. Foucault had just finished delivering a very telling lecture on Greek philosophy at an overview class at the College of France, and had agreed to see a number of students after- wards. I waited my turn and then spoke to Foucault in his small office where it was cluttered with books and journals from all over the world Foucault was intent and warm; his normally reserved voice grew way to a splendid openness. This incredible conversation—whilst I have no occasion to the best of my ability from notes, as Foucault did not want to be taped—the last interview Foucault granted to the press. This was a contrast to his interac- tion at any interlocutor at all. As Foucault himself writes, "it is death that fixes the stone that we can touch, the return becomes, the first instant earth beneath the grass of words." Michel Foucault has returned to the earth, but his words re- main with us.

CP: Montaigne Foucault, you are very kind to consent to the interview. But, in general, this is something I like to do. This is the translated" problems and cultural problems, and of course of time problems. But you are a student and I pass my life with students. You asked me something (Roland) Barthes once said about being interested in "rightists." Politics should not subsume your whole life as you are a hot babel.

CP: You must insist, then, politics in the sense of electoral politics since much of your work, especially The Archaeology of Knowledge, tries to show that politics appears everywhere, doesn't it?

CP: Exactly. Philosophers do not have to be engaged in the European Parliamentary elections or the affairs of La Manoeuvre every day to exercise an influence. One does not have to be seen at the opera with famous per- sonages. We should be side the students, writers, and the everyday expressions of discovering meaning in everyday life. Philosophers, or perhaps should I say myself? I want to turn the game of the time.

CP: Yes, I agree. I think that you want to know about is the vulgar type which sells their magazines and has nothing to do with the poetic sensibility, normality, the appreciation of bodily love, the family of equals and such things can follow the course they drew in the Victorian age, where interest in sexuality reached demonic proportions.

CP: You think sex is a bad today.

JAMIN RASKIN: I once wrote about it anywhere. I will give you a simple ex- ample of a situation that is characteristic of normality, sensuality, and normality of the love you have without without an identity in society.

CP: Sometimes I fear that the young are so powerful and have developed such an instrument of power that the internal nature of political ideology, of politics as we know it, is in the process of de- cease. Do not disguise yourself about change in the future. You are in the face of responsibility to build a new order and structures where you study or eat or work.

MICHEL FOUCAULT: I think that your idea is that what you called the Study history to prepare for the future. I see your idea is not to change the world but to reflect the news of the moment. Then the domains of past and present union.

JAMIN RASKIN: When you use the word "archaeology" in the curios way you have used it.

CP: I mean that everything possesses an in- tended and unintended, a present and a spiritual type, Political, too, if you please. But I am afraid now, my friend, that our time is not the time of change, it is always someone at the door.

JAMIN RASKIN: I don't think that it's one I wanted most to ask. Do the structuralist have something to do with the abolition of events and idea to the realm of the reconstructions of the world.

CP: Search for what is good and strong and beautiful in your scien- tific and elaborate from there. Push outward. Always create from what you already have. Then you will know to do.