

individualism, since it is assumed on a commonsense basis that the individual is uniquely located in a body. Thus any attempt to direct sociology towards a theory of the body must appear as an heretical betrayal, since such a movement suggests simultaneously biologism and methodological individualism.

Michel Foucault

In writing about sociology's neglect of the body, it may be more exact to refer to this negligence as submergence rather than absence, since the body in sociological theory has had a furtive, secret history rather than no history at all. The point of this book is to expose this submergence and to articulate a theory in order to bring out the prominence of the body and bodies. Before drawing attention to various areas of sociological theory where, so to speak, the body survived despite its theoretical exclusion, it is important to outline in a peremptory manner what is embraced by the sociology of the body. This brief recovery of the body has to be inserted in order to avoid any hasty accusations of biologism or atomism. Since this book, as will become evident later, is in part an application of the philosophy of Michel Foucault, some of the basic distinctions here are clearly Foucauldian. First, a sociology of the body can be regarded as a materialist enquiry. In an interview concerning power and the body, Foucault compared his own interest in the body with Marxist analysis of ideology and power:

As regards Marxism, I'm not one of those who try to elicit the effects of power at the level of ideology. Indeed I wonder whether before one poses the question of ideology, it wouldn't be more materialist to study first the question of the body and the effects of power on it. Because what troubles me with these analyses which prioritise ideology is that there is always presupposed a human subject on the lines of the model provided by classical philosophy, endowed with a consciousness which power is then thought to seize on. (Foucault, 1980a: 58)

For Foucault, the power-effects of ideology are not to be seen in terms of the manipulation of the human subject as pure consciousness. In modern societies, power has a specific focus, namely the body which is the product of political/power relationships. The body as an object of power is produced in order to be controlled, identified and reproduced. Power over the materiality of the body can be divided into two separate but related issues – 'the disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population' (Foucault, 1981: 139). The first relates to singular bodies and is referred to as an 'anatomy-politics', while the second embraces the species body and involves a 'bio-politics' of populations. Foucault regards medical science as the crucial kink at the level of knowledge between the discipline of individual bodies by professional groups (of psychiatrists, dietitians, social workers and others) and the regulation of populations by panopticism (in the form of

asylums, factories, schools and hospitals). The administered society involves the control of persons through the medicalization of bodies. While often presented as a critique of modern Marxism, Foucault's project can be seen to bear a relationship to a view of historical materialism presented by Friedrich Engels who, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (n.d.), claimed that the materialist interpretation of history regarded the production and reproduction of immediate life as the determining factor of human societies. This determination had a two-fold character, namely the production of the means of subsistence and the production of human beings: 'The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and of the family, on the other' (Engels, n.d.: 6). A materialist theory of the body has to provide the linkage between the discipline of the body and the regulation of populations in terms of the institutional connections between family, property and patriarchy.

While human society has changed fundamentally over the last 2000 years, sociobiology would suggest that the human body has remained, in all important respects, physiologically static. The implications of this juxtaposition are that a sociology of the body would be an ahistorical enterprise. Such a conclusion is, however, fundamentally misguided, since the questions of 'the body' and 'the population' in relation to socio-cultural structures are necessarily historical. This insight into the historicity of the body is one of the basic contributions of Foucault's approach to the history of Man as an object to science. With the demographic explosion of the eighteenth century, 'population' emerged as an object of innumerable scientific technologies and enquiries:

Within this set of problems, the 'body' – the body of individuals and the body of populations – appears as the bearer of new variables, not merely as between the scarce and the numerous, the submissive and the restive, rich and poor, healthy and sick, strong and weak, but also as between the more or less utilisable, more or less amenable to profitable investment, those with greater or lesser prospects of survival, death and illness, and with more or less capacity for being usefully trained. The biological traits of a population became relevant factors for economic management. (Foucault, 1980a: 172)

'Population' emerged as the focus of the sciences of the body and as in association with new disciplines, regulations and coercive practices. With the conjunction of the body and the population, the sexuality of individuals became a new focus of power relations which were directed at a management of life.

Spirit and Flesh

In more conventional terms, the body can thus become a genuine object of a sociology of knowledge. The Western tradition of the body has been